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Cabinet resigns after Amir issues pardon decrees

Move sets ground for national reconciliation • No Assembly session today



KUWAIT: HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah tenders the government's resignation to HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at Dar Al-Yamamah yesterday. — KUNA

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday signed and issued decrees pardoning Kuwaitis convicted to years in jail, official statements said, setting the ground for national reconciliation in the country. The Cabinet announced following a brief meeting that HH the Amir signed two pardon decrees which the Cabinet had approved the day before.

It then announced that HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah tendered the government's resignation to HH the Amir. The Cabinet said its resignation comes amid an optimistic atmosphere in the country, and to pave the way for a new chapter. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled is highly expected to be asked by HH the Amir to form the new Cabinet, which is expected to include more MPs.

National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, who played an important role in the pardon discussions, said at the Assembly that the pardon decrees had been issued, expressing his thanks to HH the Amir and all those who were involved in the efforts. Ghanem said he was informed of the Cabinet's resignation, and accordingly the regular Assembly session scheduled for today will not be held.

Local media cited unnamed senior government sources as saying that around 70 people will be pardoned, topped by a dozen opposition former lawmakers and activists who have been living in exile in Turkey since the summer of 2018 to escape jail terms passed against

them for storming the National Assembly building following an anti-corruption protest in 2011.

They include former MPs Musallam Al-Barrak, Faisal Al-Mislem, Jamaan Al-Harbash and others. The list is expected to include other convicts in Kuwait. Ghanem yesterday confirmed that more reports for additional pardons will be submitted to HH the Amir, but gave no dateline.

MP Obaid Al-Wasmi tweeted that the pardon has been issued, the government has resigned and a decision to delay grillings against the prime minister is no longer effective. He said no concessions had been made, especially on imposing taxes. MP Saifi Al-Saifi thanked HH the Amir and called for pardoning all activists jailed for expressing their opinions.

There were no details about how many people had been pardoned or their names. This information is expected to be detailed when the two decrees are published in the official gazette. The move came after sessions of national dialogue called by HH the Amir in which the government, speaker and three opposition MPs took part.

The Amir then invoked article 75 of the constitution, which authorizes him to pardon prisoners or reduce their sentences, and decided to pardon a number of Kuwaiti citizens convicted and sentenced to jail terms. The Amir assigned the speaker, prime minister and head of the judicial council Ahmad Al-Ajeel to set out conditions for the planned amnesty. The three submitted their first report on the issue to HH the Amir late last week.

News in brief

Ransomware arrest in Kuwait

THE HAGUE: International investigators said yesterday they had arrested seven people in global raids targeting cyber criminals behind ransomware attacks worth more than half a million euros. Two people were arrested last Thursday in Romania and another in Kuwait, while three were held South Korea and one in an unspecified European country. — AFP

Iran demands US assurances

TEHRAN: Iran demanded US guarantees it will never again pull out of the 2015 nuclear accord and warned Tehran will not accept any partial return to the deal. Talks to restore the nuclear deal between Iran and world powers are due to resume in Vienna on Nov 29. Foreign ministry spokesman Said Khatibzadeh told a news conference that progress in the negotiations was contingent on the US lifting sanctions. — AFP

Australia to sell coal 'for decades'

SYDNEY: Australia said yesterday it will sell coal for "decades into the future" after spurning a pact to phase out the polluting fossil fuel to halt catastrophic climate change. "We have said very clearly we are not closing coal mines and we are not closing coal-fired power stations," Australian Minister for Resources Keith Pitt said. — AFP (See Page 10)

French kids mask up again

PARIS: Schoolchildren in large parts of France were ordered yesterday to again wear facemasks in class, less than a month after being allowed to remove them, as the country tries to tamp down a surge in COVID cases. Under the government's COVID protocol, primary school pupils have to wear masks when the incidence rate rises above 50 new infections per 100,000 inhabitants over five consecutive days. — AFP (See Page 5)

Resignation of Kordahi can end row: Arab League

BEIRUT: The Arab League yesterday backed the resignation of Lebanon's information minister whose comments on the Yemen war sparked a damaging diplomatic row with Gulf states. "From the very beginning, the resignation could have defused the crisis," the League's assistant secretary general,

Hossam Zaki told a news conference in Beirut. "We need stronger confirmation that this step could still happen," he said following talks with parliament speaker Nabih Berri.

Zaki, who also met Prime Minister Najib Mikati and President Michel Aoun said Information Minister George Kordahi's departure could be a starting point for "detente" between Lebanon and Gulf states. The diplomatic rift, which threatens to plunge Lebanon deeper into meltdown, prompted Saudi Arabia and some of its allies to recall ambassadors and block imports from Lebanon. Import restrictions are a further blow to a country where

Continued on Page 2



BAABDA, Lebanon: Arab League envoy Hossam Zaki gives a press statement after meeting Lebanon's president at the presidential palace yesterday. — AFP

Long lines as US reopens borders

NEW YORK: Long lines formed at border crossings yesterday as the United States reopened to foreign visitors vaccinated against COVID-19, ending 20 months of restrictions that separated families, hobbled tourism and strained diplomatic ties. From Rainbow Bridge at the US-Canada border to Mexico's Tijuana crossing at San Ysidro, California, cars, motor homes

and masked pedestrians clogged entry points before dawn as they sought eagerly anticipated reunions with family members and friends.

At airports in Europe, passengers queued excitedly to board planes bound for American cities, while those entering the country by land - some seen lugging suitcases and pushing bag-filled strollers under the watchful eyes of border patrol agents - were greeted by hours-long wait times. The ban, imposed by then president Donald Trump in early 2020 and upheld by his successor Joe Biden, had become emblematic of the upheavals caused by the pandemic.

Continued on Page 2



SAN YSIDRO, California: A woman pushes a cart with luggage and boxes upon entry from Mexico into the United States at the San Ysidro Land Port Entry yesterday. — AFP

Nations far apart as climate talks enter final week

GLASGOW: UN climate talks entered their final week yesterday with countries still worlds apart on key issues including how rapidly the world curbs carbon emissions and how to help nations already impacted by global heating. After a week of headline announcements from host Britain on ending deforestation and phasing out coal, experts say the

underlying COP26 negotiations have barely progressed.

Countries are in Glasgow to work out how to implement the Paris Agreement's goals of limiting temperature rises to between 1.5 and 2 degrees Celsius. And while recent announcements mean they have inched closer, many disputes remain unresolved. These include ratcheting up ambition on national carbon reduction plans, providing a long-promised \$100 billion annually to developing nations and rules governing carbon markets.

"All countries are playing hardball," Stephen Leonard, climate law and policy specialist and veteran COP observer told AFP.

Continued on Page 2



GLASGOW: Former US President Barack Obama speaks during a session at the COP26 UN Climate Change Conference yesterday. — AFP

Local

Kuwait's Crown Prince receives winner of Italy's Order of Star



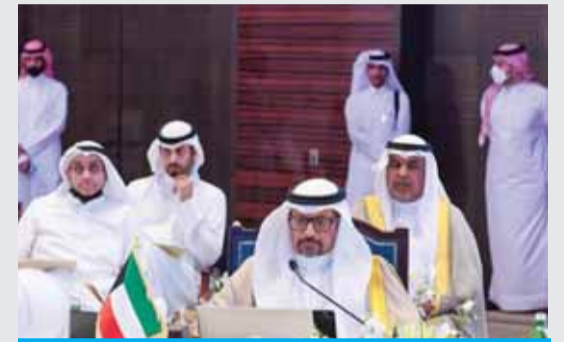
KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Dr Rasha Al-Homoud Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. — KUNA

KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday at Bayan Palace Dr Rasha Al-Homoud Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

on the occasion of winning the Order of the Star of Italy with the Rank of Officer. The Order of the Star is considered Italy's highest order to non-Italians. — KUNA

Bahrain Crown Prince stresses importance of supporting GCC development

MANAMA: Bahrain Crown Prince and Prime Minister Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifah stressed yesterday the importance of enhancing integration and supporting the development process in the GCC countries. This came during a meeting of the Crown Prince with finance ministers of the GCC's countries participating in the 114 session of the financial and economic cooperation committee hosted by Kingdom of Bahrain, in the presence of the GCC Secretary General Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf, Bahraini news Agency (BNA) reported. He stressed the keenness to continue working to achieve the desired goals in accordance with the visions of their Majesties and Highnesses, leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council, wishing the ministers all the success in their meeting. Meanwhile, the GCC finance ministers expressed their thanks and appreciation to the Bahraini Crown Prince for his keenness to strengthen the GCC development process at all levels. They praised the good organi-



MANAMA: Kuwait's Finance Minister investment Khalifa Hamada attends the meeting. — KUNA

zation and preparations made for the success of the 114th meeting of the Financial and Economic Cooperation Committee, wishing the Kingdom of Bahrain further progress and prosperity. — KUNA

Opportunity Pavilion at Dubai Expo 2020, inspiring experience for visitors



DUBAI: The Opportunity Pavilion at Dubai Expo 2020 provides visitors with an inspiring experience that addresses the most important global challenges of our time and what can be achieved when individ-

uals and societies work hand in hand to build a better future. The pavilion takes its visitors on an interactive display journey through three halls representing basic human needs, water, food and energy,

which are part of the sustainable development goals. During their visit to the pavilion, visitors live an inspiring, interactive journey with people from all over the world who have turned their dreams into

reality by implementing their projects with the least number of resources, which in turn made a great change in their local communities and from there it moved to the public good. — KUNA

Nations far apart as climate talks...

Continued from Page 1

"The EU want the highest ambition possible. The African countries want as much finance for adaptation as possible. Australia and Japan want to be able to trade as much carbon as possible."

Addressing the first formal "stocktake" yesterday of progress so far, COP26 President Alok Sharma said one week of technical negotiations had "already concluded some important issues that will drive accelerated climate action". But he said any preliminary conference decision text - over which ministers will haggle when they arrive in Glasgow later this week - had not yet materialized. "We have a lot of work to do across all issues that remain," said Britain's chief negotiator Archie Young. "We will need to work at pace."

Meanwhile, former US President Barack Obama

said yesterday he understood why young people were "frustrated" with climate inaction from leaders and that "most countries have failed" to live up to promises they made in the Paris Agreement. Obama, who was US leader in 2015 when the landmark accord was struck, said the world needed to "step up" its emissions-cutting pledges and work together to limit global temperature rises. "We have not done nearly enough to address this crisis," he told delegates in Glasgow. "We are going to have to do more and whether that happens or not to a large degree is going to depend on you."

In the six years since the Paris deal - which seeks to limit global heating to between 1.5 and 2 degrees Celsius - planet-warming greenhouse gas emissions have continued to mount, and an assessment last week said that carbon pollution will rebound this year to pre-pandemic levels. "By some measures the agreement has been a success," Obama said. "(But) we are nowhere near where we need to be yet." He admitted that "some of our progress stalled" when his successor Donald Trump chose to unilaterally withdraw the US from the Paris deal. President Joe Biden re-joined the accord when he took office. — AFP

Long lines as US reopens...

Continued from Page 1

Trump initially closed US borders to China travelers in Feb 2020. A month later he extended the ban to large swathes of the world, including the European Union, Britain, India and Brazil, in an effort to slow the spread of the coronavirus. Overland visitors from Mexico and Canada were also banned.

At Frankfurt airport in Germany, Hans Wolf was queuing at the check-in counter, visibly moved, bound for Houston to visit his son whom he had not seen in two years. "We booked the first flights in March and had since then rebooked I think 28 times, and spent so much money in between that this flight must really be profitable now," he said.

At London Heathrow Airport, two planes from rivals British Airways and Virgin Atlantic heading to New York took off at the same time from parallel runways to mark the occasion. To cope with surging demand, airlines have increased the number of transatlantic flights and plan to use larger planes.

Along the US-Mexico border, many cities have faced economic struggles due to anti-COVID trade restrictions. Reflecting widespread anticipation of the reopening, currency exchange centers in Mexico's Ciudad Juarez were hit by a shortage of dollars. The Ciudad Juarez government has implemented a special system to direct traffic, with portable toilets on the three bridges crossing into the United States "as waiting times of up to four hours are estimated", said the local director of road safety, Cesar Alberto Tapia.

In the United States' northern neighbor, seniors will be able to resume their annual trips to Florida to escape the bitter Canadian winters. Before sun-

rise, passenger cars and motor homes lined up on Rainbow Bridge straddling the border at Niagara Falls. But the cost of PCR tests that Canada requires for cross-border travel - up to \$250 - can be prohibitive.

Ann Patchett, an Ontario resident, told the Ottawa Citizen it will cost \$500 for her and her husband to go south to visit family. "Do you want to hug your children? Do you want to tuck your grandchildren into bed?" she asked. "It's very frustrating."

Lifting the travel ban will affect more than 30 countries, but entry into the United States will not be unregulated. US authorities plan to closely monitor travelers' vaccination status and will still require them to present negative COVID tests. The reopening will happen in two phases. Starting yesterday, vaccines were required for "non-essential" trips - such as family visits or tourism - although unvaccinated travelers will still be allowed into the country for "essential" trips.

A second phase, beginning in early January, will require all visitors to be fully vaccinated to enter the United States by land, no matter the reason for their trip. US health authorities have said all vaccines approved by the US Food and Drug Administration and the World Health Organization would be accepted for entry by air.

Washington has yet to comment on Europe's recent COVID caseload increase. The WHO has expressed "grave concern" over the rising pace of infections in Europe, warning that the trajectory could mean "another half a million COVID-19 deaths" by February. But many, including House Republican Elise Stefanik whose New York district borders Canada, expressed a sense of relief at the US reopening. "Finally, the day we have been waiting for," she said in a video statement. "We have worked hard on a bipartisan basis, and while this is far too late, November 8th is here and we want to make sure that this border re-opening is as smooth as possible." — AFP

Resignation of Kordahi can end...

Continued from Page 1

a weak government is struggling to secure international aid, namely from wealthy Arab neighbors. The dispute was triggered by comments made by Kordahi in an interview taped in August before he became information minister and broadcast in late October. Kordahi characterized the Saudi-led intervention in Yemen since 2015 as an "external aggression", sparking rebukes from Saudi Arabia, Bahrain,

Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates.

Each of those states support the Saudi-led military coalition against Iran-backed Houthi rebels fighting Yemen's internationally recognized government. The diplomatic rift has prompted calls for the resignation of Kordahi, an ally of the powerful Shiite movement Hezbollah. Hezbollah, which is backed by Riyadh's archrival Iran, has opposed calls for Kordahi's resignation, saying he did nothing wrong.

And Hezbollah deputy chief Naim Qassem went further on Sunday saying it was up to Saudi Arabia to "apologize". Kordahi has said stepping down was out of the question. Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan said this month that Hezbollah's dominance made "dealing with Lebanon pointless for the kingdom". — AFP

Local

Kuwaiti Cabinet's meeting touches on Amiri pardon, COP26, other issues

Health minister renews public call for seeking booster shots



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Kahled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah chairs the Cabinet's meeting yesterday. — KUNA

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti Cabinet held its weekly meeting yesterday before submitting its resignation to His Highness the Amir, discussing during the gathering issues connected to the Amiri pardon, the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26), and other issues of importance. Also during the meeting, Health Minister Sheikh Basel Al-Humoud Al-Sabah updated the Cabinet on the recent COVID-19 developments in Kuwait, saying that the situation was improving drastically. He renewed calls for citizens and residents to receive the booster shot of the COVID-19 vaccine providing that their second doses were taken six months prior.

After the meeting, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah said that the members of government were informed about the approval of the pardoning by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for some Kuwaitis sentenced on several cases in the previous years. Pardoning decrees 202 and 203 were issued yesterday.

Amir's vision

The Cabinet, during the meeting chaired by His

Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Kahled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, was pleased with the new decisions driven by the vision of His Highness the Amir after the initial pardoning report was handed to him by the heads of the judiciary, legislative and executive authorities, Sheikh Dr Ahmad Al-Nasser said. He added that the Cabinet also thanked the National Assembly for their contribution to the pardoning process, affirming that MPs had taken a step towards bringing views together and seeking what was in the interest of Kuwait and its people.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's efforts in promoting political stability and positivity is well received and appreciated, Sheikh Dr Ahmad said after the meeting. He indicated that His Highness the Prime Minister had tendered the government resignation to His Highness the Amir in line with Amiri directives for a

positive political scene in the country. The minister thanked the Kuwaiti leadership for its guidance during this exceptional period, hoping that the future would bring more positive outcomes for Kuwait and its people

Carbon emissions

On COP26, His Highness the Prime Minister — the Amir's representative — informed members of the Cabinet on the proceedings of the event held in Glasgow, Scotland, indicated the state minister of Cabinet affairs. Sheikh Sabah Al-Kahled briefed the government on Kuwait's national strategy to decrease carbon emissions by 2050, in line with the Paris Agreement, he indicated, reflecting

Kuwait strong stance towards environment protection.

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Al-Nasser provided the Cabinet with the outcome of his visit to Libya where he participated in the

chairmanship of the conference to support of Libya in line with Kuwait's presidency of the 165th Arab League Ministerial Council. He briefed the Cabinet on the Libya visit and his meetings with top Libyan figures, focusing on the welfare and development of the fellow Arab country. Sheikh Dr Ahmad also informed the Cabinet on his recent visit to Tunisia and his meetings with senior officials there.

International issues

The Cabinet then tackled recent regional and international happenings. The Cabinet expressed strong condemnation over the continuous Houthis militia attacks against Saudi Arabia and its people, saying that the targeting of civilians and facilities in the Kingdom amounted to war crimes. The State of Kuwait stood in solidarity with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia against all acts threatening its people. On Iraq, the Cabinet expressed utter condemnation over the failed assassination attempt of Iraqi Mustafa Al-Kadhemi, affirming that the terror attack aimed at destabilizing Iraq's peace and security. The Cabinet also condemned the recent terror attack against a military hospital in Kabul, Afghanistan, expressing detest towards the attack that killed and injured a score of people. — KUNA

Cabinet thanks Assembly for efforts on pardon



Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Al-Nasser provided the Cabinet with the outcome of his visit to Libya where he participated in the



KUWAIT: Minister of Information, Culture, and State Minister for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi speaks during a press conference yesterday to announce the new strategy of Kuwait's Public Authority for Sport. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

Info Minister inaugurates Kuwait's new sports strategy

KUWAIT: Minister of Information, Culture, and State Minister for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi inaugurated yesterday the new strategy of Kuwait's Public Authority for Sport for 2022-2028. Minister Al-Mutairi said that this strategy aimed to achieve the country's national policy in the field of sports in line with Kuwait vision 2035. "Basically, this strategy involves cooperation between the public and private sectors to attain the goals of sustainable development in sports," said Mutairi. "The strategy aims to specify a national day for sports, and to motivate society to exercise. It also seeks to create six sport stadiums in several governorates in the country, to establish an integrated Olympic city, and to host 45 international and regional championships," he said. He noted that the Public Authority for Sport would provide a professional system to athletes that will enable them to achieve highest levels of performance, and to empower Paralympic athletes, in addition to enabling more than 300 journalists to analyze and host different sport venues. The minister praised the Kuwaiti youth for working hard on this strategy as he expressed his faith in them in achieving its goals. Several senior officials attended the inauguration ceremony. —KUNA

NBK sponsors training program for fresh Kuwaiti graduates

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) sponsors "TAMAKAN" training program for fresh Kuwaiti graduates, as part of the strategic partnership with "Creative Confidence" for the third consecutive year.

The program is an innovative training experience especially tailored for fresh Kuwaiti university graduates. It aims to support young Kuwaiti graduates to develop their skills, expand their capabilities and grow their knowledge in a way that will make them compelling candidates for employment.

NBK will be hosting the program and providing a real business challenge that participants will work on into the final stages of the training sessions. The program will start on January 18 and end on March 27, 2022.

TAMAKAN is a full-time commitment for 10 weeks, five days a week, from 8:00am-4:00pm.

NBK Public Relations Assistant General Manager, Manal Faisal Al-Mattar, said, "NBK's sponsorship and participation in the program comes as a part of its strategic partnership with Creative Confidence. NBK is dedicated towards supporting talented young graduates and empowering Kuwaitis"

"TAMAKAN" is one of these initiatives that help invest in promising youth talents. NBK is looking forward to the outcome of the program and to seeing the participants moving into key leadership roles in their near future," she added. "NBK believes that investing in human resources is investing in our future. TAMAKAN program goes along with NBK's initiatives to invest in Kuwaiti youth and support their aspirations," Mattar noted.

Meanwhile, the Founder and Managing Director of Creative Confidence, Sumayah Mohamad Al-Jasem expressed her sincere thanks to NBK for their continuous support to TAMAKAN. "We are proud of this strategic sponsorship that results in supporting and investing in the Kuwaiti youths," she said.



Sumayah Al-Jasem



Manal Al-Mattar

Jasem added that graduates will gain real, relevant work experience and develop their skills to help them start their careers. They will get exposed to the latest methods and tools that will help them in designing solutions and shaping ideas in any field.

TAMAKAN Program offers recent graduates a unique development opportunity before starting their first job. TAMAKAN is organized by Creative Confidence in collaboration with NBK. Creative Confidence is a Kuwaiti based consulting and training company that specializes in creativity, innovation and collaboration.

Two hurt after jumping from Mangaf hotel fire

KUWAIT: Two people were hospitalized after they jumped from the second floor of a hotel in Mangaf before firemen arrived at the scene responding to a fire call Sunday night, Kuwait Fire Force said. Firemen started evacuating the building as soon as they arrived at the scene in response to an emergency call and were able to put out the blaze shortly afterwards, KFF said, noting that another person was treated onsite for smoke inhalation. An investigation was opened into the incident.



Money supply up 1% in Sept: CBK

KUWAIT: Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) announced yesterday an increase in Broad Money Supply (M2) by about 0.1 percent last September to settle at KD 38.9 billion (\$128.6 billion). Local banks' private sector deposits increased by 0.2 percent last September to settle at KD 35.1 billion (\$116.2 billion), said the CBK's economic research department in a release to the press including statistical tables. It added that private sector deposits in foreign currency decreased by 1.2 percent to reach KD 2.032 billion (\$6.72 billion), while total local banks claims on CBK represented



by CBK bonds settled at KD 2.9 billion (\$9.6 billion). The bank clarified that total local banks' assets rose by 0.6 percent to record KD 76 billion (\$251 billion) indicating that Net Foreign Assets decreased by 3.1 percent to reach KD 5.79 billion (\$19.1 billion). CBK

mentioned that Time Deposits with CBK decreased last September by around two percent to reach KD 2.24 billion (\$7.41 billion), whereas Balance of Utilized Cash Credit rose by one percent to reach KD 41.6 billion (\$137.7 billion). It indicated that the average Interest Rate on One Year Treasury Bonds settled at 1.375 percent while Financing of Kuwaiti Imports increased by 25.8 percent last August to reach KD 758 million (\$2.5 billion), and US dollar exchange rate against Kuwaiti Dinar settled at 300 fils. Narrow Money Supply indicates total volume of money in circulation including notes, coins and operational money deposits, whereas Broad Money Supply includes time deposits and saving accounts as well as liquid money. —KUNA

Local

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Kuwait charity offers free drinking water to on-site workers

KUWAIT: Kuwait Food Bank on Monday launched a new charitable project, in cooperation with Kuwait Awqaf Public Foundation, to supply free-of-charge cold potable water to workers onsite. The fresh initiative is one of the biggest advanced projects in the charitable sector in the region, since it provides clean water in cooled containers for workers at their workplaces, in addition to people on roads and at mosques, hospitals and vital places, the charity's Deputy Chairman Meshal Al-Ansari said. Ansari added that this project is a big step in charitable and humanitarian work, given the modern methods used by the bank to make it a success and benefit as many people as possible. He praised the Kuwait Awqaf Public Foundation's support for charitable, voluntary activities and efforts carried out by the bank to serve the Kuwaiti society. — KUNA



KRCS distributes schoolbags to children in Yemen

KUWAIT: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) distributed yesterday 4,870 schoolbags to children in Yemen. KRCS Director General Abdulrahman Al-Oun said in a statement to the press that the distribution of the schoolbags

included seven governorates, Hadramout, Abyan, Aden, Shabwah, Taiz, Sanaa and Marib. He added that this came within the framework of the society's interest to ensure the educational process in Yemen and support the parents buying school supplies. He affirmed the KRCS endeavor to continue supporting the education sector in Yemen in all its fields through the humanitarian work it undertakes, such as building schools and educational centers and many others. Oun praised the role of everyone who participated or contributed in any way towards the charity's projects. — KUNA



Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti shores are dotted with fishermen at this time of the year with the weather suitable for them to do what they love and, if they are lucky, get a good catch. — KUNA photos

Kuwait doctor urges men to check for prostate cancer

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: A Kuwaiti Ministry of Health official urged men, especially those aged 50 or older, to carry out periodic prostate cancer checks, warning that this type of cancer remains the most widespread among males in Kuwait. Speaking in a press statement on 'Movember' - an annual event raising awareness of men's health issues during the month of November, Head of the Urology Department at Jaber Armed Forces Hospital Dr Mohammad Al-Ghanem said that prostate cancer is widespread around the world, adding that based on the Kuwait cancer register report, the disease became in 2015 the most widespread cancer among Kuwaiti men at the rate of 15 persons per 100,000. "It is necessary for men to carry out periodic prostate examina-

tions as they grow in age," he said.

While prostate cancer numbers are growing, only a small percentage of patients develop an aggressive tumor that spreads quickly. Therefore, it is important to spread awareness about periodic checkups and early detection that could "save the lives of thousands of people," according to Dr Ghanem. "The month of November is a good opportunity to remind of the dangers of prostate cancer, especially



Dr Mohammad Al-Ghanem

that this month is linked with a campaign named 'Movember' during which men grow their mustaches and go for all the necessary tests," Dr Ghanem added.

The doctor noted that the reasons this type of cancer develops remains unclear, noting that genetics "also has a role" in its occurrence as the percentage increases among first degree relatives. Dr Ghanem said treatment of the disease is done in various ways including the use of robotic surgery, also through an incision behind the pubic bone, in addition to radiation. There is another treatment through which seeds are placed in the prostate and hormone are injected to make the body stop secreting male testosterone, in addition to the chemical and biological treatment for tumors spread out as prostate domain.



Gulf Bank holds wellness day at Al-Shaheed Park

KUWAIT: At the end of October, Breast Cancer Awareness Month, Gulf Bank organized healthy entertainment activities for its employees and the public at Al-Shaheed Park on October 30, 2021. The event activities included a yoga session, a walkathon, and a panel discussion that focused on the importance of mental health in the lives of breast cancer patients.

These events came in conjunction with Breast Cancer Awareness Month, and to highlight not only the disease and the importance of early detection, but also the role of public health and mental health, especially in improving the lives of patients and increasing their chances of overcoming the disease.

The Health Day and the first Gulf Bank Walkathon were attended by more than 250 participants from the Bank's employees and their families and friends, where they joined a yoga session, followed by a 4 km walkathon, and the discussion panel in which Joanne Hands spoke. In addition to these activities, Gulf Bank hosted Dr Fatemah Khaja for a workshop for female employees on how important early detection is and distributed free vouchers for checkups.

On this Health Day, General Manager of Human Resources at Gulf Bank, Dr Salma Al-Hajaj said: "While we are keen on the professional performance and excellence of our employees, we can never lose sight of their health and safety. And

because we recognize the importance of mental health in the lives of people, healthy and sick alike and we are aware of our role and duty, which requires us to raise awareness and create health initiatives for employees and their families, we are keen annually to participate in breast cancer awareness, and we always encourage periodic examination, and a healthy lifestyle that prevents and helps overcome diseases. We hope that all our employees and their families enjoyed the Health Day at Al Shaheed Park, and we wish them a healthy life free of diseases, and a healthy lifestyle that helps them always develop and progress."

October is the Breast Cancer Awareness Month, an annual global campaign which is known in countries around the world, with the aim of raising awareness, education, and research about breast cancer. This disease is the most common type of cancer among women all over the world, and early detection plays a key role in overcoming it.

Gulf Bank's vision is to be the leading Kuwaiti Bank of the future. The bank is constantly engaging and empowering its employees as part of an inclusive and diversified workplace in recognition of every employee's role in delivering customer excellence and serving the community at large. With its extensive network of branches and innovative digital services, Gulf Bank is able to give its customers the choice of how and where to conduct their banking transactions, all while ensuring a simple and seamless banking experience. Gulf Bank is committed to maintaining a robust sustainability program at the community, economic, and environmental levels through sustainability initiatives that are strategically selected to benefit both the country and the Bank. Gulf Bank supports Kuwait Vision 2035 "New Kuwait" and works with various parties and stakeholders in service of the vision.



Satellites spot US warship mock-ups

US court to weigh FBI surveillance of a mosque

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French schoolchildren mask up again

COVID-19 cases rise; 75% of the population inoculated

PARIS: Schoolchildren in large parts of France were ordered yesterday to again wear face masks in class, less than a month after being allowed to remove them, as the country tries to tamp down a surge in COVID cases. Primary schools in 40 of France's 101 departments or administrative areas, which had been mask-free for weeks, are affected by the order, which comes a day before President Emmanuel Macron addresses the nation about the health crisis.

Under the government's COVID protocol, primary school pupils have to wear masks when the incidence rate rises above 50 new infections per 100,000 inhabitants over five consecutive days.

With nearly 75 percent of the population inoculated against the coronavirus, France is one of Europe's vaccine leaders. But the pace of new vaccinations has slowed since the summer, when millions rushed to get shots after the introduction of a COVID pass to enter bars, restaurants, gyms and other entertainment and sporting venues. The latest government edict brings to 61 the number of departments where schoolchildren have to cover their noses and mouths.

They include the areas surrounding Paris as well as the southern city of Marseille. In secondary schools, masks remain compulsory irrespective of the number of COVID cases. Today evening, Macron will address the nation about the health cri-

sis for the first time since July 12. He is expected to discuss the booster shot campaign currently underway among over-65s and those with underlying health conditions. So far only half of those eligible for a top-up shot have received the jab.

Prime Minister Jean Castex told AFP on Friday that the government was considering updating the COVID pass to include a mandatory booster shot. The World Health Organization has expressed "grave concern" over soaring COVID cases in Europe, warning that the continent could see another half a million deaths by early next year. Germany last week set a new record for daily cases, with nearly 34,000 new cases over the previous 24 hours.

France, by comparison, has been spared a steep rise in infections, with health authorities reporting 8,547 new cases between Saturday and Sunday.

In the absence of a fourth wave of infections, many parents and teachers have expressed dismay over the reimposed restrictions on younger children. The secretary general of France's biggest primary teachers union, the SNUIPP-FSU, warned that the "yo-yo effect" would have a detrimental effect on students. "This to-ing and fro-ing risks creating a sense of instability in schools," Guislaine David said. Education Minister Jean-Michel Blanquer told France Info radio that while the new mask mandate was "unpleasant" it was "necessary".—AFP



NORTHUMBERLAND: Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson (center) is shown around a CT scan room during a visit to Hexham General Hospital yesterday in Hexham in northern England. — AFP

Britain's PM under fire as MPs debate standards system

LONDON: Prime Minister Boris Johnson faced pressure to appear before British lawmakers debating the standards system yesterday, as days of sleaze and cronyism claims against his government intensified with new revelations. MPs will hold an emergency afternoon debate amid calls for an independent inquiry into the mounting allegations of apparent corruption and inappropriate conduct within the Conservative party and government. It follows outrage at efforts last week to overhaul parliament's internal disciplinary process which would have prevented the 30-day suspension of a Tory MP found to have committed an "egregious" breach of lobbying rules.

Although Johnson abandoned the unprecedented move within 24 hours—prompting the lawmaker, Owen Paterson, to resign from parliament—it threw the spotlight on a raft of allegations around MPs' behavior. This heightened over the weekend with a report the Conservatives have been "systematically" awarding seats in the unelected House of Lords, parliament's upper chamber which scrutinizes legislation, to its high-value donors.

An investigation by The Sunday Times and Open Democracy found almost all of the party's 16 different treasurers over the past two decades were offered

seats after increasing their donations to more than £3 million. It follows other claims of government wrongdoing over the awarding of coronavirus contracts and multiple aspects of Johnson's own conduct, as well as renewed focus on lawmakers being able to have high-paying second jobs.

Paterson himself was found to have repeatedly lobbied ministers and officials for two companies paying him more than £100,000 (\$140,000, 120,000 euros) a year. "There are definitely conflicts of interest that need to be considered," Liberal Democrat MP Wendy Chamberlain, a former policewoman who applied for yesterday's urgent debate, told BBC radio. "We really do need to look at things and that's what I hope the debate does this afternoon." Her party has called for a public inquiry into the sleaze and corruption allegations, which would have the power to summon witnesses and take evidence under oath.

Keir Starmer, leader of the main opposition Labor party, demanded the prime minister himself show up to apologize, as he called for further disclosures of Paterson's correspondence with ministers over COVID contracts. "Boris Johnson needs to attend this debate, answer for his mistakes, apologize to the country and take action to undo the damage he has done," Starmer said.

"The country is yet to hear a word of contrition over his attempts to create one rule for him and his friends and another for everyone else. He must now come to the House and say sorry." On Sunday, environment minister George Eustice called the furious reaction to Paterson's case "a storm in a teacup", while international trade minister Anne-Marie Trevelyan yesterday dismissed the need for Johnson to attend the debate. — AFP

tinctive ring of Khamenei, was used to illustrate an article with the headline "Millions of Iranians Below Poverty Line". Khamenei has a political and religious status which makes him effectively untouchable in Iran. Iran, with a population of 83 million people, is facing an economic crisis after international sanctions.

There were high hopes for economic relief after Iran's 2015 pledge not to build or acquire nuclear weapons—a goal it has always denied pursuing. But those hopes were dashed in 2018 when then-president Donald Trump withdrew the United States from the deal and launched or reimposed crippling sanctions as part of a sweeping "maximum pressure" campaign. On top of that, when the COVID-19 pandemic struck, Iran became the region's worst-hit country. — AFP

Iran suspends paper after linking poverty with Khamenei

NICOSIA: Iran's press watchdog has suspended a newspaper after it published a front-page graphic of the poverty line purportedly being drawn by the hand of supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The suspension of the Kelid paper was "in accordance with the media law" watchdog head Alaedin Zohourian said, according to state news agency IRNA yesterday.

The graphic, which showed a hand with the dis-



TEHRAN: A billboard depicting Iranian Revolutionary Guards navy units observing a US warship in the Gulf of Oman, is seen at the Vali-Asr square in Tehran. — AFP

Prominent Indian resident Anant Kapadiya dies at 75

KUWAIT: Prominent Indian community member and Chairman of the Indian Business and Professional Council (IBPC) - Kuwait, Anant Kapadiya passed away in Toronto, Canada. He was 75 years old. As part of the Indian Community Support Group (ICSG), he played an important role in extending timely help to those in distress during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A well-known figure in the Indian diaspora in Kuwait, Kapadiya leaves an indelible stamp on Kuwait's corporate world and Indian cultural arena. He played a crucial role in nurturing Kuwait-India cultural cooperation. After spending around 45 years of his life in Kuwait, Kapadiya left for Canada in February this year to be with his children. He suffered a stroke and passed away on Sunday morning.

"I am deeply saddened to hear about the demise of Shri Anant Kapadiya Ji," said Indian Ambassador Sibi George in a condolence message. During his over 40 years of stay in Kuwait, he contributed immensely in promoting India-Kuwait relations both in the economic and cultural spheres. He had made his mark in Kuwait as a successful entrepreneur and worked very closely with the embassy during his tenure as the head of Indian Business and Professional Council (IBPC), the ambassador said. "Kapadiya created an unparalleled legacy with his exceptional contribution to the cause of Indian music and culture and was also instrumental in introducing some of India's top cultural and artistic per-



Anant Kapadiya

sonalities in Kuwait. I join the Indian community in Kuwait in extending my sincere and heartfelt condolences to his family and many friends," the ambassador added in his message.

Not only Kapadiya did hold up the best of India culturally in Kuwait, but as a member and Chairman of IBPC, he also showcased India's economic might by bringing some of India's top industrialists, businessmen, and entrepreneurs to Kuwait to strengthen Kuwait-India business relations. He promoted India's classical music through collabora-

tions with premier organizations in Kuwait like Dar Al-Athar Al-Islamiyyah and Kuwait's National Council for Culture Arts and Letters (NCCAL). Kapadiya organized several Indian events in Kuwait featuring legendary musicians like Lata Mangeshkar, Pandit Ravi Shankar, Ustad Alla Rakha, Pandit Hariprasad Chaurasia, Pandit Shivkumar Sharma, Ustad Zakir Hussain, Ustad Shujat Khan, Ustad Amjad Ali Khan and others.

Kapadiya also has served on the board of the Indian Community School (ICSK), Kuwait. The Indian community members in Kuwait will forever remember him fondly and the moments they spent with Kapadiya. "We were always fond of him and loved to interact with him, learning from him," said Gurvinder Singh Lamba, new Chairman of the IBPC. Kapadiya is survived by his wife Indira and three children, Akshatha, Mriga and Amit.

Obituary



24th October 1946 - 7th November 2021

Heartfelt condolences on the sad demise of
ANANT KAPADIYA
CHAIRMAN
Indian Business and Professional Council

"May his soul Rest in Peace"



Executive Committee and Members of
Indian Business and Professional Council (IBPC) Kuwait

International

Good COP, bad COP: Climate summit praised and panned

A dizzying blitz of pledges to curb methane emissions

News in brief

Ortega wins new term

MANAGUA: Daniel Ortega won a fourth consecutive presidential term yesterday in elections denounced by the United States as a "sham," with the long-term Nicaraguan leader deriding his opponents-most of them jailed or in exile-as "terrorists." With ballots in 49 percent of polling stations counted, Ortega had 75 percent of votes, according to official partial results from the country's Supreme Electoral Council. With seven would-be presidential challengers detained since June, the 75-year-old was assured a fourth consecutive five-year term-his fifth overall. The five contenders he did face have been dismissed by critics as regime loyalists. Late on Sunday night, some of Ortega's followers began to celebrate on the streets of the capital Managua even before the final result. "Yes we did it, Daniel, Daniel!" they shouted in several neighborhoods as fireworks went off. — AFP

Ethiopia rebels 'near capital'

NAIROBI: A rebel leader fighting Ethiopia's government says his troops are near the capital and preparing another attack, predicting the war would end "very soon" as diplomats rush to negotiate a ceasefire. Jaal Marroo, commander of the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), warned Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed that pro-government fighters were defecting and the rebels were very close to victory. "What I am sure (of) is that it is going to end very soon," Jaal, whose real name is Kumsa Diriba, told AFP in an interview Sunday. "We are preparing to push for another launch, and for another attack. The government is just trying to buy time, and they are trying to instigate civil war in this country, so they are calling for the nation to fight." — AFP

Relief as migrants disembark

TRAPANI: More than 800 migrants who were plucked to safety in the Mediterranean disembarked from a charity rescue vessel in Sicily on Sunday, with most set to be transferred to two waiting quarantine ships. Red Cross workers helped the migrants-some wrapped in blankets, many barefoot-off the Sea Eye 4, which had begged Italy to allow it to dock after carrying out multiple rescue operations. Save the Children staff said they had been told there were around 170 minors aboard, but it was not yet clear how many were travelling with families and how many were unaccompanied. Some of the migrants raised their arms in celebration and cheered as the red ship pulled into the port of Trapani in western Sicily. Others sat with their legs dangling over the side, looking tired and drawn. — AFP

Christchurch mosque murderer

CHRISTCHURCH: The Christchurch mosque attacker is considering appealing his unprecedented whole-of-life jail term, arguing guilty pleas made in the wake of the 2019 shootings were obtained under duress, his lawyer said yesterday. Self-proclaimed white supremacist Brenton Tarrant pleaded guilty to 51 charges of murder, 40 of attempted murder and one of terrorism last year. He was sentenced to life imprisonment without the possibility of parole, the first time a whole-life term has been handed down in New Zealand. Tarrant did not offer a defense at the time but his lawyer Tony Ellis said the Australian national was questioning his decision to plead guilty. Ellis said the gunman, 31, had told him the pleas were entered under duress because he was subject to "inhuman and degrading treatment" while being held on remand. — AFP

ECOWAS hardens stance

ACCRA: The West African regional grouping ECOWAS on Sunday hardened its stance against military-ruled Mali and Guinea, imposing new individual sanctions and calling on both countries to honor timetables for a return to democracy. The Economic Community of West African States "has decided to sanction all those implicated in the delay" in organizing elections set for February 27 in Mali, ECOWAS Commission President Jean-Claude Kassi Brou told AFP after a summit of the 15-nation group in the Ghanaian capital Accra. He said Mali had "officially written" to Ghanaian President Nana Akufo-Addo, who holds the rotating presidency of ECOWAS, to inform him that the Sahel country could not hold elections as planned. "All the transition authorities are concerned by the sanctions which will take immediate effect," Brou said, adding that they included travel bans and assets freezes. — AFP

GLASGOW: The COP26 climate talks resuming yesterday have so far unfolded on parallel planes, with high-level announcements stage-managed by host country Britain during week one riding roughshod over a laborious UN process built on consensus among nearly 200 countries. A dizzying blitz of pledges to curb methane emissions, phase out coal-fired power, stop overseas fossil fuel financing, and halt deforestation would appear to have moved the dial towards the Paris Agreement's most ambitious goal of capping global warming at 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels.



Activist brands COP26 'failure'

With a rise of 1.1C to date, storms, heatwaves and floods have become more frequent, intense and deadly. An International Energy Agency (IEA) tally of the commitments, along with one by India to boost renewables and reach net zero by 2070, found they would hold warming to 1.8C - not good enough, but way better than the "catastrophic" 2.7C projected by the UN just last month. US special envoy John Kerry, a 30-year veteran of climate geopolitics, said he "had never counted as many initiatives and as much money - real money - being put on the table."

But not everyone was equally impressed. On the



GLASGOW: Members of climate action protest group Scientist Rebellion hold signs during a demonstration on the sidelines of the COP26 UN Climate Change Summit yesterday. — AFP

streets, climate activist Greta Thunberg, leading a global protest march on Saturday, branded COP26 a "failure" and an exercise in greenwashing. Several of the marquee pledges last week, while still significant, were considerably less than meets the eye, analysts pointed out. "We've run the numbers - the IEA scenario still leaves an enormous emissions gap in 2030," researchers at Climate Analytics reported, highlighting the need to slash global emissions nearly in half within a decade to keep 1.5C within view.

Many frontline negotiators were not happy either. "This first week is a disappointment," said Ahmadou

Sebory Toure, chair of the G77-plus-China group, a negotiating bloc of more than 130 poor and developing countries, the largest in the UN climate forum. "Most of our concerns are not truly or effectively being taken into account," the Guinean diplomat told AFP in an interview. Toure lambasted the failure of rich nations to cough up \$100 billion a year by 2020 - a pledge first made in 2009, and now postponed to 2023 - to help vulnerable nations decarbonise their economies and cope with climate impacts. "After the sub-prime crisis in 2008, the US mobilised \$8 trillion - and that was just for one country," he said. — AFP

Vax the kids? A bitter dispute for separated couples

CHICAGO: Michael Thompson, a 47-year-old executive recruiter from Illinois, expects his former wife to take him to court over vaccinating their two children against COVID-19. He doesn't trust the vaccine for children, but she wants to follow US health guidelines and have their eight-year-old and 10-year-old inoculated. It is a clash repeated among separated families across the United States, where widespread vaccine hesitancy has thwarted efforts to end the pandemic despite injections being free and easily available. "I'm vaccinated, but I don't feel the need for my kids to get the vaccine until it's been proven more," Thompson told AFP. "We don't know the long-term effects for kids."

Thompson says this week's decision by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to approve the Pfizer vaccine for children aged five and over appeared rushed. And he is ready for a costly fight against his ex-spouse. "She's pushing back against me and will like-

ly take me to court, which will cost me between \$5,000 and \$10,000. But to me it's worth it," he said. "I'm skeptical (of the vaccine) because it involves my kids. I think I'd be an irresponsible parent if I wasn't."

Divorce and litigation

Family attorneys say the CDC decision has opened the floodgates for divorce and litigation. For Sarah Stark, a 52-year-old divorced therapist from St Charles, Illinois, approval of vaccines for children is a major relief. Her 10-year-old daughter Shayna has been homeschooling for the last two years because a history of strokes and a blood clotting disorder puts her at higher risk.

And even though her ex-husband is against getting their daughter vaccinated, Stark is able to because she has sole custody and is responsible for medical decisions. "He doesn't think the vaccine is a great idea but luckily it's not his decision to make," Stark said. For many divorcees, things



DENVER: Tyler Holm-Denoma, 5, left, waits for National Jewish Health registered nurse Emily Cole to give him a pediatric COVID-19 vaccine in Denver, Colorado. — AFP

are not as clear cut. Family law varies state by state, and many parents share custody and medical decisions-creating a scenario that often must be decided by a judge.

"We saw a few disputes over the vaccines for 12-year-olds, but I think we should expect to see a lot of battles regarding the younger kids

because custody battles are usually about younger children," said Holly Davis, a family law attorney with Texas-based firm Kirker Davis. Davis added that currently about 20 percent of her cases involve vaccination disputes, but she expected that number to increase now that younger kids can be given shots. — AFP

US conservatives take culture wars to classrooms

TEXAS: Conservatives in Texas and several other states have declared war on the teaching of books aimed at sensitizing students to racism and gender identity issues, saying they wrongly inflict feelings of guilt on white and non-LGBTQ students. In one direct result of the campaign, a school district west of Houston last month temporarily withdrew copies of a book that explains the unintentional "micro-aggressions" an African-American child suffers because of the color of his or her skin.

"New Kid" by Jerry Craft is just one of 850 books being examined by a Texas legislative committee examining how books used in the schools deal with institutional racism and sexism. Committee head Matt Krause has asked every school district in the state to send him a list cataloging how many of each of the books they possess, where they are located and how much they spent for them.

Divisive debates over the acceptability of books and of certain teachings have sprung up in some 15 states, primarily in the South, sparking unusually angry confrontations in local school board meetings. They "will pop up everywhere in the future, especially in urban areas where there is a conservative push at the state level but where local politics tend to be more Democratic," Brandon Rottinghaus, a political science professor at the University of Houston, told AFP.

'Witch hunt'

Far away, on the east coast, the newly elected Republican governor of Virginia, Glenn Youngkin, appears to have drawn votes with his promise that parents will always have a say on the books being taught in the schools. His campaign drew nationwide attention with an ad in which a Virginia woman says she was shocked to learn her son had suffered nightmares after his high school English class read "Beloved," a Pulitzer-winning historical novel by Black author Toni Morrison.

"Beloved" tells the rending story, based on an actual incident, of an escaped slave who kills her



WASHINGTON: The dome of the US Capitol is seen reflected on a car door in Washington, DC. — AFP

infant child rather than have it seized by marshals and returned to slavery. Conservatives have also lodged angry protests against the teaching of "critical race theory," an academic approach to studying ways in which racism infuses US legal systems and institutions in often subtle ways. Protests broadly targeting so-called "woke" culture - a term used to describe awareness of race- or gender-based injustices - have led to the banning of books seen to include racial stereotypes.

The Texas Library Association has pushed back against what it called "a substantial increase in censorship activity in Texas." "A parent has the right to determine what is best for their child," the group says on its website, but "not what is best for every child." And the Texas State Teachers Association has denounced what it called a "witch hunt," following passage by the state legislature of a law that sets specific guidelines for the teaching of racial and sexual inequalities.

In the Spring Branch school district in Texas, the graphic novel "The Breakaways" - which features a character born as a girl but who feels like a boy - has been withdrawn and added to Krause's list of 850 questionable books following complaints from parents. For the book's author, Cathy G Johnson, "Book banning serves as a media distraction from the real harm politicians like Matt Krause perpetuate." She noted that Equality Texas, which advocates for gay, lesbian and transgender causes, considers Krause "a prolific author of anti-LGBTQ legislation." — AFP

US court to weigh FBI surveillance of a mosque

WASHINGTON: The US Supreme Court will take up a case involving three Muslim men in California who say they were surveilled at their mosque by the FBI after the September 11, 2001 attacks based solely on their religion. The three men - Yassir Fazaga, imam of the Orange County Islamic Foundation, along with Ali Uddin Malik and Yasser Abdelrahim - say the FBI sent a confidential informant to several mosques in the county in 2006 and 2007, ordering the man to pose as a convert and gather information.

"The FBI employed a paid informant person with a prior criminal history to infiltrate these mosques," said Ahilan Arulantham, a lawyer with the ACLU civil rights group who will represent the plaintiffs before the high court. The informant, he said, "told everybody that he was a convert, that he was wanting to rediscover his French-Algerian roots." "He then was instructed by the FBI to gather as much information as possible on people in this community - cell phones, email addresses, conversations, which he secretly recorded," Arulantham told reporters. The ACLU says the informant recorded religious prayer groups in the mosque, leaving a secret recording device hidden in his car key fob, as well as secretly making videos in mosques, homes and businesses.

Arulantham said the informant "started, again at his FBI handlers' behalf, to try to incite violence, but he scared a bunch of people, when he was talking about things like bombing, Jihad and the war in Iraq and Afghanistan (and) they reported him to the FBI." The lawyer said the informant then "became disgruntled," argued with his FBI handlers, and ultimately decided to go public with his experience. The imam and his two congregants then filed a complaint against the FBI for spying on them in violation of federal law and their constitutional rights. — AFP

International

Australians skirt vaccine rules with black market certificates

A thriving black market in fake vaccine certificates online

MELBOURNE: A ban on unvaccinated Australians entering bars and restaurants nudged thousands to get jabbed - but it has also seen the rise of a thriving black market in fake COVID-19 vaccine certificates online. Twenty-four-year-old Molly - who asked to conceal her real name - is hitting the town. When Melbourne last month clambered out of 260-plus days of sporadic lockdowns, the allure of the city's vibrant social scene was too much to resist, even though she is unvaccinated. "I'm not anti" vaccine, she told AFP, "but I don't agree with it being so mandatory."

they entered into force. One still-active website purports to sell certificates from Australia, the United States, Britain, Ireland and Pakistan for around US\$500 apiece. Health experts worry that fake certificates put owners at risk, could fuel outbreaks and complicate contact tracing.

The number of fakes in circulation is difficult to estimate, but one Telegram channel touting fraudulent Australian certificates has more than 64,000 members alone. "You can get them pretty easily on the dark web," said Vince Hurley, a veteran detective who now teaches criminology at Macquarie University. "The price ranges from AU\$100 (\$74) to AU\$1,000 depending on the quality, on the reputation of the person selling and comments from other individuals."

Despite the risk of up to 10 years in jail and fines topping US\$7,400, some Australians have bought the fake certificates, or created their own homemade workarounds. Salim, 27 - who also asked for his real name not to be used - created his own vaccine passport by using a friend's real one as a template. He has successfully used it in restaurants, gyms and salons, and is not deterred by any legal risks. "I'm forced to do this because I wasn't given a choice. I'm not robbing a bank, I'm not hurting anyone," he said. "I know at least 10 people who have fake vaccination papers," he added.

You're not coming in

The Australian Federal Police is aware of the problem and has vowed to "maintain the integrity of the COVID-19 vaccine rollout in Australia," according to a spokesman. To address the issue authorities have



MELBOURNE: A customer scanning a QR code to enter a department store in Melbourne as the city further lifts COVID restrictions allowing non-essential retail shops to open and travel to the regions of Victoria after the city's sixth lockdown. — AFP

begun to reboot the first vaccine passports with flickering digital holograms, QR codes and other anti-counterfeit measures. But according to Hurley, there is a "law of diminishing returns" policing the black market, with forces needing to engage in the highly "labor intensive" job of "having dedicated police sitting at a desk, monitoring online". Day-to-day policing of certificates is left to venues, which are required by law to check the status of everyone they admit.

Anthony Hammond, the owner of two pubs in

Melbourne, says his industry has been left in the lurch when it comes to policing themselves. The pub owner's venues have been "flat out" since reopening to revelers, and staff have been examining a dizzying array of certificates on apps, smartphone wallets and in hard copy. "We don't know anything about them. I wouldn't even know what they would look like, we've had no education by the government or whoever," he said. "You're going to have some people doing the wrong thing. How can we prevent that?" — AFP



Fake certificates raise risk, could fuel outbreaks

In the last few weeks, she has used a fake vaccine passport acquired through social media to dine at multiple restaurants across the city. "There was a link going around a few months ago: you put in your details, and it gives you a vaccine passport," she explained. The link has since been removed, but Australian authorities are playing whack-a-mole with a host of similar sites and apps that are keen to cash in.

Across the country, Google searches for fake certificates soared when rules for the non-vaccinated were announced in early October, surging again when

Taleban's victory sparks hopes of peace in rural Afghanistan

DASHTAN: In the villages that once bore the brunt of Afghanistan's frontline fighting, the Taleban victory has broken a cycle of air strikes, gun battles and funerals. The hardliners' takeover of Kabul and the sudden collapse in August of the US-backed regime shocked the world and upended the freedoms of Afghans, which were particularly enjoyed by the urban middle class.

But away from major cities, where little of the international aid worth billions of dollars ever reached, many believe the Islamist movement's rule could bring a stop to the fighting and the hope for an end to corruption. "I would give everything for the Taleban," said 72-year-old Maky as she prepared cotton fibre in her hardened hands with a group of other women in Dashtan, a remote farming settlement in northern Balkh province. "Now there is no sound of shooting," she told AFP. "The war is over and we are happy with the Taleban."

'No infidels'

Desperately poor, the villagers are preparing for winter by drying animal dung to use as fuel. A bitter breeze whips up dust in the central cemetery, where the graves of Taleban fighters are now decorated with colorful trinkets and flags. In one of the well-tended plots lies the son of 82-year-old village elder Hajifat Khan, who celebrated the Islamists' victory. "The men and women of this village are Taleban supporters, young and old," he said, cross-legged in a neighbor's home.

"Now I'm satisfied. Now there are no infidels," he told AFP, adding that he had been beaten by a local pro-government militia just before the takeover. He said Dashtan - about 30 kilometers north of

Balkh town - used to be a thriving community with more than 60 families. After many fled the fighting and poverty, now only a handful of families remain among the eroded foundations, collapsed domed roofs and empty dwellings.

Caught in crossfire

A US-led invasion ousted the brutal, repressive Taleban regime in 2001, after which two decades of military intervention by NATO forces followed. A democratic government was restored, women were once again allowed to work and study, and a vocal civil society was rebuilt. But corruption and vote-rigging allegations plagued government institutions, justice was slow and ineffective, and foreign troops were tainted by accusations of colluding with warlords, abusing Afghans and disrespecting local customs. Thousands of civilians were killed or injured each year in attacks by Taleban insurgents and air strikes by US-led forces, with progress largely limited to cities as the worst of the war raged in rural areas.

Mohammad Nasir earns 200 to 300 Afghani (two to three US dollars) a day at a cotton field on the outskirts of his town of Balkh, yards from the 9th-century Noh Gonbad Mosque, believed to be Afghanistan's earliest Islamic building. He weighs the white crop from a scale hanging on a tree, before stuffing it into huge orange bags, ready for collection. Nasir said he did not support either side in the conflict that raged through most of his life.

"I was against both of them because I wanted peace," the 24-year-old from nearby Zawlakai village told AFP. "I didn't want to fight." At another plantation nearby, 26-year-old Farima is among dozens of women and children harvesting cotton in the sunshine, wrapped up



DASHTAN: An Afghan boy walks through the Dashtan village of Balkh province. — AFP

warmly against the wind. During the war, she avoided leaving her home, afraid of being injured. With the cotton-picking season ending, she is now working on the land each day with her daughters Asma, 10, and Husna, 9, and son Bartula, aged just three. The pickers in the fields in Dawlatabad district are paid about 10 Afghani (11 cents of a US dollar) per kilogram, each making 200 to 300 Afghani. Wearing pink rubber gloves to protect her hands from the sharp bolls of the cotton plants, Farima told AFP it was hard work. "But what else can I do?" she said. For her, life since the Taleban takeover remains unstable and exhausting. While the end of the conflict is a relief, hardship and insecurity endure. "What change has come? We are still hungry and there are no jobs," she says.

A looming economic disaster means the Taleban's window for holding on to loyalty may be short. Essentials like cooking oil, rice and tomato paste now cost a lot more after the national currency, the Afghani, depreciated and the country's reserves were frozen abroad. Afghanistan is now home to one of the world's worst humanitarian crises, with more than half of Afghans expected to

suffer "acute food insecurity" this winter, as a severe drought devastates the country.

In neighboring Samangan province, where 93 percent of the 440,000-strong population live in the countryside, Noor Mohammad Sedaqat grows onions, carrots, okra, tomatoes and pumpkins. In the months before the takeover, he was caught in the crossfire of heavy fighting between government forces to the west and the Taleban to the east. On one occasion a group of farmers was mistaken for Taleban by a local militia, and narrowly avoided being killed, he said.

Sedaqat's situation on the frontline meant he dared not show allegiance to either the Taleban or the government. "If we went to one side, the other side would beat us, and vice versa," he said. The 28-year-old father of nine, who works a plot of land in Yakatut village, about 20 kilometers from the provincial capital Aybak, says the new government has cut crime and corruption. But his earnings are plummeting. He hitches a ride to Aybak every one to two weeks to sell his produce at the bazaar, and hopes to make 6,000 to 7,000 Afghani per trip. — AFP

Satellites spot US warship mock-ups

WASHINGTON: China has built what appear to be full-scale outlines of American warships including an aircraft carrier, satellite imagery showed, possible targets to practice striking some of the most potent US weapons deployed in the Pacific. The US Navy's carrier battle groups-centered around massive aircraft carriers-are among the most powerful weapons in the American arsenal. One is deployed with the 7th Fleet in the Pacific, watching over major flashpoint areas such as Taiwan and the South China Sea. China has been developing anti-ship missiles for years, including ones capable of taking out aircraft carriers.

In satellite images captured last month by Maxar Technologies and sent to AFP on Sunday, huge outlines of American naval vessels were seen in the Taklamakan Desert in China's western Xinjiang region. They included at least one shaped like an aircraft carrier, and another in the form of a destroyer. One target was seen mounted on a rail transportation system. The full-scale structures included flat outlines as well as more sophisticated ones with what appeared to be instrumentation poles, according to the US Naval Institute.

"Analysis of historical satellite images shows that the carrier target structure was first built between March and April of 2019," the USNI report said. "It underwent several rebuilds and was then substantially dismantled in December 2019. The site came back to life in late September of this year and the structure was substan-



RUOQIANG: This handout satellite image shows a rail terminus and a target storage building in Ruoqi county in the Taklamakan Desert, China's western Xinjiang region. — AFP

tially complete by early October." The USNI cited intelligence firm AllSource Analysis as saying the area has been used for testing ballistic missiles in the past. When asked about the images, Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said yesterday that he was "not aware of the situation".

'Unmistakable message'

Beijing is currently on a major arms modernization drive, according to a Pentagon report released last week on the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA), with many weapons designed to help neutralize the most important American warships in the event of a

regional conflict. These include the DF-21D missile, which has a range of more than 930 miles, the Pentagon said. It provides "the capability to conduct long-range precision strikes against ships, including aircraft carriers, out to the Western Pacific from mainland China," the report added. The Chinese military has deployed these missiles in exercises, in what US Navy Admiral Philip Davidson has described as "an unmistakable message to regional and global audiences". "Their employment during a large-scale PLA exercise demonstrates the PLA's focus on countering any potential third-party intervention during a regional crisis," he told the US Senate in March this year. — AFP

News in brief

Singapore halts execution

SINGAPORE: A Singapore court put the execution of a Malaysian man in a drug trafficking case on hold yesterday after a last-ditch legal challenge, his lawyer said, following criticism from campaigners who say he is mentally disabled. Nagaenthran K Dharmalingam was arrested in 2009 for carrying 43 grams - around three tablespoons - of heroin into the city-state, which has some of the world's toughest anti-drugs laws. He was sentenced to death the following year and was due to be hanged on Wednesday after losing several appeals, despite supporters' claims his intellectual disability means he can't make rational decisions. But yesterday the Singapore High Court agreed to postpone the execution pending a new appeal from his lawyers, who are arguing that the hanging would be unconstitutional. — AFP

Nepal recovers 3 bodies

KATHMANDU: The bodies of three French climbers who disappeared in a remote corner of the Himalayas were recovered yesterday close to where they went missing last month, police in Nepal said. The group were attempting to scale Mingbo Eiger, a 6,000-metre peak near Mount Everest, and were last heard from via satellite phone at their camp on October 26. Bad weather hampered efforts to find the men and the rescue team said last week that they could have been buried under a depth of snow the size of a five-floor building. Rishi Raj Dhakal, an inspector at the Solukhumbu district police office, told AFP the bodies were transported by helicopter to the small town of Lukla, which sits close to the route up to Everest. "The bodies will now be sent to Kathmandu for post-mortem," he added. — AFP

Floods kill 9 in Sri Lanka

COLOMBO: Nine people are dead and two others missing after floods in Sri Lanka and parts of southern India caused by more than a week of pounding rains. Nearly half of Sri Lanka's 25 districts have been hit by the deluge, with the worst affected areas in and around the island's tea-growing Central Highlands. "Five deaths and two disappearances were reported" across Sri Lanka since the rains began at the end of October, Pradeep Kodippili of the island's disaster management agency told AFP yesterday. More floods are likely in the coming days with downpours set to move to the country's northern coast around the city of Jaffna, the country's weather bureau warned. Four people have also died in "rain-related incidents" across India's Tamil Nadu state, local disaster management minister KKSSR Ramachandran said on Sunday. — AFP

Russia COVID shutdown ends

MOSCOW: Most of Russia yesterday ended a week-long paid holiday aimed at curbing the spread of the coronavirus, despite the country seeing thousands of new cases and more than 1,000 deaths per day. President Vladimir Putin ordered the paid holiday period from October 30 to November 7 in a bid to stem soaring infections and deaths exacerbated by a slow vaccination drive. Individual regions had the authority to extend the period but as of Monday only five had done so, including the western region of Bryansk and the northwestern region of Novgorod. A number of regions did however introduce or extend a requirement for proof of vaccination to visit restaurants, cafes and shopping centers. In the city of Veliky Novgorod where authorities extended the shutdown, some approved of the measure. "That's the right thing to do," Antonina Leontyeva, 75 said. — AFP

Business

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2021

‘Blizzard’ hits SoftBank with loss on sinking investments

China tech crackdown, other investment losses hit group’s Vision Fund portfolio

TOKYO: Japan’s SoftBank Group yesterday suffered its first quarterly net loss in 18 months as a China tech crackdown and other investment losses hit its Vision Fund portfolio. The telecoms firm-turned-investment giant also announced a share buyback worth one trillion yen (\$8.8 billion), reportedly under pressure from shareholders frustrated by its sinking stock price.

SoftBank Group has poured money into some of the tech world’s biggest names and hottest new ventures—including embattled Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba and ride-hailing firm Didi Chuxing-through its \$100-billion Vision Fund. But CEO Masayoshi Son’s strategy of targeting tech firms and start-ups in search of unicorns has been controversial and led to an earnings rollercoaster in recent years.

Son said the firm was “in the middle of a blizzard” as it recorded a net loss of 397.9 billion yen (\$3.5 billion) in July-September. It was hit particularly hard by a drop in the value of Alibaba, but also took a hit from slumps in other Chinese tech companies as well as South Korean e-commerce firm Coupang, with first-half net profit down more than 80 percent on-year. In total, SoftBank said its loss on investments during the quarter amounted to 1.66 trillion yen including those incurred by its Vision Fund operations.

“We’re not proud of that,” Son said of the first-half results. “Our most important indicator, the net asset value, has decreased by six trillion yen. Just in three months. This is a big deal.” Son said the

results could be boiled down to one key factor: “In one word, Alibaba,” he said.

Shares in Alibaba Group Holding, SoftBank’s largest single investment, fell more than 30 percent in the three months ended September, according to Bloomberg, as authorities in China embarked on a crackdown on tech firms as part of a drive to tighten their grip on the economy. SoftBank recorded a loss of 1.21 trillion yen from its stake in Coupang, and 321 billion yen for DiDi Global, parent of Didi Chuxing, which has also been in Beijing’s crosshairs. DiDi’s share price “is dropping under the influence of the Chinese government’s regulations. Most of the other Chinese shares we own are also tumbling”, Son said.

Buyback

After the April-June first quarter, Son said he would be taking a careful approach to investments in China, acknowledging “tough challenges”. “We want to be cautious,” he said in August. “New rules are being implemented, so until it gets settled we want to wait and see. In one year or two, it will be clearer.” SoftBank’s investments in volatile tech firms and start-ups have made for unpredictable earnings.

In 2019-20, it reported a record net loss of 961.6 billion yen as the start of the pandemic compounded woes caused by its investment in troubled office-sharing start-up WeWork. But it then reported Japan’s biggest-ever annual net profit in 2020-21, driven by tech-share rallies as people moved their



TOKYO: Pedestrians walk past a SoftBank mobile shop in Tokyo yesterday. —AFP

lives online during the coronavirus pandemic. As usual, SoftBank did not issue an annual forecast, but Son unveiled a share buyback intended over the course of a year, though he said it could take longer if funds were needed for investments or other reasons.

“With the current share prices, it’s a chance for shareholders to buy them... we believe we now have

capacity to buy back shares worth one trillion yen, while keeping balanced financial discipline,” he said.

The Financial Times last week reported “deep frustration” among SoftBank shareholders over the firm’s sinking stock price, saying Son was under pressure to announce the buyback during this quarter’s earnings. —AFP

Algerian farmer’s olive oil wins global recognition

AIN OUSSERA: Hakim Alileche left a successful career in graphic design and moved to the Algerian countryside to produce “magic potion” - organic olive oil that has won him international recognition. The 48-year-old says he chose the Ain Oussera plateau for its cheap land and water supply. His oil won first prize at the Dubai Olive Oil Competition in the Extra Virgin Early Harvest category in February 2021 and in May he won silver at the Japan Olive Oil Prize.

“These honors really reassured us because it means we were right,” he said. The farm of some 40 hectares has over 15,000 olive trees, and so far 9,000 have started producing. “I started planting them bit by bit from 2005. I like farming and I’ve been fond of olive trees since I was little,” he said. “In Algeria, it’s a sacred tree.” Producing organic olive oil “puts me right into this mood of respect and protection for the planet,” he said.

He has visited several other producing countries - Bosnia-Herzegovina, Greece, France and Italy to learn about production methods. “These trees have never had any chemical treatment and I will do everything to make it stay that way,” he said, clasping a goblet of oil freshly extracted from his modern Italian press. “It’s really food and medicine,” he said, taking a sip of the fragrant liquid before heading out to supervise workers harvesting olives in the orchard.



AIN OUSSERA: Algerian olive oil producer Hakim Alileche stands in his grove during harvest, in Ain Oussera in the Djelfa province, south of the Algerian capital. —AFP

‘Very high quality’

As with every year since entering into production, Alileche is picking his olives early, in a country where the harvest doesn’t start until mid-November. “An early harvest allows you to get all the benefits of the olives, all the natural antioxidants,” he said. The olives are scraped off the branches by hand to avoid damaging the trees, and fall on a tarpaulin on the ground to then be scooped into crates and hauled off to the press.

“Crushing them the same day avoids the olives oxidising,” Alileche said. Picked this early, the olives give a meager amount of oil - just

eight liters per 100 kilograms. That compares to 18 liters for fully mature fruits. “Our oil is a very high quality that we want to get certified in Europe” as organic, Alileche said.

He has labeled his oil Dabha, the name of both his mother and his wife. The production process “respects the entire ecological system: no pollution, no fertilizers”. The oil’s free acidity - a measure of quality whereby the lower the figure, the better the oil - is 0.16 percent, just a fifth of the 0.8 percent limit for Extra Virgin oil. “At the mill, we don’t touch the olives much,” he said. “We wash them, press them and finally bottle the oil.” —AFP

US could be ready for rate hike by end of 2022: Fed

WASHINGTON: The US economy may be ready for the Federal Reserve to raise its benchmark borrowing rate by the end of next year, the central bank’s Vice Chair Richard Clarida said yesterday. The comments were the clearest signal yet that the US central bank is preparing the way for further steps to contain inflation and normalize monetary policy after last week announcing it would begin cutting back its pandemic stimulus.

“While we are clearly a ways away from considering raising interest rates,” Clarida said he believes the “necessary conditions for raising the target range for the federal funds rate will have been met by year-end 2022.”

The Fed slashed the rate to zero in March 2020 to help contain the economic crisis caused by the pandemic and then began massive monthly bond purchases to keep credit flowing to businesses and households. Prices have risen as the economy recovered, caused by high demand, transportation bottlenecks and shortages of both components and workers, creating concerns that inflation will accelerate and the Fed would have to hike rates more aggressively next year. In his speech to the Brookings Institution, Clarida said he did not expect current supply chain snarls to last or put persistent pressure on inflation or wages. He acknowledged upside risks to inflation and said the disruptions have been “substantial,” but the “imbalances are likely to dissipate over time as the labor market and global supply chains eventually adjust and, importantly, do so without putting persistent upward pressure on price inflation and wage gains.” —AFP

Egypt money pooling apps thriving

CAIRO: Cash-strapped Egyptians fearful of banks have long relied on a “gameya” to access money in time of need, but now tech startups are cashing in on the age-old money-pooling association. Navigating an app with strangers is “easier and safer” than the traditional face-to-face practice, said one user, Menna Shaarawi, 31.

“I receive the money in my bank account without any delays and I don’t have to chase after people to get what’s owed to me. It’s perfect really,” the marketing manager told AFP about her use of the ElGameya (association in Arabic) app, which is quickly rising in popularity. Dina Rabie, an economist and lecturer at the British University in Egypt, explained that the gameya is “more of a social norm” in the country where the practice dates back to at least the turn of the 20th century.

The cooperative system that allows people to save and borrow money is popular in parts of the world, including Africa and Latin America. Participants put an equal amount each month in a pot and take turns to collect the sum that has accumulated. On average, a gameya lasts between five and 20 months and is not limited to a particular economic class, Rabie said.

Almost 30 percent of Egypt’s 102-million-strong population lives below the poverty line, according



CAIRO, Egypt: A view of the company offices of “Al-Gameya”, a tech startup that runs an app to facilitate for strangers to create an informal money-pooling association to provide access for money in time of need, points a screen showing to the application’s online portal at the company offices, in Cairo. — AFP

to state figures. Less than a third of Egyptians have bank accounts, a 2017 World Bank report said. The gameya is often formed among relatives or co-workers facing financial hardships. Operating outside the confines of a formal banking sector, it works particularly well for young couples saving up for a wedding or for a health emergency that requires hefty fees. In a country where 63.4 percent of workers earn their income from the informal economy, according to the World Bank’s 2018 figures, such avenues often prove essential.

Ahmed Mahmoud, 28, who founded the ElGameya app in 2019, said: “In three simple steps

we get rid of logistical hassles” that come with the old way of doing things. Users need to register, upload their supporting documents and sign a contract to start using the app, he said. Registration requires a national identity card rather than a credit card or other proof of finances, while contributions can be made via cash or electronically with a mobile phone.

Ahmed Wadi, creator of the popular MoneyFellows app, agrees that online transactions are easy. His app has around 173,000 users who contribute between 500 pounds (\$30) to tens of thousands monthly. One user, Ashraf Salah from the

southern city of Qena, said he was “sceptical” at first. “But after I registered, I ended up raising money to renovate my home.”

Salah said he likes the anonymity the app provides, unlike the “embarrassing” traditional method where everyone knows how much you put in the pot. Mahmoud, of ElGameya, maintains that his app contributes to “financial inclusion”, an initiative espoused by the authorities to integrate the finances of Egyptians into the formal economy.

The Central Bank of Egypt is cooperating with both apps to incorporate the savings of Egyptians, shifting them from the shadow economy to a more formalized setting. MoneyFellows succeeded in raising \$4 million last year from venture capital firms to expand its digital footprint. They attribute this to their “solid evaluation system” where users get higher credit ratings if they can provide more proof of their ability to pay funds.

In Cairo’s competitive and well-established startup ecosystem, both ElGameya and MoneyFellows say they have boosted their user bases by around 700 percent and 300 percent respectively in the last year. Mahmoud said that the coronavirus pandemic actually helped, rather than hindered, the expansion. His app has 30,000 clients, including 30 percent from rural and economically marginalized Upper Egypt in the country’s south.

ElGameya has mostly attracted people “who want to get married or pay for private schools”, Mahmoud said. A study by the American University in Cairo found that 43 percent of Egyptians who have savings are part of money-pooling clubs. But some, like Ragab Farghaly, 50, question the need for an app, where fees are charged. —AFP

Business

AUB awarded 'Best Islamic Bank in Kuwait, 2021' by Asiamoney

Award in recognition of bank's leadership and its role in supporting economic growth

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank (AUB) has been awarded the "Best Islamic Bank in Kuwait, 2021" by Asiamoney, one of Euromoney prestigious publications, in recognition of the bank's leadership and its role in supporting economic growth while prioritizing the safety of customers and employees, using Technology to automate key process and vastly reduce times for transactions, as well as the bank's success in adapting to the new era of social distancing imposed by COVID-19 pandemic, in addition to working closely with authorities to perfect fast, easy and secure digital know your customer options.

Asiamoney also recognized the accomplishment done by AUB, earlier this year, when the bank successfully completed the pricing and issuing of non-callable Mudarabah Sukuk to Additional Tier 1 (AT1) bonds of \$600 million to enhance the capital base. The total demand for sukuk exceeded \$1.8 billion, covering 3 times the targeted issue size, which is a clear indication of investors' confidence in the bank's solid performance and operations. The sukuk has been listed on Nasdaq



Jehad Saud Al-Humaidhi



Dubai, the region's international financial exchange, which reflects the bank's strong position as a leading Islamic financial institution in the region as a whole. Also the bank's selection of the appropriate timing, size and terms of issue and the target markets are the success drivers of this issue, after hiring Citigroup, HSBC Bank, Standard Chartered Bank as global coordinators in

addition to their role with KFH Capital, KAMCO Invest, Abu Dhabi Islamic Bank and Kuwait International Bank as Joint Dealer Managers. "It is worth mentioning" Asiamoney's award decisions were made by a team of senior journalists after receiving detailed submissions from market participants and in conjunction with research in the banking and capital market by editorial committee. Asiamoney's senior editors also visited each country or territory to meet leading bankers and gather client and competitor feedback.

On this occasion, Jehad Saud Al-Humaidhi, AUB's Chief Executive Officer (CEO) said, "We are honored to receive this prestigious award from the renowned Asiamoney magazine, which is a recognition of the notable efforts made by the Bank over the past years to maintain its leadership position and to enhance its standing in the Islamic banking market, as well as its success in providing innovative standard banking products and solutions that meet the sector growing needs, and able to fulfill our obligations towards our customers."

Al-Humaidhi added, "AUB management decision to

convert the bank's transactions to be aligned with Islamic principles was the turning point in the bank's success-filled journey, which came in line with a strategic strategy and vision of the bank's shareholders to move steadily towards operating as an Islamic bank as of Thursday, April 1, 2010, and since this date, the bank has been able to achieve incessant successes despite the great competition that has escalated in recent years in the Islamic banking sector. Al-Humaidhi stressed that AUB commitment to sustainability, application of Islamic Sharia principles, excellence of its banking services through digital transformation, and its ability to overcome the challenges posed by COVID-19 pandemic confirms its breakthrough in providing a model of success and progress that we should be proud of. Al-Humaidhi expressed her confidence in AUB ability to pursue its journey of innovation and utilization of the latest technology developments in the banking sector, in a way that enhances its operational efficiency and strengthens the bank position as one of the leading banks in Kuwait.

ABCK-AmCham Kuwait hosts an Inter-Council speed networking event

KUWAIT: The American Business Council (ABCK)-AmCham Kuwait, Australian Business Group Kuwait, British Business Forum Kuwait, Canadian Business Council-Kuwait, French Business Council-Kuwait, German Business Council-Kuwait, Kuwait India Business Council, Lebanese Business Council-Kuwait, Portuguese Business Council-Kuwait and Spanish Business Council - Kuwait, held their second Inter-Council networking event for 2021, to foster new relationships among member companies throughout the network of Chambers and Councils in the State of Kuwait. The event also welcomed the newly formed Portuguese business Council and Spanish Business Council-Kuwait.

The Inter-Council Networking event facilitated fast-moving networking sessions for business owners and executives. Attendees were grouped together in rooms with a few others, and each had the opportunity to interact with

several professionals in Kuwait as they shared their own business profiles.

Over 1,000 member companies and millions of dollars in foreign investment in Kuwait are represented by the Councils/Forums and Chambers. They are the country's go-to groups for anything trade-related. The Councils and Chambers are dedicated to supporting the development of commercial relations between Kuwait and their representative countries as partners for their respective countries, but they also focus heavily on networking Kuwait's business community through unique events and programs year-round.

ABCK-AmCham Kuwait: Is a non-profit organization operating since 1985 and is composed of 500 corporations, small and medium sized companies, and prominent business leaders and entrepreneurs, both American and Kuwaiti. ABCK-AmCham Kuwait has acted as an advocate for American interest in the state of Kuwait.



GLASGOW: An inflatable 'Big Baby', unveiled by the protest group 'Population Matters' to draw attention to increasing population numbers is pictured in Glasgow yesterday during the COP26 UN Climate Change Conference. —AFP

Climate on track to devastate world's poorest economies

GLASGOW: The 65 most vulnerable nations will see GDP drop 20 percent on average by 2050 and 64 percent by 2100 if the world heats up 2.9 degrees Celsius, according to a report released yesterday at the COP26 climate talks in Glasgow. Even if global temperature rises are capped at 1.5C, in keeping with the most ambitious Paris Agreement goal, the same countries would take a GDP hit of 13 percent by 2050 and 33 percent by the end of the century, the study commissioned by Christian Aid said.

To date, Earth's average surface temperature has risen 1.1C compared to late 19th-century levels.

The findings from Christian Aid show that more than a third of the world's nations urgently need help to build up resilience if their economies are to withstand the onslaught of heatwaves, drought, floods and storms made more intense and deadly by global warming. "The ability of countries in the Global South to sustainably develop is seriously jeopardized," said lead author Marina Andrijevic from Humboldt University in Berlin.

"Policy choices that we make right now are crucial for preventing further damage." Eight of the top 10 most affected countries are in Africa, with two in South America. All 10 face GDP damage of more than 70 percent by 2100 under our current climate policy trajectory, and 40 percent even if global warming is capped at 1.5C. The country facing the worst GDP loss is Sudan, which in September was left reeling from heavy rains and flash floods affecting more than 300,000 people.

The country would see a GDP reduction of 32 percent by 2050, and 84 percent by 2100 compared with if there was no climate change. The countries covered by the report make up two key negotiating blocs at the UN climate talks, which run through Friday: the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS). Small island states are especially vulnerable to storm surges made worse by rising seas.

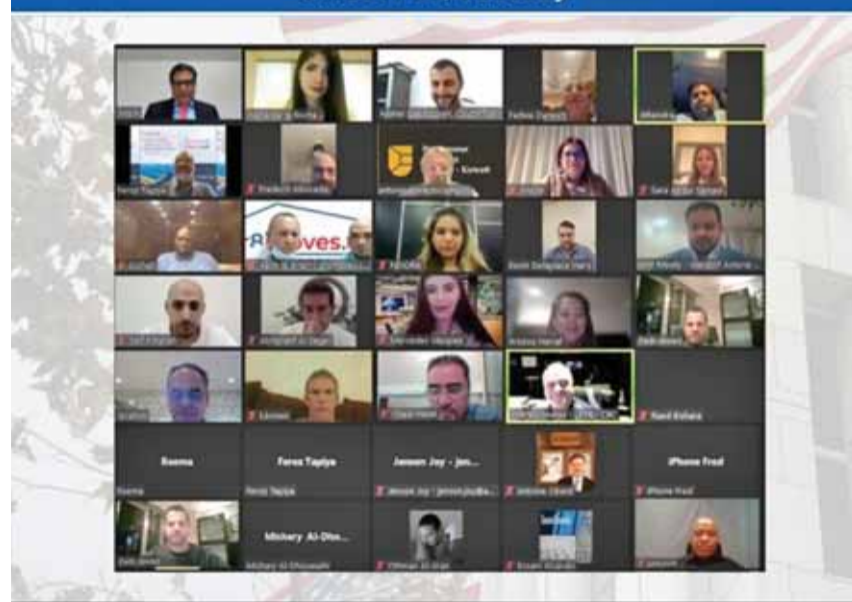
The study does not take into account adaptation measures, which could potentially alleviate some of the damage. To date, rich governments have committed only modest sums to help poor countries adapt to climate impacts.

"Africa has the done the least to cause climate change yet this report shows it will face the most severe consequences. That is deeply unjust," said Mohamed Adow, director of Nairobi-based climate and energy think tank Power Shift Africa. —AFP



Virtual Inter-Council Speed Networking Event

October 26, Tuesday



17m Nigerians face food insecurity

KUWAIT: Nearly 17 million Nigerians are projected to be either at crisis or emergency levels of food insecurity next year, according to a major report. The investigation, the bi-annual Cadre Harmonize framework, is led by Nigeria's Ministry of Agriculture with technical and financial support from the United Nations and NGOs.

Between October and December this year, more than 12.1 million Nigerians in 21 states were either at crisis or emergency levels of food insecurity, the report published on Friday stated. That number is projected to increase to 16.8 million between June and August next year, it added.

The projected findings enable decision makers to better identify areas and population at risk of food insecurity and malnutrition, according to the UN's

Food and Agriculture Organization. This year, the area with the highest number facing food insecurity — 144,914 people at emergency or crisis levels — was Borno state, in the northeast, where jihadists have waged a 12-year-long insurgency. Military operations are ongoing in the region, but violence continues. More than two million people have been displaced from their homes in the region, with many living in squalid camps where they depend on handouts.

Next year, the number of people experiencing emergency or crisis levels of food insecurity in Borno is projected to rise to 291,542 people. In addition to the northeast insurgency, Nigeria is also battling unrest in its northwest and central states, where criminal gangs terrorize communities.

The oil-dependent economy of Africa's most populous country was battered by the coronavirus pandemic. Slipping into its second recession in five years last year, Nigeria's economy has bounced back to growth in recent months.

But inflation, especially food prices, remains high, plunging Nigerians further into poverty. —AFP

Crypto market value tops \$3tn for first time

LONDON: The world cryptocurrency market is worth more than \$3 trillion for the first time, according to calculations yesterday, as mainstream investors increasingly jump on board.

The value has reached \$3,007 trillion (2.6 trillion euros), said CoinGecko, which tracks prices of more than 10,000 cryptocurrencies. "The crypto market is growing at a mind-blowing speed," noted SwissQuote analyst Ipek Ozkardeskaya. "A part of it is speculation of course, but a part of it is real," she told AFP. "Crypto is now making its way to traditional finance and everyone is on board." Bitcoin, the world's biggest cryptocurrency, hit a record-high \$66,000 last month after taking another step towards mainstream status. It surged back above \$66,000 yesterday close to its all-time peak after a five percent jump.

Ethereum, the second biggest cryptocurrency by market value, hit a record high \$4,768 yesterday. A bitcoin futures exchange-traded fund, a type of financial instrument, launched on the New York Stock Exchange in October. The ETF is a more accessible vehicle that puts bitcoin within the grasp of even more investors. Some investors see cryptocurrencies as a hedge against inflation, which is surging worldwide as economies reopen after pandemic lockdowns.

"Bitcoin is bouncing higher again, close to all-time highs," Hargreaves Lansdown market analyst Susannah Streeter said yesterday. "The recent surge in the crypto... partly seems to have been caused by investors piling in, seeing it as a hedge against inflation," Streeter added.

No more than 21 million bitcoin can be created, helping its price to trade way above its rivals, but trading of cryptocurrencies in general has shown to be extremely volatile with massive price swings a common occurrence. —AFP



Stock markets wobble on inflation fears

LONDON: World stock markets wobbled yesterday as investors balanced bright US jobs data against stubborn inflation concerns. Nearing midday, London stocks turned flat while Frankfurt declined and Paris bobbed higher after a mixed showing in Asia.

The dollar diverged as dealers awaited vital US consumer price inflation data due tomorrow. Bitcoin surged above \$66,000 to near its record peak on feverish demand, as the combined value of all cryptocurrencies topped \$3 trillion, according to data provider CoinGecko. Oil rallied further after OPEC and other major producers refused to heed US calls last week to ramp up output to meet a surge in demand.

"European (stock) markets have kicked off the week on a somewhat uninspiring note, with indices largely trading water off the back of a volatile week just gone," said IG analyst Joshua Mahony. Markets had surged Friday on blockbuster US job creation data, which

showed recovery was well underway in the world's top economy. Wall Street's three main indexes clocked up records last week after figures showed more than half a million new US jobs were created last month, with hiring rebounding as new infections fall across the country. Figures for the previous two months were also revised up. However, optimism continues to be held back by worries about inflation, which has surged this year owing to a pick-up in demand, a spike in energy prices and supply chain snarls-forcing central banks around the world to start rowing back their massive pandemic-era support measures.

Adding to inflation expectations is Joe Biden's \$1.2 trillion infrastructure bill that finally passed through Congress on Friday, giving the president a much-needed boost in his plan to push through vast spending measures to support the economy. However, another proposal to stomp up another \$1.9 trillion for social and environmental programs continues to languish.

The US jobs report was followed Sunday by China saying exports had soared by a better-than-expected 27.1 percent in October as factories kept goods flowing out despite power outages in recent months caused by emission reduction targets, the surging price of coal and supply problems. —AFP

Business

Mohamed Naser Al-Sayer & Sons announces test drive a hybrid

Be a part of the change, be a part of hybrid revolution

KUWAIT: Celebrating a spectacular milestone of 17 million units of electrified vehicles Mohamed Naser Al-Sayer & Sons has launched an exclusive test drive campaign, for its promising range of Toyota Hybrid Electric vehicles across all showrooms in Kuwait.

Over the years Toyota has successfully launched a variety of HEVs, leading the way to a steady growth in the adoption of its environmentally friendly vehicles. The company's original vision has allowed Toyota to be the leader in meeting increasingly stringent emissions regulations around the world. Hybrid is the practical way towards green motoring, and it delivers a more relaxed and rewarding drive than a conventional car.

We are hybrid

According to Martin Aherne Business Director Toyota Kuwait "Toyota Hybrid Electric cars act like normal petrol cars, you drive them like normal cars, and you service them like normal cars, and you refuel them like normal cars. However, they have the added advantage of a 2nd power source. This 2nd power source is self-charging with NO plug-in. This 2nd power source makes them quieter and more responsive; the performance must be experienced to be believed. They are also much more fuel efficient which is better for the environment. The world is changing, and these cars are built for a better world."

Total cumulative sales of electrified vehicles have crossed 17 million units during the period 1997-February 2021. Total accumulative reductions in CO2 emissions as a result of electrified vehicles is around 140 million tons. (1997-2020).

Bader Faisal Al-Sayer Head of Marketing Toyota Kuwait said "With Toyota Hybrid I can see today future connectivity, progressive technology, unique style and performance with the highest ever fuel efficiency. A main advantage of this totally different and exciting experience includes technology that can make a great connection with



the younger generation."

Toyota Highlander SUV

7-seater Highlander combines all the familiar Toyota SUV attributes of comfort, drivability and safety with low emissions, greater fuel efficiency, Intelligent All-Wheel Drive (AWD) and space on demand. Highlander HEV can be driven entirely on electrical power with zero-



Toyota electrified vehicle global sales cross 17 million units

fuel consumption and tailpipe emissions, or by combining the power generated from the petrol engine and two electric motors, depending on the vehicle's speed and driver behavior.

Highlander's sophisticated body is based on the brand-new Toyota New Global Architecture (TNGA-K) vehicle platform. This robust foundation is com-

plemented by a lightweight high rigidity bodyshell with a low center of gravity, which provides the SUV with exceptionally nimble handling and comfortable highway cruising characteristics.

Stunning all-new C-HR Crossover - Turn Heads

C-HR HEV comes with all the benefits expected of the world's most proven and advanced hybrid-electric technology, yet drives like any other conventional car, offering remarkable fuel efficiency at 23.9 km/L with zero compromise on performance. It is powered by a petrol engine that delivers 97 hp and a peak torque of 142 Nm, working in tandem with an electric motor that churns out 71 hp of power and 163 Nm of torque. The hybrid-electric powertrain is equipped with a small, light, and powerful lithium-ion battery pack that can efficiently absorb and deliver current, enhancing the electric motive force delivery.

Corolla cross SUV - Soaks up adventure not fuel

Corolla Cross thrilling drive personality is brought to life by a new electrified hybrid system that combines two power sources. Its 1.8-liter Atkinson-cycle



petrol engine produces 97 hp and a peak torque of 142 Nm, working in tandem with two electric motors that generate 71 hp and 163 Nm of torque. The system is mated to an Electrically Controlled Continuously Variable Transmission (E-CVT) that contributes to an outstanding fuel consumption value of 23.7km/L. Drivers can also choose between ECO, Power, and Normal driving modes to suit

their driving styles. In addition, a separately-switchable EV Mode can be combined with any of these three driving modes, for a silent and emission-free driving at low speeds and for short distances. In Kuwait since launching the Prius HEV model in February 2016, Mohamed Naser Al-Sayer & Sons current hybrid electric model line-up also features Rav4, Camry, and Corolla.

ABK partners with Behbehani Motors on Skoda vehicles

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK), in partnership with Skoda Kuwait, Behbehani Motors Company, is presenting its customers with exclusive financial benefits on a limited quantity of Skoda vehicles. Johair Marafi, ABK's Acting General Manager - Retail Banking said: "We are excited to be entering this partnership with Behbehani Motors Company. At ABK, we take pride in striving to enhance our clients' banking experience as well providing the ideal finance solutions in order for them to acquire their vehicle of choice."

This offer which includes a discount of up to KD 150 presented by Skoda Kuwait, Behbehani Motors Company will be available until quantities are depleted, and is applicable for current and new clients with both salary and non-salary transfers at ABK.



Johair Marafi

Burgan Bank reveals winner of Al-Thuraya salary account draw

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank, announced yesterday Mohammad Melbes Al-Enezi as the lucky winner of the draw prize of Al-Thuraya Salary Account monthly draw.

The draw rewards new and existing customers who transfer their salary to Burgan Bank by offering them a chance to win KD 10,000 every month. Each account holder has one chance to enter the draw. The Al-Thuraya account holders have the option to hold money in Kuwaiti dinar and other major currencies and can access account-related services such as standing orders, loans and credit cards, and benefit from the discounts and offers throughout the year. Customers wishing to open the Al-Thuraya account can do so by simply visiting the nearest Burgan Bank branch and obtain all the necessary details.

Huawei shares how to tackle climate change with technology innovation at COP26

KUWAIT: Dr Fang Liangzhou, vice president and CMO of Huawei Digital Power, recently spoke at COP26. At the session "System Change and Climate Innovation in the Technology Industry" hosted by the UNFCCC Global Innovation Hub, Fang virtually delivered a keynote address on "Building a Low-Carbon Smart Society." Fang described how Huawei Digital Power integrates digital and power electronics technologies to help industries save energy and reduce emissions from both power generation and consumption. Digitalization of power can cut waste in energy consumption, sharply boost power generation from renewables, and make transportation and cities green. Fang called for joint efforts to build a low carbon smart society together.

Fang said, "Carbon neutrality has become a shared mission of the world. Technology innovation will play a central role in tackling climate change and achieving carbon reduction goals. Huawei Digital Power integrates digital and power electronics technologies, develops clean power, and enables energy digitalization to drive energy revolution for a better, greener future. We focus on converging and innovating on technologies to accelerate the digitalization of energy and enable various industries to upgrade. We aim to accelerate clean power generation, build green transportation, sites, and data centers, and work with industry partners to build a low-carbon smart society."

According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), the main sources of global carbon emissions are electricity, industry, and transportation. The electricity and transportation sectors account for 40 percent and 21 percent of carbon emissions respectively. The ICT sector consumes 4 percent of global electricity. To achieve carbon neutrality, low-carbon electricity production and electric energy consumption are a must. Huawei Digital Power works with partners to continuously innovate on energy production and consumption to achieve green and low-carbon outcomes:

- In smart PV, Huawei develops a clean power system that focuses on renewable energy technologies such as wind, solar, and energy storage. In the Middle East, Huawei is helping Saudi Arabia's Red Sea Energy Storage Project supply power to the entire city. This project will use the 400 MW PV + 1.3 GWh energy storage system, going to meet the energy requirements of millions of people in the future. Once the project is rolled out, the city will be the first in the world to be powered with 100 percent clean energy of PV and storage.

- In energy digitalization, Huawei leverages a combination of digital and power electronics technologies to reduce consumption during energy conversion, storage, and use, thereby improving energy efficiency. Huawei, together with China Southern Power Grid, uses AI technologies to automatically identify typical



Dr Fang Liangzhou, vice president and CMO of Huawei Digital Power, speaking at COP26

risky scenarios and defects on transmission lines. Thanks to the new preventive maintenance approach based on intelligent analysis and manual judgment, the time for completing onsite work is shortened from 20 days to 2 hours, improving the efficiency by 80 times.

- In site power facility, Huawei uses cabinets instead of rooms and poles instead of cabinets to simplify sites, and have launched a series of off-grid fuel-removal power supply solutions to help carriers accelerate network carbon neutrality and bridge the energy divide. For example, the carrier in Zhejiang, China used Huawei Site Power high-density eMIMO technology to replace six cabinets with one cabinet, reducing the footprint from 5 m² to 1 m² and improving the site energy efficiency from 85 percent to 96 percent. They also adopted Huawei's green power solution where the unique iPV technology helps generate 20 percent more electricity, enabling PV to become the main power supply for green ICT networks and reducing carbon emissions by 8 tons per site each year.

- In data center facility, prefabrication, modularization, and intelligent technologies are used to build simplified, green, intelligent, and secure next-generation data centers. For example, Huawei's prefabricated modular data center solution helped Wuhan quickly build an AI computing center. The center was built in 120 days and put into use in 180 days, shortening the rollout time by more than 50 percent. In addition, AI energy conservation technology is adopted to decrease the PUE to 1.25, which represents a saving of more than 3.4 million kWh of electricity each year. In addition, carbon dioxide emissions can be reduced by approximately 42,000 tons over the course of the lifecycle.

- In mPower, Huawei provides power domain solutions and charging infrastructure to accelerate the process of transportation electrification. For example, Huawei's DriveONE powertrain system helped SERES build the world's first mass-produced, high-performance electric coupe SUV with a cruising range of more than 1000 km, achieving 0-50 km/h acceleration in 1.99 seconds.

Huawei adheres to the green pledge of "Tech for a Better Planet" and has continued to invest in reducing carbon emissions, promoting renewable energy, contributing to a circular economy, and conserving nature with technology. As of September 30, 2021, Huawei Digital Power has helped customers generate 443.5 billion kWh of green power, save 13.6 billion kWh of electricity, and reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 210 million tons, which was equivalent to planting 290 million trees.

CBK bonds and related Tawarruq

KUWAIT: The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) announced the most recent issues of CBK bonds and related Tawarruq at a total value of KD 160 million for six months with a rate of return at 1.250 percent.

Australia vows to sell coal 'for decades'

SYDNEY: Australia said yesterday it will sell coal for "decades into the future" after spurning a pact to phase out the polluting fossil fuel to halt catastrophic climate change. More than 40 countries pledged to eliminate coal use within decades during the COP26 UN climate summit in Glasgow, which aims to cap the warming of Earth since the Industrial Revolution to between 1.5 and 2.0 degrees Celsius.

Australia, along with some other major coal users such as China and the United States, did not sign up. "We have said very clearly we are not closing coal mines and we are not closing coal-fired power stations," Australian Minister for Resources Keith Pitt told national broadcaster ABC. Defending Australia's decision, Pitt said Australia had some of the world's highest quality coal.

"And that is why we will continue to have markets for decades into the future. And if they're buying... well, we are selling." Demand for coal is expected to rise until 2030, the minister claimed. "If we aren't to win that market, somebody else will," Pitt added. "I would much rather it be Australia's high-quality product, delivering Australian jobs and building Australia's economy than coming from Indonesia or Russia or elsewhere." —AFP



SYDNEY: People wear caricatures of Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison (left) and Deputy Prime Minister Barnaby Joyce (right) during a rally as part of a global day of action on climate change in Sydney as world leaders attend the COP26 UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow. — AFP



Marino Maganto speaks during the inauguration.— Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



IKEA: Your new neighbor in the city

Al-Homaizi opens a new and unique concept of IKEA in the Assima Mall, Kuwait City

KUWAIT: After 37 years with only one store in Kuwait, IKEA opens the third customer meeting point, the New IKEA Shop in the heart of the city, in the Assima Mall. IKEA opens this shop with the purpose of bringing the IKEA experience to the heart of Kuwait City and to be closer to more people in Kuwait, to surprise, excite and inspire them with a unique and unforgettable experience.

and home visits to understand deeply what are the needs and dreams of the people in Kuwait. Whatever their background, whatever their needs, whatever their lifestyle, whatever their wallet and whatever challenges they have to overcome in their everyday lives at home, IKEA Shop at the Assima Mall is there for them and their whole family.”

The visitors to the Assima Mall IKEA

continue reinforcing the concept on all our customer meeting points,” highlighted Maganto.

To ensure we deliver the best experience, we have heavily invested in their training which means that they will be able to assist you on any need, any request, no matter what area of the home. If you want to change your children’s rooms or you want to do a full kitchen, so they will be able to assist you in the whole journey,” Maganto continued.

So, one can sit back, relax, let the IKEA team of Home Furnishing experts take care of the rest, while one enjoys IKEA Coffee and the freshly baked pastries of the IKEA bakery in the first IKEA Cafe in Kuwait. You can have a taste of a wide selection of cold and hot beverages and delectable bread and pastries.

“With IKEA at the Assima Mall being the new neighbor in the city, we want to reach everyone and welcome them in a shop that is all about convenience. This will be the destination where people would want to visit to be inspired and enjoy shopping their IKEA favorites with their family. By offering inspiring and affordable solutions for all areas of the home that cater to the people’s needs and dreams -physically or digitally- and personalized services, we will secure a unique, affordable and rewarding customer experience.”

“IKEA is one of the most loved brands in Kuwait. IKEA is for everyone and this is why we want to be closer to more people and reach them wherever they



Marino Maganto, CEO, IKEA Al-Homaizi (Kuwait, Morocco and Jordan) answers a question during the interview. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

People are **IKEA's** most valuable assets

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: IKEA Al-Homaizi Limited opened its third branch in Kuwait at Assima Mall, the newest destination in the capital’s financial business district. The newly-opened branch is a testament of their commitment to offer their brand to customers even during the pandemic. In February 2020, at the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, IKEA opened its second branch, a planning studio at 360 Mall.

Speaking to Kuwait Times on the sidelines of the inaugural event yesterday, Marino Maganto, CEO, IKEA Al-Homaizi (Kuwait, Morocco and Jordan), said he is excited on the opening of IKEA’s third branch in Kuwait during this challenging period. “Kuwait is one of the most important markets for IKEA. You can judge this by the fact that we already have our third branch in Kuwait, this time in the busy district of Kuwait’s financial hub,” Maganto said.

“We want to be closer to the people who love our products, to the place where they live, in the area where they work and interact with each other. This is the best opportunity to bring IKEA closer to the hearts of our clients,” he said. Maganto revealed a fourth new IKEA store is being built south of Kuwait City, and once completed, will be the largest IKEA showroom in Kuwait.

Maganto takes pride in his company’s value-driven principle and how they were able to maintain their links with customers even during the pandemic. “We continue to invest in human resources as they are the most valuable assets of the company; I am very proud of them, and in fact the reason why we are growing rapidly amidst the pandemic is because of them. We can have a fantastic branch and beautiful installations, but without our customers we are nothing,” Maganto added.

Asked if they have experienced inconveniences staffing or recruiting people especially since many people (more than a quarter million) left Kuwait and some were forced to resign during the pandemic. “Honestly, we didn’t experience difficulties because we retained all our staff and take good care of them. In fact, we have hired more staff. These people who are serving our clients are trained; they prepared for this over the last one year. We want them to serve our customers

from A-Z, greeting and welcoming them and making them feel at home when there are at our store,” he said.

Maganto explained that even though the new outlet is located in a smaller area compared to The Avenues mall store, all items available in the bigger store are also available in this store. “We are in the most iconic and prime location, and we are proud of this. We managed to compress the big IKEA store into a smaller store, keeping the essence of IKEA so that shoppers are able to feel the same environment of our bigger branch,” he said. “Our staff will guide our shoppers and you will be provided with a tablet for a digital tour. You may not see some products physically but you can see them digitally.”

According to Maganto, IKEA is not just an office solution store, but also for family solutions. “You will see here a lot of family-oriented products. We believe in the power of family; this store will be a family hub for everyone to enjoy and shop,” he said. Despite the negative impact of the pandemic to all businesses across the globe, Maganto said IKEA managed to deliver their products and services to their valued customers.

“We think out of the box; we offer new services which we did not provide before the pandemic. We got closer to people like never before, even emotionally. We make sure that our people are well-guided, compensated and cared for. During the lockdown we had the solution for almost everything. During the pandemic, our delivery services increased seven-fold, while the waiting period decreased by five. Delivery was done in just a few hours compared to before the pandemic. Those are the changes we made over time to meet the demands of our growing number of customers,” he told Kuwait Times.

And since the pandemic is not over yet, IKEA assures the safety and well-being of everyone visiting their stores. “Our staff and management are 100 percent vaccinated! We want the safety of our customers. Wearing masks is our priority, and we can take our customers on a tour of our stores virtually. We also have IKEA on wheels for people who don’t want to visit our stores physically. We also have cash on delivery for the convenience of customers, and recycling of old IKEA products too,” Maganto added.



IKEA Assima was inaugurated yesterday (November 8) in Assima Mall by Marino Maganto, CEO of IKEA in Kuwait. During the opening ceremony Maganto mentioned: “Our vision is to create a better everyday life for everyone. That vision influences everything we do. Our aim is to reach and attract more and more people wherever they are and help them reach their dreams.”

“Today, we are transforming IKEA to better meet the needs of our customers, and we are excited to strengthen our presence in Kuwait and be where people work, live, shop and entertain. So, they can find us whenever and however they want,” said Maganto.

IKEA is very well established in Kuwait and has been in the market for almost 36 years. In February 2020, IKEA opened a planning studio in 360 Mall; and today marks another milestone in the history of IKEA Al-Homaizi Limited by opening a unique concept of IKEA shop in Kuwait. “This is a pioneer concept of IKEA Shop in the world, and we are super excited to bring this unique concept to Kuwait, to the heart of the city, to the Assima Mall,” Maganto continued.

IKEA Shop at the Assima Mall will be the home furnishing destination for everyone. For the people working and living in and around the city, for the people looking for a new place to spend the time with their friends or family, for the parents shopping and having a good time with their children, and for all those looking for beautiful ideas and home furnishing inspiration for their home or their office.

“We have created this IKEA Shop to deliver a new IKEA experience for everyone. We have listened to our customers’ feedback, conducted consumer research

will be able to shop all the IKEA range. More than 7,000 articles under one roof with the help of the IKEA co-workers and their digital tools. We have introduced the latest technology available today to display functions, benefits and quality in an interactive and exciting way, to make shopping easier and fun.

But this is not all, IKEA Shop at the Assima Mall also introduces the ultimate IKEA Design lounge. A beautiful and comfortable area where our experts will help you make your dreams come true.



Together they will design the room, the home or the office that you always dreamed off.

“We are also continuing in this shop with the figure of the ‘multi-functional co-worker’. Co-workers that will prioritize customer needs to facilitate your shopping and make it easy and seamless. Offering you all different choices and providing you with personalized services according to your preferences, and now at even lower prices. And all on your own terms. We started this concept of multifunctional coworker in IKEA 36 and customers are really happy so we will

are and however they want, to help them create a better everyday life by offering them the best IKEA experience and affordable solutions for everyone.”

“This is only the start of our ambitious expansion plan in Kuwait. We want to meet them with new and exciting customer meeting points in more areas. Stay tuned for more exciting news.”

“We are really excited to welcome everyone to IKEA at the Assima Mall,” Maganto concluded before cutting the ribbon. Welcome to IKEA at the Assima Mall: Your new neighbor in the city. Now open for everyone!



Lifestyle | Features



A painting by Pablo Picasso entitled 'Mousquetaire a la pipe II' is displayed at Christie's auction house in New York. — AFP photos



Art handlers hang Mark Rothko's 'No. 7', part of The Macklowe Collection.



An art handler adjusts Frida Kahlo's final "Bust" Self-Portrait "Diego y yo" (Diego and I) at Sotheby's.

New York's in-person art auctions return with world's most expensive collection

After more than a year, in-person auctions return to New York this week with the sale of the Macklowe collection—the world's most expensive to hit the market. At auction houses Christie's and Sotheby's, the message is the same: the art market is thriving. With sales starting November 15 estimated to bring in more than \$1 billion in a week, "this is our largest sale season... since 2015," a record year, said Brooke Lampley at Sotheby's.

"Throughout the pandemic, there was great demand from our buyers, who weren't experiencing the same level of supply as they were accustomed to," she told AFP. Experts say the pandemic has not negatively impacted the funds nor appetite of potential buyers, who are increasingly in Asia and younger than their predecessors. For the first half of 2021, when it saw sales increase by 13 percent compared to 2019, Christie's noted that 30 percent of its buyers were new clients, and 31 percent of those were millennials.

"A lot of people are looking at their walls, thinking about the art they want to add to their collection, because they're spending so much more time in their homes," said Emily Kaplan at Christie's, which resumes in-person auctions today.

\$600 million collection

In September, Sotheby's won the rights to sell the Macklowe collection, the subject of a legal dispute following the high-profile divorce of New York real estate developer Harry Macklowe and his ex-wife Linda in 2018. The auction house



A painting by Jean-Michel Basquiat entitled 'The Guilt of Gold Teeth' is displayed.

is billing the pieces, worth \$600 million, as the largest collection of modern and contemporary art ever put on the market.

Of the 65 pieces, 35 will go under the hammer on November 15 with an estimated value of \$400 million. The rest will go on sale in 2022. Highlights include Alberto Giacometti's "The Nose", a suspended bronze the sculptor began working on in 1947, and Mark Rothko's minimalist painting "No. 7". Both are estimated to be worth \$70-90 million. The collection includes Andy Warhol's "Nine Marylins" (worth \$40-60 million) and "Sixteen Jackies" (worth \$15-20 million) — as well as several pieces by living artists, such as

Jeff Koons, Rudolf Stingel, Wade Guyton and Tauba Auerbach.

"There's incredible demand for contemporary art by artists practicing today," said Lampley. At Sotheby's, the evening of November 18 will be dedicated to the sale of works from the last 20 years, including two Banksy works estimated to be worth several million dollars each.

Digital element

Christie's auction season begins today with a 21st-century sale, focusing on solid bets such as Banksy works, but also a monumental painting by Jean-Michel Basquiat, "The Guilt of Gold Teeth", which



Art handlers hang Andy Warhol's 'Nine Marylins'.

he completed in 1982 during one of his stays in Modena, Italy during his meteoric rise. The painting, which depicts a voodoo figure surrounded by graffiti and numbers, is estimated at \$40-80 million. Digital artist Beeple's sculpture "Human One" depicts a helmet-wearing astronaut walking through a changing environment. The piece can be modified remotely by the artist at any time, even once installed in the buyer's house.

On Thursday, Christie's will auction a collection of Impressionist pieces assembled by Texas businessman Ed Cox, a wealthy Republican Party donor who died in 2020. The collection includes one piece

each from masters such as Edgar Degas, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Claude Monet, Camille Pissarro, Paul Cezanne and Gustave Caillebotte, as well as three paintings from Vincent Van Gogh. A sales record for Frida Kahlo could be broken at Sotheby's, which will auction off her self-portrait "Diego y yo"—valued at \$30 million. The auction house will also sell a rare original copy of the US Constitution, signed on September 17, 1787 in Philadelphia (worth \$15-20 million). — AFP



Women search for used clothes amid tons discarded in the Atacama desert, in Alto Hospicio, Iquique, Chile. — AFP photos

Chile's desert dumping ground for fast fashion leftovers

A mountain of discarded clothing including Christmas sweaters and ski boots cuts a strange sight in Chile's Atacama, the driest desert in the world, which is increasingly suffering from pollution created by fast fashion. The social impact of rampant consumerism in the clothing industry—such as child labor in factories or derisory wages—is well-known, but the disastrous effect on the environment is less publicized.

Chile has long been a hub of second-hand and unsold clothing, made in China or Bangladesh and passing through Europe, Asia or the United States before arriving in Chile, where it is resold around Latin America. Some 59,000 tons of clothing arrive each year at the Iquique port in the Alto Hospicio free zone in northern Chile. Clothing merchants from the capital Santiago, 1,800 kilometers (1,100 miles) to the south, buy some, while much is smuggled out to other Latin American countries. But at least 39,000 tons that cannot be sold end up in rubbish dumps in the desert.

"This clothing arrives from all over the world," Alex Carreno, a former employee in the port's import area, told AFP. "What is not sold to Santiago nor sent to other countries stays in the free zone" as no

one pays the necessary tariffs to take it away. "The problem is that the clothing is not biodegradable and has chemical products, so it is not accepted in the municipal landfills," said Franklin Zepeda, the founder of EcoFibra, a company that makes insulation panels using discarded clothing. "I wanted to stop being the problem and start being the solution," he told AFP about the firm he created in 2018.

Water waste

According to a 2019 UN report, global clothing production doubled between 2000 and 2014, and the industry is "responsible for 20 percent of total water waste on a global level." To make a single pair of jeans requires 7,500 liters (2,000 gallons) of water. The same report said that clothing and footwear manufacturing contributes eight percent of global greenhouse gases, and that "every second, an amount of textiles equivalent to a garbage truck is buried or burnt."

Whether the clothing piles are left out in the open or buried underground, they pollute the environment, releasing pollutants into the air or underground water



View of ecologic yarns made of used clothes, at the Ecotex factory.



Workers rip metal buttons off used clothes to make ecologic yarn at the factory of Ecotex in Santiago.

channels. Clothing, either synthetic or treated with chemicals, can take 200 years to biodegrade and is as toxic as discarded tires or plastics.

Not all the clothing goes to waste: some of the poorest people from this region of 300,000 inhabitants pick through the dumps to find things they need or can sell in their local neighborhood. Venezuelan migrants Sofia and Jenny, who crossed into Chile only a few days earlier on a 350-kilometer journey, search through a clothing pile as their babies crawl over it. The women are looking for "things for the cold," given the desert's nighttime temperatures drop to levels unheard of in their tropical homeland.

Changing attitudes

Chile, the richest country in South America, is known for the voracious consumerism of its inhabitants. Fast fashion advertising "has helped to convince us that clothing makes us more attractive, that it makes us stylish and even cures our anxiety," said Monica Zarini, who makes lamp shades, notebooks, containers and bags from recycled clothing.

Things are changing, though, according to Rosario Hevia, who opened a store to recycle children's clothes before founding in 2019 Ecocitex, a company that creates yarn from pieces of discarded textiles and clothing in a poor state. The process uses neither water nor chemicals. "For many years we consumed, and no one seemed to care that more and more textile waste was being generated," she said. "But now, people are starting to question themselves." — AFP

Astronaut becomes first Chinese woman to spacewalk

Astronaut Wang Yaping became the first Chinese woman to walk in space, authorities said yesterday, as her team completed a six-hour stint outside the Tiangong space station as part of its ongoing construction. Tiangong—meaning "heavenly palace"—is the latest achievement in China's drive to become a major space power, after landing a rover on Mars and sending probes to the Moon. Its core module entered orbit earlier this year, with the station expected to be operational by 2022.

Wang and her colleague Zhai Zhigang stepped out of the module on Sunday night—waving to the camera while tethered to the outside of the station—and installed a suspension device and transfer connectors. "This marks the first extravehicular activity of the Shenzhou-13 crew, and it is also the first in China's space history involving the participation of a woman astronaut," said the China Manned Space Agency in a statement early Monday.

"The whole process was smooth and successful," the agency added, declaring it finished. Tiangong is expected to oper-

ate for at least 10 years, and the three astronauts are the second group to stay there. Wang is the first woman to visit. Mission commander Zhai is a former fighter pilot who performed China's first spacewalk in 2008.



In this file photo Chinese astronaut Wang Yaping, member of the second crew for China's new space station, salutes during a briefing the day before the launch at the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre in the Gobi desert, in northwest China.

Sunday's operation came just weeks after Wang, Zhai and third team member Ye Guangfu blasted off from the Jiuquan launch center in northwestern China's Gobi desert. Ye, who stayed inside during the walk to support his crewmates, is a People's Liberation Army pilot. Their work involves setting up equipment and testing technology for future construction, with at least one more spacewalk planned. The team is expected to spend six months at the station. The previous record-breaking crew, who made the first mission to Tiangong, returned to Earth in September after spending three months there. — AFP



This screen grab made from video released by Chinese state broadcaster CCTV shows Chinese astronaut Zhai Zhigang stepping outside China's Tiangong space station in orbit around Earth on November. — AFP photos



Hannah Longoria attends a makeshift memorial at the NRG Park grounds where eight people died in a crowd surge at the Astroworld Festival in Houston, Texas.



This file photo shows Travis Scott performing during the Astroworld Festival at NRG Stadium in Houston, Texas.

Rappers Travis Scott, Drake sued over deadly Texas concert crush

Rappers Travis Scott and Drake have been sued for having "incited mayhem" after eight people were killed and dozens injured in a crush during a Texas concert, the law firm confirmed on Sunday. Texas firm Thomas J. Henry Law on Sunday tweeted a story published by the Daily Mail on the suit, confirming it had filed "one of the first lawsuits in Travis Scott Astroworld Festival tragedy." The plaintiff is 23-year-old concertgoer Kristian Paredes, who was one of those "severely injured" at the concert on the night of November 5.

Around 50,000 people were in the audience at Houston's NRG Park when the crowd started pushing toward the stage as Scott was performing, triggering chaotic scenes. Texas-resident Paredes, who is also suing concert organizers Live Nation and the venue, "felt an immediate push" at the front of the general admission section



This combination of file pictures shows (left) US rapper Travis Scott arriving for the 2021 MTV Video Music Awards at Barclays Center and (right) US rapper Drake attending the Los Angeles premiere of the new HBO series 'Euphoria'.—AFP

as Travis Scott got on stage, the complaint said. "The crowd became chaotic and a stampede began," it went on. "Many begged security guards hired by Live

Nation Entertainment for help, but were ignored."

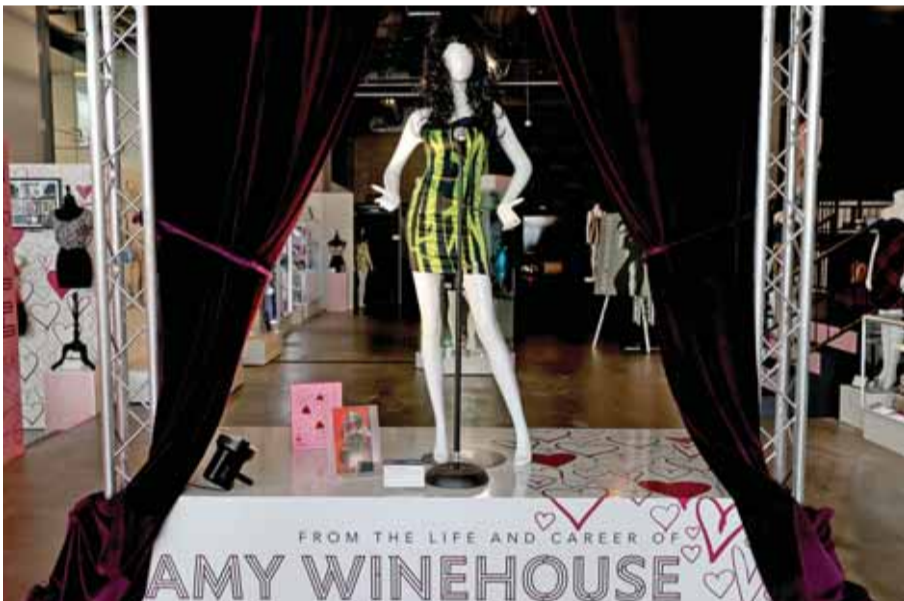
The suit, filed in Houston's Harris County court, claims Scott "had incited mayhem and chaos at prior events" and that "defendants knew or should have known of (Scott's) prior conduct." The suit also accuses Canadian rap superstar Drake, who joined Scott's headline set, of contributing to causing the surge toward the stage. "As Drake came onstage alongside of Travis Scott he helped incite the crowd even though he knew of Travis Scott's prior conduct," the complaint charges. He continued to perform even as the "crowd became out of control" and the "crowd mayhem continued," it added.

Struggle to breathe

High-profile attorney Ben Crump announced Sunday he had also filed suit against Scott and Astroworld. Crump specializes in civil rights and personal injury, and has represented clients including the families of victims of police violence George Floyd and Breonna Taylor. He and co-counsel Bob Hilliard filed suit Sunday on behalf of 21-year-old concertgoer Noah Gutierrez, who described "a scene of chaos and desperation." The lawyers said they expected to file suit on behalf of other concertgoers during the week.

"We are hearing horrific accounts of the terror and helplessness people experienced—the horror of a crushing crowd and the awful trauma of watching people die while trying unsuccessfully to save them," Crump and Hilliard said in the statement. "We urge others who suffered physical or emotional injury or witnessed the events of that day to contact us." Survivors of the incident described chaotic scenes of people squeezed up against one another, with many struggling to breathe.

Scott, who launched the Astroworld music festival in 2018, reportedly halted his act several times when he saw fans in distress near the stage. Authorities in Texas have opened a criminal investigation into the tragedy, involving both homicide and narcotics detectives, Houston Police Chief Troy Finner told reporters on Saturday. Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner said authorities were looking at video footage and talking to witnesses, concert organizers and people who were hospitalized. He told reporters on Saturday that the eight people killed were aged from 14 to 27, with one person's age unknown. The chaos also resulted in 25 people being transported to the hospital and more than 300 people being treated on the scene for minor injuries.—AFP



The dress worn by the late Amy Winehouse during her final performance on display at Julien's Auctions in Beverly Hills, California. — AFP photos



Personal items belonging to the late Amy Winehouse on display.

Amy Winehouse's last concert dress sells for \$243,200

The dress singer Amy Winehouse wore for her final performance sold Sunday for \$243,200, 16 times its estimated value, as part of a trove of memorabilia from the late diva's life auctioned in California. Winehouse wore the green and black bamboo print dress at a concert in Belgrade in 2011. A month later, on July 23, she died from acute alcohol poisoning. She was 27. Her death was the culmination of a lengthy and often very public struggle with alcohol and drugs. The dress was the highlight of an 800-item collection of personal effects, ranging from bras and DVDs to books and make-up that were sold by Winehouse's parents, Mitch and Janis.

The entire collection brought in \$4 mil-



Personal items belonging to the late Amy Winehouse on display.

lion, twice the original forecast, according to auction house Julien's, which managed the sale that ran from Saturday to Sunday. "Of course, there are fans and museums

and collectors all over the world that will want to own some of these items, care for them, show them at museums, keep her legacy and her memory alive and at the

same time raise some money for the foundation," Martin Nolan of Julien's said ahead of the auction.

The proceeds will go to the Amy Winehouse Foundation, which supports vulnerable young adults struggling with addiction. "All of these dresses represent Amy-fantastic musician, songwriter, but also a fashion icon," Nolan said. Multi-Grammy-winning Winehouse, whose seminal and soulful 2006 album "Back to Black," is counted as a modern classic, often spoke of her personal experiences battling alcohol and drug addiction. Another highlight of the sale was the heart-shaped handbag custom-made by Moschino that Winehouse used at the 2007 Brit Awards, which sold for \$204,800.

Many of the other dresses she wore in performances sold for between \$12,500 and \$150,000. The 400-plus-page catalogue put together by Julien's was a walk-through of the singer's influences and career, but also her distinctive retro style that made her a fashion icon. — AFP

Marvel's 'Eternals' tops N America box office despite mixed reviews

Marvel's new superhero film "Eternals" took in an estimated \$71 million this weekend to top the North American box office, a strong pandemic-era opening if a bit below expectations, industry watcher Exhibitor Relations said Sunday. Written and directed by Chloe Zhao, fresh off her best-director Oscar win for "Nomadland," the film faced some of the worst reviews of any Marvel film—the only one to draw a "rotten" rating on Rotten Tomatoes—but has fared well overseas, taking in an impressive \$91 million.



Led by actors Angelina Jolie, Salma Hayek, Richard Madden and Gemma Chan, "Eternals" tells the tale of an immortal race of aliens who emerge from several millennia in hiding to save the Earth from the evil Deviants. With "Eternals" gobbling up the biggest chunk of box office pie for the Friday-through-Sunday period, previous leader "Dune" dropped to a very distant second place, at \$7.6 million. The Warner Bros sci-fi thriller, based on the classic Frank Herbert opus, stars Timothee Chalamet, Rebecca Ferguson, Zendaya and Oscar Isaac. It follows a family in the distant future fighting for survival on a desert planet plagued by monstrous sandworms.

United Artist's James Bond film "No Time to Die" again placed third, at \$6.2 million. The studio says it is Daniel Craig's last time playing the suave spy. It will be offered on digital platforms starting Tuesday, a quick turnaround after its October 8 release. Sony superhero film "Venom: Let There Be Carnage," moved up a place this weekend, to fourth spot, taking in \$4.5 million. Its domestic total is now close to \$200 million. And in fifth was 20th Century's computer-animated sci-fi comedy "Ron's Gone Wrong," at \$3.6 million. Its voice cast includes Zach Galifianakis, Ed Helms and Olivia Colman. Rounding out the top 10 were: "The French Dispatch" (\$2.6 million) "Halloween Kills" (\$2.4 million) "Spencer" (\$2.1 million) "Antlers" (\$2 million) "Last Night in Soho" (\$1.8 million) — AFP

Film festival offers Tunisian inmates rare escape

For the first time, three prison inmates in Tunisia were allowed a brief taste of freedom for the sake of art. The prestigious Carthage Film Festival offered the prisoners the chance to briefly escape confinement-under police supervision-to help make a documentary about the festival. "To be free, even for a while-nothing is more beautiful," said one of the inmates, who gave his name as Nemss. The trio were chosen due to their "good behavior,

but also their audiovisual gifts", said Tarek Fanni, the head of cultural programs at the prison authorities. "It's an important means of reintegration," Fani said. The idea was the result of a collaboration between the film festival, the World Organization Against Torture (OMCT) and the North African nation's prison authority.

Nemss, 30, who has already spent one-third of his life in prison and has five more years left to serve, said leaving the confines of jail was a major event. "After this moment of happiness, I ask myself how I will return to the prison," Nemss said. The three inmates had already undergone eight months of training at a club in their prison in Mahdia city, on Tunisia's eastern coast.

'Feel free'

The training "had a very positive effect on the behavior of the inmates", the

deputy head of Mahdia Prison, Colonel Hamdi Hailla, told AFP. "We would like to expand it to all prison establishments," he added. Similarly excited was "T", 30, a former architecture student who was arrested for drugs leaving the same festi-

val in 2016. "All the key moments of my life seem to have to do with the Carthage Film Festival," he said, smiling. "This outing gives us the impression of leading a normal life."—AFP



Sports

Fans finally return in Seville for Spain's 'Gran Derbi' like no other

First Seville derby with fans in 728 days

SEVILLE: It could have been the whistles from inside the Benito Villamarin as Sevilla's players jogged out to warm up or the whistles outside in the streets, as more Real Betis fans decided to join in. It could have been the chanting and clapping and shouting as thousands draped in green and white walked towards their gates, or the hooves against the ground, horses patrolling, with police perched on top.

There were flares smacking on pavements and helicopters in the sky, feet climbing steps and hands slapping on backs. "Just listen to that," said Real Betis fan Jose Maria, pointing behind him. "That's the sound of a football match."

It was 728 days since the last Seville derby had been played with fans, another welcome reprieve for supporters in Spain but this one perhaps the most welcome of all.

If the Clásico between Real Madrid and Barcelona is La Liga's most famous fixture, 'El Gran Derbi' between Sevilla and Real Betis is the one most synonymous with supporters, a celebration of devotion and loyalty to two teams situated just four kilometers apart. "I took a boat and a bus to get here," says Juan Carlo, who has been a Betis socio for nearly 50 years. "Without fans this game was terrible, to be honest it was nothing. With fans, it's the best game in the world."

It was also the first match without any fans at all, the starkest demonstration of what had changed and what had been lost. On June 10 last year, Sevilla faced Real Betis as football resumed in spite of the pandemic, in front of empty seats, with players arriving in kit and people locked down at home.

'Absence of magic'
"To return is to win," ran La Liga's slogan but even if the victory was necessary and better than nothing, it felt hollow. Amid nervousness about coming back, Sevilla midfielder Ivan Rakitic was among the loudest voices in favor.

"I have heard a lot of talk about us having to play for economic reasons but I haven't heard anyone talk about the fans, the people, for whom their club is a part of their life and it's been taken away from them. We have to step forward," he said.

There were two more derbies, including the 100th in the topflight, and all of them felt diminished, like games everywhere, but perhaps in this game more than anywhere else. "In the absence of magic, all that was left was metal studs," wrote El Mundo.

Joaquin, Real Betis' iconic forward, who joined the club aged 16 and turned 40 in July, even renewed his contract for another season, determined not to retire without people in the stands. "It would make me sad if my last year was like this," he said.

With Betis 2-0 down, Joaquin came on as a substitute in the 89th minute on Sunday, applauded by those home supporters that were left. Just over an hour earlier, hundreds of green and white flags fluttered around the pitch as 50,534 fans, minus Sevilla's 600, sang the Betis anthem. "Hay una leyenda que recorre el mundo entero," goes one line, "a legend that runs throughout the whole world."

In the afternoon, clouds of red smoke had covered the Sevilla team bus as thousands waited to greet the players arriving at the doorway of the



SEVILLE: Real Betis' supporters wave flags before the start of the Spanish league football match between Real Betis and Sevilla FC at the Benito Villamarin stadium in Seville on Sunday. —AFP

Lebreros hotel. On Saturday, they had waited to serenade them after a last training session at the Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan.

"Tomorrow the essence of the derby returns, the fans," said Monchi, Sevilla's sporting director. "Betis and Sevilla fans were born with this feeling. Let's show the world what our derby is: 90 minutes of passion and dedication for the colors, for our coexistence, and respect for the rest of the season."

Sevilla, in third, were looked strong for Betis, in fifth.

Shortly after half-time, Marcos Acuna rifled a shot into the top corner and with nine minutes left, Hector Bellerin diverted into his own net, prompting Betis fans to turn for home.

At almost 11pm local time, with most of the stadium empty and the final whistle long gone, Sevilla's players skipped back out onto the pitch. In the far-right corner they danced, the last sound of the match Sevilla's fans high up above them and still there, celebrating the night the derby returned. —AFP

News in brief

Real Sociedad reclaim top spot

MADRID: Atletico Madrid conceded in the 92nd and 96th minutes on Sunday to surrender a two-goal lead and draw 3-3 away at Valencia in La Liga. Atletico let another two points slip away at Mestalla before Real Sociedad reclaimed top spot with a 2-0 win away at Osasuna and Sevilla beat 10-man Real Betis by the same scoreline in the Seville derby. The draw leaves Atletico Madrid four points behind Real Madrid, who beat Rayo Vallecano on Saturday, and continues a weekend of remarkable comebacks in La Liga, after Barcelona threw away a three-goal lead against Celta Vigo. Valencia sit 10th but the point continues a mini-resurgence for Jose Bordalas' side, coming on the back of a 2-0 win over Villarreal. Valencia had previously gone seven matches without a win.

Leverkusen drop to sixth

BERLIN: Bayer Leverkusen midfielder Robert Andrich scored a 90th minute equalizer to snatch his team a 1-1 draw at Hertha Berlin on a day of dramatic late goals in the Bundesliga on Sunday. Former Hertha academy graduate Robert Andrich struck late against his old club to spare his side's blushes in a cagey game in the capital. It was the first of a string of last-minute strikes in the German topflight, as Cologne grabbed a late equalizer at home to Union Berlin, and Eintracht Frankfurt beat Greuther Fuerth in injury time. Having briefly drawn level on points with league leaders Bayern Munich in October, Leverkusen have now dropped to sixth after four games in a row without a win.

Safe-standing trial in Britain

LONDON: Manchester United and Chelsea are among five football clubs taking part in a safe-standing trial from January 1, more than 25 years after standing was banned in Britain, the sports minister announced yesterday. The other teams whose applications to operate licensed safe-standing areas have been approved are Premier League champions Manchester City, Tottenham and Championship side Cardiff. Standing areas in the English top-flight and second-tier Championship were outlawed by legislation passed following the 1989 Hillsborough disaster, which led to the deaths of 97 Liverpool fans. The pilot will be independently monitored and its findings provided to the British government for it to make a decision on a possible wider roll-out of safe standing for next season.

New England, Colorado top seeds

LOS ANGELES: The New England Revolution and the Colorado Rapids clinched the top seeds in their respective conferences on the final day of the 2021 regular season for North America's Major League Soccer. The Western Conference Rapids and the East's Revolution also earned first-round playoff byes. Colorado secured the top spot by eliminating Los Angeles FC, Real Salt Lake qualified with a late goal in a 1-0 win over Sporting Kansas City and the Vancouver Whitecaps punched their ticket with a 1-1 draw with the Seattle Sounders FC. In the East, Orlando City booked their spot with a 1-0 win over CF Montreal 2-0 and Atlanta United FC rallied past FC Cincinnati 2-1.

Milan derby draw allows Napoli to keep top spot

MILAN: AC Milan missed the chance to go top of Serie A on Sunday after a 1-1 derby draw with Inter Milan which allowed Napoli to maintain their place at the summit. Stefano Pioli's unbeaten side are level with Napoli on 32 points after a Stefan de Vrij own goal cancelled out Milan old boy Hakan Calhanoglu's 11th-minute penalty for Inter in a tense, exciting encounter at the San Siro.

Milan, whose fans unfurled a huge display before the match in honour of health workers and those who had died of COVID-19, will be rueing a missed opportunity to claim first place after Napoli could only manage a 1-1 home draw with Verona earlier in the day. "The glass is half-empty... Looking at the chances we had we deserved more," said Inzaghi. "Milan and Napoli have kept up an incredible rhythm but there is time and we are up there. We want to keep pushing forward."

Neither side will be happy with the derby point as they both had opportunities to win the match in front of 57,000 fans, with Alexis Saelemaekers striking the post late for Milan. Lautaro Martinez meanwhile missed Inter's second penalty of the night just before the half-hour mark and wasted other chances to snatch the winner for nominal away side Inter, who were looking for a win which would have boosted their title challenge.

As it is, Simone Inzaghi's team stay seven points behind the league's two front-runners in third place. "For me the glass is half-empty... Looking at the chances we had we deserved more," said Inzaghi. "Milan and Napoli have kept up an incredible rhythm but there is time and we are up there. We want to keep pushing forward."

Napoli honor Maradona

Napoli wore a kit bearing the face of club legend Diego Maradona, who died nearly a year ago, but

West Ham punish Alisson blunders to end Liverpool's run

LONDON: Jurgen Klopp was furious with the officials after West Ham punished three mistakes from Liverpool goalkeeper Alisson Becker and ended the Reds' 25-match unbeaten run with a 3-2 victory on Sunday.

Klopp's side would have broken the club's record unbeaten run in all competitions, which had stood since 1982, if they had avoided defeat at the London Stadium. But Alisson's disastrous display condemned Liverpool to a first loss since they lost to Real Madrid in the Champions League quarter-final first leg in April.

Liverpool hadn't lost in the league since Fulham won at Anfield in March. It was a day to forget for Alisson, whose own goal put West Ham head in the first half. Trent Alexander-Arnold equalized with a brilliant free-kick, but Alisson was at fault again as Pablo Fornals and Kurt Zouma struck for the Hammers after half-time.

Divock Origi got one back for Liverpool, but it wasn't enough to preserve their long unbeaten streak. Klopp was furious with West Ham's first goal, saying Alisson was fouled by Angelo



MILAN: AC Milan's Swedish forward Zlatan Ibrahimovic heads the ball during the Italian Serie A football match against Inter Milan on Sunday at the San Siro stadium, in Milan. —AFP

were not inspired to beat Verona. Verona, who finished the match with nine men after two late red cards for Daniel Bessa and Nikola Kalinic, took a point thanks to Giovanni Simeone's close-range finish from Antonio Barak's low cross in the 13th minute.

Giovanni Di Lorenzo levelled for the hosts just five minutes later but they couldn't find a winner, with Victor Osimhen and Dries Mertens striking the woodwork late in each half. Napoli are wearing the Maradona kit for all of their games in November, with a trip to Inter Milan and a home clash with Lazio coming up in the league after the international break.

Maradona led Napoli to their only two Serie A titles and the 1989 UEFA Cup in seven successful and frequently controversial seasons in southern Italy between 1984 and 1991. He remains an icon in Naples and his death last November was felt as keenly in the city as it was in his native Argentina.

Ogbonna and that Craig Pawson should have sent off Aaron Cresswell for a nasty foul on Jordan Henderson.

"The first they score is a foul on the goalkeeper. The arm goes into Alisson's arm so how can he catch it? That makes no sense," Klopp said. "What can Alisson do? People will say I'm making excuses but I'm calm. You need normal decisions from a referee and he did not do that. Cresswell's was a reckless challenge on Henderson. It was a clear red card."

Liverpool dropped to fourth place in the Premier League as West Ham climbed into third. The Reds are four points behind leaders Chelsea, while West Ham are only three adrift of Thomas Tuchel's men. "However long a run is, it will come to an end. It looked like we lost a bit of patience. We were not that calm in the decisive moments. We can be better 100 percent," Klopp said.

West Ham's first league win against Liverpool since 2016 was also their manager David Moyes' maiden league success against Klopp at the eighth attempt. Moyes has worked wonders in his second spell at West Ham and a challenge for a Champions League place will be in their sights if they can maintain this level of performance.

"It's been hard to beat Liverpool over my career, so I was very pleased to get it. It was a terrific effort," Moyes said. "I'm hugely proud. The way the players have gone about it, you talk about me turning it around, these players were close to

Roma struggles continue

Roma's worrying crash in form continued with a fifth defeat for Jose Mourinho's team just 12 games into the season, 3-2 at promoted Venezia. Deservedly a goal ahead at half-time after Eldor Shomurodov and Tammy Abraham had scored following Mattia Caldara's opener for Venezia, Roma collapsed after a harsh penalty decision allowed Mattia Aramu to level with a 65th-minute spot-kick.

David Okereke's neat finish with 16 minutes remaining on the banks of the Venetian Lagoon sank the club from the capital, who are now sixth and three points outside the Champions League places. Roma's fourth defeat in seven games in all competitions, a run which includes a 6-1 thumping at the hands of Norwegian outfit Bodo/Glimt, allowed local rivals Lazio to leapfrog into fifth with a 3-0 win over Salernitana. —AFP

relegation. Now we're pushing for Europe."

Reds rocked

In the fourth minute, Fornals' in swinging corner raced towards Ogbonna, who got in front of Alisson with a jump that obstructed the Brazilian's view. Ogbonna's arm made contact with Alisson as the keeper's flailing attempt to punch clear diverted the ball behind him and into his own net.

A lengthy VAR check followed as Liverpool's players surrounded Pawson to claim both a foul on Alisson and a handball by Ogbonna, but the goal was allowed to stand. Alexander-Arnold brought Liverpool level in stunning style in the 41st minute.

Mohamed Salah's quick feet drew a foul from Declan Rice on the edge of the area and Alexander-Arnold curled a brilliant strike over the wall and into the top corner of Lukasz Fabianski's net. Liverpool's commitment to throwing bodies forward in search of the win came back to bite them in the 67th minute.

After Sadio Mane lost possession, Jarrod Bowen embarked on a mesmerizing run before slipping a pass to Fornals, whose low shot from the edge of the area slipped under Alisson's weak attempted save. Alisson's nightmare wasn't finished. The keeper was caught out of position as Zouma headed West Ham's third goal from Bowen's 74th minute corner. Origi scuffed home in the 83rd minute to give Liverpool hope. But Mane headed inches wide of the far post as West Ham survived a tense finale. —AFP

Sports

'Far superior' Verstappen outpaces Hamilton to win Mexico Grand Prix

Race to Formula 1 title continues next week in Sao Paulo

MEXICO CITY: Max Verstappen cruised to victory at the Mexico Grand Prix on Sunday leaving defending champion Lewis Hamilton to admit the Red Bull car "is far superior". Hamilton clung on to finish second in his Mercedes holding off a late charge from Red Bull's Mexican driver Sergio Perez. "Their car is far superior this weekend and there was nothing we could really do about it," said Hamilton.



MEXICO CITY: Red Bull's Dutch driver Max Verstappen (left) races ahead of Mercedes' British driver Lewis Hamilton (right) and Red Bull's Mexican driver Sergio Perez during the Formula One Mexico Grand Prix at the Hermanos Rodriguez racetrack in Mexico City on Sunday. — AFP



Middle East hosts last three races

Verstappen, who grabbed the lead on the first corner, finished 16.555sec ahead of Hamilton with Perez just over a second further back. The Dutchman increased his lead in the world championship to 19 points from Hamilton with four races left. "There's still a long way to go," Verstappen said. "It's of course looking good but also it can turn around very quickly."

Frenchman Pierre Gasly was fourth in an AlphaTauri followed by the Ferraris of Monegasque Charles LeClerc and Spaniard Carlos Sainz. Hamilton had expressed his surprise on Saturday after Mercedes secured a front-row lockout, with teammate Valtteri Bottas on pole. The advantage did not survive the first corner, where almost all of the drama of the race happened in a few chaotic seconds.

Bottas and Hamilton started fast but as they headed into the turn side by side, Verstappen charged round the outside of the Finn. The three cars went into the corner abreast but the Red Bull came out first. "It was nice three wide and it was all about just trying to brake as late as you can," said Verstappen. "I kept it on the track, came from third to first and that was basically what made my race because I could just focus on myself, and we had incredible pace in the car," said the Dutchman who won for the third time in Mexico.

'Someone hit me'

As Hamilton gave chase, the Finn went for a spin. "Someone hit me and caused me to spin," Bottas complained on team radio after rejoining in last place. The

guilty party was Daniel Ricciardo, charging from row four. His McLaren lost a front wing.

Mercedes boss Toto Wolff was unhappy at the way Verstappen got through. "That should not happen," Wolff said. "We had two cars in front and seemed to open up the sea for Max to come around the outside. The spin afterwards when there could have been a third or fourth place is annoying to say the least."

The collision at the front sent ripples down the pack as Yuki Tsunoda and Mick Schumacher both went off. The safety car came out, allowing Ricciardo and Bottas, who eventually finished in 15th place, to pit for repairs. When the racing resumed, Verstappen quickly built a lead over Hamilton with Perez third.

Red Bull's pit-stop strategy allowed Perez to take the lead on the 33rd lap. As it dawned on the huge crowd that a Mexican was leading, they rose in their seats, roaring and waving flags. "I could hear the crowd com-

ing through the stadium section, it was pretty incredible," said Perez.

'Pace on another level'

After Perez finally pitted, he came back in third and resumed his pursuit of Hamilton. The crowd roared again when Perez caught his hare on the 61st lap, but he could not find a way past. "It shows how fast their car is when Sergio is that close behind me and able to follow that closely," said Hamilton.

Perez still earned the first podium finish by a Mexican driver in the race. Wolff said the Red Bulls were just faster. "Their pace was on another level," he said. "I don't think we could have won even if we'd stayed ahead at the first corner. They could have driven circles round us." The battle resumes in Sao Paulo, Brazil, next week before the championship heads to the Middle East for the last three races. — AFP

Ooredoo official telecom operator of World Cup 2022 and Arab Cup 2021

DOHA: Ooredoo, Qatar's leading telecommunications operator, has announced it is to be Official Middle East and Africa Telecommunications Operator of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 and the FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2021.

Ooredoo's selection to support these major leading events strengthens the company's long-standing commitment to FIFA. Ooredoo was also a National Supporter of the 2019 and 2020 editions of the FIFA Club World Cup in Qatar.

Sheikh Nasser Bin Hamad Bin Nasser Al Thani - Chief Commercial Officer, Ooredoo Qatar - said: "We are beyond proud to be working with FIFA again, this time as a key supporter of the biggest sporting event in the world and of the biggest football event in the region."

"All eyes will be on Qatar in 2021 and 2022 as our country is propelled onto the global sporting stage. This is an opportunity for Ooredoo to cement our leadership in innovation and telecommunications; engage a regional audience; promote our country as a major sporting hub; and celebrate football, the most popular sport in the world," he continued.

"Qatar boasts the infrastructure required to host sporting events of such a scale, and Ooredoo's innovation, technology and experience enable delivery of the required network speeds and reliability. We are honored to be supporting our country in providing an unrivalled fan experience for all, and we look forward with great excitement to some incredible football."



Nick Brown, FIFA's Director of Commercial Revenue, said: "We are delighted that Ooredoo has returned, this time as a Regional Supporter, for these two amazing tournaments in Qatar. With Ooredoo by our side, we are looking forward to hosting memorable events that will connect followers of the beautiful game in Qatar and across the globe."

The FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 - the single biggest sporting competition in the world - is set to be held from November 21 to December 18, 2022, and will be the first-ever FIFA World Cup to be held in the Arab world. With an average match audience of more than 110 million viewers, more than 51 percent of the world's population watched the FIFA World Cup Russia 2018.

The FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2021 will feature 16 of the region's top national teams from November 30 to December 18, 2021 and will serve as a dress rehearsal for next year's FIFA World Cup, which will take place from November 21 to December 18, 2022. Read more about both events on FIFA.com.

Djokovic wraps up year's end world number one spot

PARIS: Novak Djokovic has wrapped up the end-of-year number one ranking after winning the Paris Masters tournament. The Serb, who won three of the year's four Grand Slam tournaments, finishes the year top for the seventh time, overtaking Pete Sampras who achieved the feat six times. Djokovic is more than 3,000 points ahead of US Open champion Daniil Medvedev after beating the Russian in the Paris final on Sunday. The other big winner in the ATP rankings released yesterday was Alexander Zverev, who has equaled his career-high ranking of third.

Meanwhile, US Open champion Emma Raducanu moved into the top 20 of the world rankings for the first time yesterday. The 18-year-old Briton, who is ranked 20th after reaching the quarter-finals of the Transylvania Open in October, became the first qualifier to win a Grand Slam when she triumphed in New York in September. This week, Raducanu is top seed for the Linz Open in Austria and has a bye into Tuesday's second round. Australian Ashleigh Barty remains number one after a week of the Billie Jean Cup, formerly known as the Fed Cup, but the competition's results do not count toward the rankings system. — AFP



PARIS: Serbia's Novak Djokovic poses with the trophy after winning the ATP Paris Masters at The AccorHotels Arena in Paris on Sunday. — AFP

Australia to tour Pakistan for first time in 24 years

LAHORE: Australia will tour Pakistan for the first time in 24 years in March-April, the Pakistan Cricket Board said yesterday, despite England and New Zealand recently pulling out of matches there. Australia will play three Tests, as many one-day internationals and a single Twenty20 international. "Australia are one of the high-performing sides and them playing in our backyard for the first time after a gap of 24 years will be a special treat for the fans," Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Ramiz Raja said in a statement.

The tour will be a huge boost for Pakistan, which was hit hard when New Zealand abandoned its tour over a security alert just as the two teams were due to kick off their first match in September. England pulled out a week later and there had been fears Australia would do the same.

"Cricket Australia is excited about the prospect of touring Pakistan next year for what will be a highly anticipated series in a country so incredibly passionate about the game and their national team," said Cricket Australia chief executive Nick Hockley, according to the PCB statement. "The safety and welfare of our players and staff remains our number one priority and we will continue to work with the PCB and relevant agencies to ensure that appropriate and sufficient arrangements are put in place for the tour." — AFP

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Sabah Hospital	24812000	Kaifan	24849807
Amiri Hospital	22450005	Shamiya	24848913
Maternity Hospital	24843100	Shuwaikh	24814507
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700	Abdullah Salem	22549134
Chest Hospital	24849400	Nuzha	22526804
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010	Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Adan Hospital	23940620	Qadsiya	22515088
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300		Dasmah
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000	22532265	
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9	Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
		Shaab	22518752
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Basheer Kannur Abdul S/o Abdul Khader. D.No. 2-103-1, Mainmoona Manzil Ganadabettu House 575007 D.K. I have changed my name as Abdul Basheer. (C 0966)

I CHENNREDDY SUBBARREDDY, S/o. KATTERA PALLE NARAYANA REDDY, R/of D.No. 8-3-106; Koti Reddy Nagar, Badvel (Town), Gopavaram (Ma), YSR KADAPA (Di), A.P, do hereby change my name to KATTERAPALLE SUBBAREDDY (UID: 930829459042), S/o. KATTERAPALLE NARAYANA REDDY. Passport no. K4765901. (C 0967) 3-11-2021



KANSAS CITY: L'Jarius Sneed #38 of the Kansas City Chiefs reacts after intercepting a pass during the fourth quarter of the game against the Green Bay Packers at Arrowhead Stadium on Sunday in Kansas City, Missouri. — AFP

Mahomes guides Chiefs past Rodgers-less Packers

LOS ANGELES: Patrick Mahomes passed for 166 yards and a touchdown as the Kansas City Chiefs outlasted the Aaron Rodgers-less Packers 13-7 on Sunday, snapping Green Bay's seven-game win streak. The reigning NFC champion Chiefs took advantage of quarterback Rodgers being sidelined with COVID-19 to hand the Packers just their second loss of the season.

"I thought our defense did a nice job. We didn't hold back," Chiefs coach Andy Reid said. "Guys played hard and aggressive, and you've seen things happen when teams are favored. You have to bear down every week the best way you can."

Mahomes overcame a slow start and got support from his teammates, including Darrel Williams, who rushed for 70 yards on 19 carries, and Travis Kelce, who caught a first-quarter touchdown.

"I feel like we're close," Mahomes said. "You can see drives here and there where we're the team everybody knows and loves, but you have to consistently do that throughout every single drive in a game. We're just not executing."

Jordan Love, who struggled in his first NFL start

against the Chiefs pass rush, passed for 190 yards, going 19 of 34 as Green Bay went just two-for-12 on third-down plays. "This falls on me," said Packers coach Matt LaFleur. The Chiefs improved to 5-4 on the season.

In other games, Baltimore Ravens' Lamar Jackson proved once again that he is one of the greatest rushing quarterbacks of all time in a 34-31 victory over the Minnesota Vikings. Jackson, who is in his fourth NFL season, delivered his 10th 100-yard regular-season rushing game, which ties Michael Vick for quarterbacks. But including the playoffs, Jackson has 12, one more than Vick.

"Of course I respect (Vick's) game. That's cool," Jackson said. "I don't know what to say." Jackson passed for 266 yards, three touchdowns and two interceptions for the Ravens, who improved to 6-2 on the season. He ran for 120 yards on 21 carries against the Vikings.

Bills, Cowboys stunned

The AFC East-leading Buffalo Bills and NFC East first-place Dallas Cowboys both suffered surprise

losses after their offenses fizzled. Teddy Bridgewater threw for a touchdown and rushed for another to lift the visiting Denver Broncos to a 30-16 win over the Cowboys.

Matthew Wright kicked three field goals and the Jacksonville Jaguars' stingy defense held the Bills' top-ranked scoring offense in check to deliver a 9-6 upset. Bridgewater completed 19 of 28 passes for 249 yards, including a 44-yard scoring pass to Tim Patrick early in the second quarter.

Dallas' Dak Prescott completed 19 of 39 passes for 232 yards with two touchdowns and an interception in his return from a one-game absence because of a calf injury. "They beat us. It is something we will learn from," said Prescott. "We got to start faster and play a cleaner game."

In Florida, Wright's 21-yarder with 12:13 left in the game snapped a tie, and the Jaguars' defense was rock-solid, sacking Buffalo quarterback Josh Allen four times. Allen's fourth down pass to Stefon Diggs with 62 seconds left fell short, and Jacksonville ran out the clock.

Allen completed 31 of 47 passes for 264 yards and tossed two interceptions. He wasn't even the best player on the field with that name. Jaguars' defensive end, also named Josh Allen, was the better of the two with eight tackles, a sack and an interception.

In California, James Conner ran for 96 yards and two scores and had five receptions for 77 yards and another touchdown, and the Arizona Cardinals beat the San Francisco 49ers 31-17. Colt McCoy was 22-of-26 passing for 249 yards and a touchdown in place of the injured Kyler Murray, and Eno Benjamin ran for a touchdown as the Cardinals improved to 8-1 on the season.

In the late game, Tennessee's Kevin Byard returned a Matthew Stafford interception 24 yards for a touchdown as the Titans surprised the Los Angeles Rams 28-16 in a clash between the conference co-leaders. Ryan Tannehill passed for 143 yards and a touchdown and rushed for another score for the Titans, who improved to 7-2 despite missing injured running back Derrick Henry. — AFP

Durant guides red-hot Nets past Raptors

LOS ANGELES: Kevin Durant scored 31 points to post his 10th consecutive game of 20 or more points, as the Brooklyn Nets routed the host Toronto Raptors 116-103 on Sunday. Durant also had seven rebounds and seven assists, as Brooklyn won their fifth straight game in front of a crowd of 19,800 at Scotiabank Arena. "Like we said since day one, he's been unbelievable this season at both ends of the floor, rebounding, scoring, facilitating," said Nets coach Steve Nash.

Durant was playing in Canada for the first time since tearing his left Achilles tendon while playing for the Golden State Warriors in the 2019 NBA finals. "The last time I was here was one of my lowest moments as a basketball player," Durant said.

James Harden added 28 points, 10 rebounds and eight assists, Blake Griffin had 14 points and 11 rebounds, and Patty Mills came off the bench to score 13 points in the win. "When he's at that level, he makes us go," Griffin said of Harden, who scored 16 of his 28 in the fourth quarter. "We, as a team, can go to a different level."

Fred VanVleet had 21 points and eight assists for the Raptors, who have lost two in a row. OG Anunoby added 16 points, Gary Trent had 14 and Precious Achiuwa scored 13 points. Raptors forward Pascal Siakam, in his first game of the season after recovering from shoulder surgery, scored 15 points in 25 minutes of playing time.

Nash, of Victoria, British Columbia, earned his first victory in his home country as a head coach. "That means a lot," Nash said. "This is a very special place for me. Not only Canada, but Toronto. I've spent so much of my time here, I have so many close friends, relationships and memories in this city. For me, this is definitely a sweet win."

Elsewhere, Bradley Beal scored 30 points, and the Washington Wizards defeated the visiting Milwaukee Bucks 101-94, sending the reigning NBA champi-



TORONTO: Kevin Durant #7 of the Brooklyn Nets drives on Fred VanVleet #23 of the Toronto Raptors during the first half of their NBA game at Scotiabank Arena on Sunday in Toronto, Canada. — AFP

ons to their fifth loss in the last six games. Giannis Antetokounmpo led the struggling Bucks with 29 points and 18 rebounds in the first game of a five-game road swing. Grayson Allen added 19 points for the

Bucks. In New York, Ricky Rubio nailed eight three-pointers and finished with 37 points and 10 assists to lead the Cleveland Cavaliers to a 126-109 win over the New York Knicks. —AFP

Xavi unveiled as Barcelona coach to fans at Camp Nou

MADRID: Xavi Hernandez was unveiled as Barcelona's new coach yesterday as thousands of fans welcomed the debt-ridden club's legendary former midfielder back to Camp Nou. Xavi walked out to chants of "Xavi, Xavi" before signing his contract on the pitch, alongside his family and Barca president Joan Laporta.

"I don't want to get too emotional so I will just tell you one thing — we are the best club in the world," Xavi told the crowd of around 10,000 fans. "And we will work to the highest standards to have success. We cannot accept defeats or draws, we have to win every game." Laporta said: "Today will be an historic day for Barca." Xavi is the first Barca coach to be presented on the pitch in front of fans at the 99,000-capacity stadium, with the routine usually only reserved for the club's biggest signings.

The return of the 41-year-old as coach, six years after he left Barcelona to play in Qatar, has generated huge excitement and raised hopes the club can begin a return to Europe's elite. Barca sit ninth in La Liga, with the club grappling with debts of more than a billion euros. They have not been European champions since 2015.

Xavi's appointment was confirmed in the early hours of Saturday and he flew out of Doha a few hours later, before watching Barcelona at a distance as they threw away a three-goal lead away at Celta Vigo to draw 3-3. He then attended in person to watch the club's youngsters as Barca B beat Sevilla B at the Johan Cruyff Stadium on Saturday evening.



BARCELONA: Newly-appointed FC Barcelona's Spanish coach Xavi Hernandez (right), flanked by FC Barcelona's Spanish president Joan Laporta, poses with his jersey during the presentation ceremony at the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona yesterday. — AFP

Xavi's first training session in charge will be today, although the squad is depleted by injuries and absences away on international duty. Barcelona's first game with Xavi in the dug-out will be at home to local rivals Espanyol on November 20.

After playing 767 games for Barcelona, Xavi left to play for Al Sadd in Qatar in 2015 before taking over as the team's coach four years later. He is widely considered one of the Barca's greatest ever players, having won eight La Liga titles and four Champions Leagues, as well as the World Cup and two European Championships with Spain. — AFP