



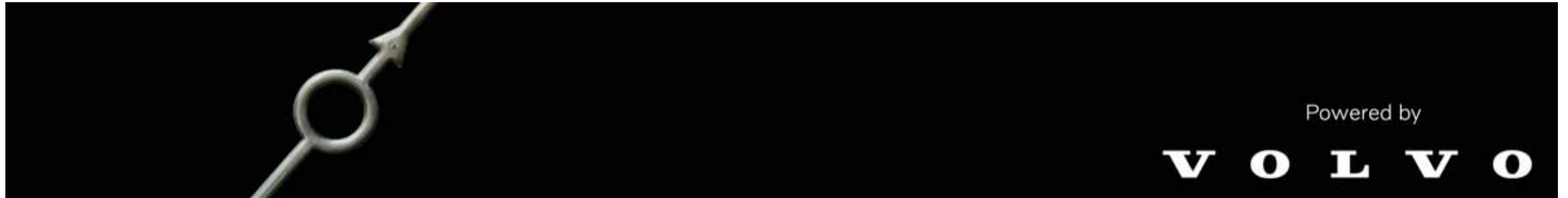
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400,000+ students return to school after 19 months

MoE ready for new academic year • One vaccine dose enough to enter schools



KUWAIT: Students attend class at a school in Salmiya after public schools reopened for on-campus learning yesterday for the first time after 19 months due to the COVID-19 pandemic. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat (See Page 3)

KUWAIT: More than 400,000 students of public and private Arabic schools returned to campuses yesterday for the 2021-22 academic year after 19 months of closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The "Safe Education" project - a collaboration between the ministries of interior, education, health, and information - was launched to protect all students in education facilities from the coronavirus and prevent its spread. Some private foreign and bilingual schools had reopened on Sept 26 for in-person classes.

Education Minister Ali Al-Mudhaf affirmed yesterday that the ministry is ready for the beginning of the new school year, with all its challenges. "In the past six months, the ministry of education - in cooperation with the ministry of health - has worked on preparing schools and faculty members to provide a safe environment for everyone," Mudhaf said during a visit to a number of schools.

"Cooperation with the ministry of health led to creating a new guidebook of safety measures, and we will reassess the situation at the end of the

year to come up with appropriate decisions," he said. "I am proud of what I saw today as it reflects the amount of work and dedication of all those concerned to assure a happy and safe school year," Mudhaf added.

Meanwhile, the education ministry informed schools to allow students, teaching staff and parents who have taken one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine on campuses. Weekly PCR tests are required for students aged 12 and above and teachers who are not vaccinated, the ministry added.

The maximum capacity for any classroom is 20 students, with students sitting one to two meters apart. Masks should be worn at all times. Classes are divided into two groups: The first group will go to school on Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday, while the second group will go on Monday and Wednesday. In the following week, the groups will swap attendance. The duration of each period has been extended to one hour from 45 minutes to allow teachers to compensate for any loss in education due to the closure of schools from last year due to the pandemic. — Agencies

News in brief

Saudi confirms talks with Iran

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's foreign minister confirmed yesterday that Riyadh held discussions with regional rival Tehran last month. Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan said "the fourth round of talks took place on September 21". He did not disclose the location of the meeting or the level of representation. Iraqi sources said last month that officials from both countries had met recently in Baghdad. — AFP

Iran urges US to unfreeze \$10bn

TEHRAN: Iran's foreign minister has called on the US to unlock \$10 billion of Tehran's frozen assets to clear the way for a return to a nuclear deal with major powers. If the Americans have "true intentions, let them release some of our assets, for example \$10 billion frozen in foreign banks", Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said in an interview with state television broadcast late Saturday. — AFP

Jordan king, Assad hold phone call

AMMAN: Jordan's king held a telephone call with Syria's president yesterday, the palace said, in the first such conversation between the two leaders since Syria's war erupted a decade ago. King Abdullah II and Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad discussed "bilateral ties and means to bolster cooperation", a statement said. During their call, Abdullah stressed Jordan's "support for efforts to safeguard Syria's sovereignty, stability and territorial unity", it added. — AFP

3 Expo workers died of COVID

DUBAI: Three laborers died from COVID-19 during construction of Dubai's Expo 2020 site, officials said yesterday, a day after revealing three work-related deaths. "We've never been complacent on worker welfare, this is a matter we take extremely seriously," said spokeswoman Sconaid McGeachin. On Saturday, officials defended the work-related deaths, saying the fatality rate was lower than in Britain's construction sites. — AFP

Nine killed as cyclone lashes Oman, Iran

MUSCAT: At least nine people were killed in Oman and Iran yesterday as Tropical Cyclone Shaheen pummeled parts of their coastlines, authorities said. In Oman, two people died in a landslide and a child in flash flooding, officials said. Rescue teams pulled the bodies of two Asian workers from their home hit by a landslide in the Rusayl industrial area of Muscat province, Oman's National Committee for Emergency Management said.

The child died and another person was reported missing in flash floods in the capital's province, it added. Flights were suspended and schools closed as the storm, with wind speeds up to 139 km an hour, was due to cross Oman's north coast in the evening. In the capital, Muscat, vehicles were tire-deep in water and streets deserted.

Across the sea in Iran, six people were killed in Chabahar port in the southeastern province of Sistan-Baluchestan, parliament's news agency ICANA reported, citing deputy speaker Ali Nikzad. "Infrastructure, including electrical facilities and roads, was damaged," provincial governor Hossein Modarres-Khiabani told Iran's official IRNA news agency.

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Disappointment as no women elected in Qatar

DOHA: Women voters voiced disappointment yesterday after none were elected in Qatar's first legislative polls, with all eyes on whether the amir will use his powers to appoint 15 lawmakers to boost representation. Thirty men were elected to Qatar's Shura Council at Saturday's polls despite more than two dozen women standing

for the body which is seen as a nod to democracy rather than a fully-fledged parliament.

"The (amir's) quota is the lifeline to ensure women's representation in the next assembly," said defeated candidate Aisha Jassim Al-Kuwari, who ran in a constituency alongside four other women against 14 male contenders. "We hope to appoint four to five women because the presence of women is very important. Some of the female candidates were disappointed, of course, because they presented strong programs - but we should not forget that some female voters chose

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Algeria escalates France dispute with flight ban

PARIS: The diplomatic discord between Algeria and France deepened yesterday after Algiers banned French military planes from its airspace, its latest response to a row over visas and critical com-

ments from President Emmanuel Macron. France's jets regularly fly over the former French colony to reach the Sahel region of western Africa, where its soldiers are helping to battle insurgents as part of its Barkhane operation.

"This morning when we filed flight plans for two planes, we learned that the Algerians had stopped flights over their territory by French military planes," an army spokesman, Colonel Pascal Ianni, told AFP. He said the decision had "slightly impacted" supply flights but "does not affect our operations" in the Sahel. But the move heightened ten-

sions that had already flared Saturday when the Algerian government recalled its ambassador to France, citing "inadmissible interference" in its affairs. According to French and Algerian media reports, Macron told descendants of figures in Algeria's 1954-62 war for independence that the country was ruled by a "political-military system" that had "totally re-written" its history. "You can see that the Algerian system is tired, it has been weakened by the Hirak," he added, referring to the pro-democracy movement that forced Abdelaziz

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MUSCAT: A picture taken yesterday shows flooding in the Omani capital as Cyclone Shaheen hit the country. — AFP



DOHA: A Qatari woman casts her ballot at a polling station yesterday, during the country's first ever legislative vote. — AFP

Kuwait keen on helping Libya complete transitional phase

Libya's foreign minister confirms departure of some foreign fighters



KUWAIT: Libya's foreign minister Dr Najla Mangoush speaks during a press conference in Kuwait yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat



This handout photo released by Kuwait's Foreign Ministry yesterday shows Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah meeting with his Libyan counterpart Dr Najla Mangoush.

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Foreign Minister and State Minister for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah met with his Libyan counterpart Dr Najla Mangoush yesterday. During the meeting, the Kuwaiti minister affirmed Kuwait's keenness on helping Libya complete its transitional phase and hold its general elections on December 24, 2021. Meanwhile, the Libyan official praised Kuwait's efforts in supporting Libya and the region. In addition, both sides also discussed the historic bilateral ties between Kuwait and Libya, ways of enhancing those ties, in addition to latest regional and international developments.

Libya's foreign minister had said yesterday that some foreign fighters have left the country as the unity government seeks to marshal international help to withdraw the many who remain. "The reports are correct. There is a very modest start,"

Mangoush said at a news conference in Kuwait when asked whether some foreign fighters had been removed.

"We are still seeking a larger and comprehensive organization for the exit of mercenaries," she said. Libya's warring sides, backed by regional powers, remain entrenched with allied foreign mercenaries along front lines in defiance of a ceasefire agreement.

Any more significant withdrawal of foreign mercenaries has appeared far off amid arguments over the role of regional forces allied to each side and stumbles in efforts

to agree ground-rules for a national election.

There has been little peace or security in Libya since the 2011 NATO-backed uprising that ousted Muammar Gaddafi. The country split between warring eastern and western factions in 2014. Eastern forces were backed by the United Arab Emirates, Russia and Egypt. The previous government in Tripoli, in the west, which was recognized by the United Nations, was supported by Turkey.

The warring sides brought in mercenaries, including via Russia's Wagner group, from Syria, Sudan and Chad among

other countries, the United Nations has said.

Last year, after commander Khalifa Haftar's eastern-based Libyan National Army (LNA) was pushed back from its 14-month assault on Tripoli, the two sides agreed on a truce and accepted the installation of a new unity government in Tripoli. The ceasefire agreement called for all foreign mercenaries to be withdrawn within three months of its being signed a year ago.

The head of Libya's presidency council said last month it would take part in a conference to ensure "unified, consistent" international support and restore a sense of Libyan leadership and ownership over the country's future. But Mohammed Al-Menfi also warned of "serious challenges" that could undermine national elections planned for December 24. — Agencies



Libyan official praises Kuwait's efforts

News in brief

Amir congratulates Qatar

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations to the Amir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani on the success of his country's first Shura Council elections. His Highness Sheikh Nawaf praised the great participation of the Qatari people in the voting process, wishing Qatar's leadership and people more welfare and success.

Amir sends condolences

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of condolences yesterday to Sultan of Oman Haitham bin Tariq, over the victims of the tropical storm Shaheen. In the cable, His Highness the Amir prayed to Allah Almighty to bestow mercy upon the dead and for a speedy recovery for the injured, hoping that Oman will overcome the natural disaster. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables.

Kuwait lists 72 cases

KUWAIT: Kuwait yesterday reported 72 new COVID-19 cases registered over the previous 24 hours, raising the total to 411,803, while a single fatality took the country's death toll to 2,452. The number of patients hospitalized at COVID-19 wards stood at 40, while there were 10 patients in intensive care units in addition to 657 active cases, the ministry's spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad said. Some 28,538 swab tests were conducted over the same period, taking the total to 508,146.

Second dose available

KUWAIT: People who received their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine but missed their second dose appointment can go to the Kuwait Vaccination Center in Mishref to receive their second dose at any time without prior appointment, health ministry spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad said.

No causeway closure

KUWAIT: Reports circulating on social media alleging that Kuwaiti authorities have closed the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah Causeway for motorists are false, the Interior Ministry said yesterday. The Interior Ministry had on Friday banned cycling, jogging and other recreational activities on the bridge for public safety purposes.



KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem received Indian Ambassador to Kuwait Sibi George in his office yesterday.

KFAED signs \$1.9m deal with UN to help Syrian refugees

KUWAIT: Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development signed a \$1.9 million agreement with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to develop a health project for Syrian refugees in Jordan. In a press statement yesterday, KFAED's Director-General Marwan Al-Ghanem said that the agreement aims to provide health services to Syrian refugees in Jordan by developing primary health care services. The representative of

the High Commissioner for Syrian Refugees in Kuwait, Nasreen Rubaian, noted that the project includes providing primary health care to about 28,113 patients from Za'atari camp and about 52,314 from Azraq camp, as well as following up on coronavirus cases. In 2016, the Kuwaiti Fund provided the High Commissioner with a grant of \$3 million to contribute to supporting the response plan to the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon. — KUNA

Nine killed as cyclone lashes...

Continued from Page 1

The eye of the storm was 220 km off the coast of the province, he said.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) was also on "high alert", emergency services said. Some flights to and from Muscat International Airport were suspended "to avoid any risks", the airport said, while the Civil Aviation Authority urged people to avoid

low-lying areas and valleys. Oman declared a two-day national holiday yesterday and today and shuttered schools "due to the adverse climate conditions", the official Oman News Agency said.

Deadly storms are periodic occurrences in the Gulf. In July, northern Oman was hit by heavy rains, hail and strong winds. And in May 2018, Cyclone Mekunu hit southern Oman and the Yemeni island of Socotra, killing at least 11 people. Oman, a country of some 4.6 million people, reopened its doors to foreign tourists last month after a COVID-imposed closure.

The Gulf country - known for its rich heritage, scenic coastline and stunning terrain - has been hit hard by the fall in world crude prices since 2014 and the coronavirus pandemic. The sultanate had been

counting on tourism to boost its flagging economy but the virtual collapse of international leisure travel has set back those plans.

The UAE was also bracing for the possible impact of Cyclone Shaheen, with emergency authorities urging people to avoid beaches and low-lying areas. "We would like to assure everyone that the concerned authorities are on high alert and prepared to deal with any upcoming tropical situation," its National Emergency Crisis and Disaster Management Authority said Saturday. All construction work has been halted in Al-Ain, bordering Oman, until tomorrow, the Abu Dhabi Media Office said, while children will study remotely today and tomorrow. — AFP

Disappointment as no women...

Continued from Page 1

men and this is the will of the people." It is not known when the amir's appointments will be announced or when the council will meet. "I'm not happy because all of them (winners) are men - some of them are old. To be honest, I was surprised. It's not fair," said voter Shamma who declined to give her full name. "We are really sad," Dania Thayer, director of the Gulf International Forum, tweeted "I foresee a strong likelihood of women being appointed by the amir".

Of the 284 hopefuls who went into the race for the 30 available council seats, just 28 were women although the final proportion after a number of eleventh-hour candidate withdrawals has not been published. As well as

counting no women amongst their number, the 30 victorious candidates were older men mostly from prominent families, many of whom had backgrounds in business or government.

"You lost the battle of victory, but you won the war of participation!" popular Qatari author Ebtessam Al-Saad wrote on Twitter. "We still hesitate to accept women... voters still feel that their communication with men is more free and flexible than their dealings with women." If as expected by many analysts the amir does directly appoint women to improve the gender balance it would follow what happened in Bahrain's legislative election.

Official sources had confirmed to AFP this was a likely outcome in the event no women succeeded at the ballot box in Qatar. "Disappointed, but not surprised that not a single woman has won. Representation of women is still considered a 'token' representation and is based on filling a quota," said Qatari voter Haya. — AFP

Algeria escalates...

Continued from Page 1

Bouteflika from power in 2019 after two decades at the helm.

Macron's office did not deny the reported comments, but said the president was discussing the war in Algeria with French youths and answering questions, not giving an official interview. Ianni said there had been no official notification of the flight ban, and the French foreign ministry, contacted by AFP, declined to comment.

Last year, the Algerian government criminalized the dissemination of what it considers "false news" that harms national unity. Saturday's ambassador recall was the second time it had done so, having taken a similar response in May 2020 after French media broadcast a documentary about the Hirak movement. Algerian

officials have cracked down on efforts to revive the pro-democracy protests, and rights groups say dozens of people linked to it have been jailed in recent months.

Algiers was also angered last week after France said it would sharply reduce the number of visas it grants to citizens of Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia. Paris said the decision had been made necessary by the former colonies' failure to do enough to allow illegal migrants in France to be returned. When a French court denies a person's visa request, authorities must still secure a consular travel pass from his or her home country in order to forcibly expel them, a document that Paris says Algiers, Rabat and Tunis are largely refusing to provide.

Macron has reportedly ordered the number of visa deliveries to Algeria and Morocco to be halved from 2020 levels, and by a third for Tunisia. The Algerian foreign ministry summoned France's ambassador Francois Gouyette on Wednesday to make a "formal protest" of the visa ruling. — AFP

Local

Kuwait reopens schools amid strict precautions after 19-month shutdown

‘I never thought I would say that, but I missed school’



KUWAIT: Students attend class at schools around Kuwait yesterday. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat, Fouad Al-Shaikh and KUNA

KUWAIT: Thousands of students across Kuwait returned yesterday to their classes as the country decided to reopen schools after 19 months of closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic. With a smile on his face, Ali Al-Mhana, a 10th grader, wears his school uniform and a face mask waiting for his friends outside the school in Hawally Governorate. “I will meet all my friends again. I never thought I would say that, but I missed school,” he told Xinhua.

Mhana wasn't the only one expecting to return to school. Reem Amro, who will be in 12th grade, expresses happiness of going back to school after months of lockdowns and boredom. “At first, we were happy when schools were suspended. It was a vacation, but after months I started to be bored and lost connection with many friends due to the

coronavirus pandemic where there were no visits and meetups,” Amro said.

For the first time, Alia Al-Edwan, a housewife, spent hours on the traffic jam to reach her daughter's school. “I used to stay at home and make activities for my children inside the home, but now I have to deal with the outside world again,” she said. Edwan added that e-learning was good for her family as she used to have full supervision of her daughter during classes.

However, for Hannah Al-Essawi, a mother of a

student, e-learning wasn't a successful move. “Children have suffered enormous setbacks in their learning journey. Most students weren't paying attention to the teacher during class, homework was cancelled, and no sports activities to evolve the child's character,” she complained.

Iman Al-Taki, a teacher, said that traditional and direct education is much better than distance education since the student is under the supervision of the teacher and also the student can focus and ask the teacher

about the curriculum.

The Ministry of Education has developed a plan aiming to provide a safe educational environment by applying health requirements and implementing a plan that includes social distancing, reducing the number of students in classes, and not allowing the unvaccinated to enter without a weekly negative PCR test certificate. Parents welcomed the return of schools, but some of them complained about the weekly PCR test as it is an extra cost because most of them have more than one child.

As a resumption plan, the ministry decided to divide the school students into two groups, where the first attend on Sundays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays, while the other attends on Mondays and Wednesdays, and the days are switched between the two groups weekly. - Xinhua

Around 30% Filipino students in Kuwait did not enroll in two years

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: Around 30 percent of Filipino students in Kuwait failed to enroll in the last two academic years - 20 percent during 2020-2021 and an additional 10 percent in 2021-2022, Principal Antonio Casupang of Philippines International English School (PIES) in Fahaheel revealed. “Because of the pandemic, many parents decided to enroll their kids for online classes, while some parents decided to send their families back home to the Philippines. So, we had an around 30 percent decline in enrollees last year and this year,” said Casupang.

Kuwait resumed on-campus classes for private and public schools for the 2021-2022 academic year after a 19-month hiatus. The resumption follows putting in place the necessary health precautions to protect students against the risks of the coronavirus, Assistant Secretary of the Ministry of Education Dr Abdulmohsen Al-Huwaila said yesterday.

Principal Dr Jesusa V Puno of the New Kuwait Philippines International School (NKPIS) in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh confirmed a similar decline in student numbers. “In our school, an almost same number of students failed to enroll since the onset of pandemic, but at least most students are now back for on-

campus classes. The pandemic hurt us a lot, but we cannot blame the parents for their decision to enroll their children in schools back in their home country,” Puno said.

These two schools cater to the educational needs of the Filipino community in Kuwait - from kindergarten to senior high school. Out of a total of 230,000 Filipinos in Kuwait, 165,000 are domestic helpers, who are unable to bring their families here. Most Filipinos who can sponsor their families are those with salaries of KD 500 and above. Most of the students are children of the 65,000 skilled and semi-skilled Filipino workers, many of whom were affected by the pandemic.

Like other schools, the two Filipino schools have divided their students into two groups to attend face-to-face and online classes alternately every week. “This system is still very new to both students and teachers, but we have equipped our teachers with the tools they need. We are ready for this academic year. Combining traditional and digital methods of teaching is quite tough and challenging, but we have to live with it since there is no turning back,” Casupang said.

“Besides, we have to deal with the students differently, as we have embraced the fact that our students are overexposed to computer screens. We have to deal with students who are bored at home with a lack of social skills. Of course, education obtained online cannot be guaranteed, although I can vouch that facilities at PIES conform with the guidelines of both MoE and MoH,” he said.

The two principals confirmed some of their students during the pandemic stopped attend-



Some parents complain of weekly PCR

the student is under the supervision of the teacher and also the student can focus and ask the teacher



Antonio Casupang



Dr. Jesusa V Puno

ing school after they were sent home, or their parents too decided to go back home for good. “The challenges that we are facing now are different from the pre-pandemic era. I hope everything will get back to normal by next year,” Puno said.

Recently, Minister of Education Ali Al-Mudhaf said the ministry has made all arrangements to ensure the high quality and smoothness of the educational process in the new schooling year. A statistical chart recently posted on the ministry's website put the overall number of schools in Kuwait at 1,146, including 985 public schools and 161 private ones, or 85.95 and 14.05 percent respectively of the total.

The number of school students hit 522,220 - males and females, including 439,365 - or 84.13 percent, in government schools, and 82,855 - or 15.87 percent, in private Arabic schools. The school day in public and Arabic private schools starts at 7:30 am for all stages, and ends at 12:20 pm for kindergarten, 1:00 pm for primary and 2:05 pm for intermediate and secondary stages.

Establishing Kuwait's Abdullah Al-Salem University 'historic step'

KUWAIT: Minister of Oil and Minister of Higher Education Dr Mohammad Al-Faris said yesterday that the establishment of the new Abdullah Al-Salem University was a historic step and part of the state's development goals for 2035. The statement came after the meeting for university's Constituent Board headed by chairperson Dr Moudhi Al-Hmoud. He pointed out that the aim of Abdullah Al-Salem University was to prepare qualified youth cadres to contribute in building and developing society and meet the requirements of the labor market.

The founding of the university's board came within the framework of the state's support for higher education and the leadership's interest in developing the country. The board will approve the establishment of Abdullah Al-Salem University and decide on all buildings, lands and public facilities dedicated for the university.

On her and the committee members behalf, Dr Hmoud thanked the leadership in laying the foundation for the establishment of the University. She praised the members of the Constituent Board, stressing that it included a diverse group of specialists in several scientific and practical fields which enhances human development and keep pace with global challenges and changes. The Secretary-General of the board, Dr Adel Al-Hussainan, stated that the board's first meeting reviewed the decrees that were listed on the agenda including the ones relating to Kuwait Vision 2035. —KUNA

Zain partners with National Safe Education Campaign

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced its partnership with the National Safe Education Campaign (Safe Education), which comes in joint collaboration with the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, and Ministry of Information. The campaign aims at raising public awareness of the necessary health and traffic safety measures on the occasion of the new academic year, which started this year with physical attendance in classes.

Zain's partnership with this awareness campaign comes in line with its Corporate Sustainability and

Social Responsibility strategy, through which the company renews its support to the various public entities in the nation to adopt many similar initiatives and programs that serve the community and contributes to public health and safety.

Commenting on the partnership, Chief Corporate Communication and Relations Officer Waleed Al-Khashti said: “Today we are pleased to announce our partnership and support of the Safe Education campaign in collaboration with four different ministries to mark the beginning of the new academic year. This partnership is nothing short of a clear reflection of the active collaboration between the nation's public and private sectors towards the common interest of protecting the health and safety of everyone”.

Khashti continued: “With the new academic year resuming physical attendance in classes after 18 long months due to the pandemic, it is very important to communicate with students and their parents

to raise awareness of the important health measures they have to follow to ensure their safety. Moreover, we also believe it is crucial to spread important instructions related to traffic safety and other general guidelines. That's why we were keen on utilizing our various media channels to serve the goals of this campaign.”

Khashti concluded: “At Zain, we are committed to supporting the country's various developmental plans to achieve social, health, and security goals, as we represent the Kuwaiti private sector. For this, we are proud to be among the first companies to collaborate with the government to make this campaign a success. We hope this initiative contributes to protecting everyone involved.”

Assistant General Director of the General Department of Public Relations and Media Security at the Ministry of Interior, Colonel Abdulleh Al-Abdulsalam, commented: “Safe Education aims at reaching out to students, parents, and everyone work-

ing at educational institutions. The campaign comes in collaboration with our colleagues at the ministries of Health, Education, and Information, and each entity has a role to spread their message, including health measures, traffic safety guidelines, and other guidelines with the collective aim of raising awareness and achieving a safer education environment.”

Abdulsalam continued: “I would like to extend my thanks to everyone who participated and contributed to making this campaign a reality. I'd also like to thank Zain for joining forces with us to make this initiative a success and contribute to a safer education environment for everyone. I wish all the best of luck to our students and hope they stay safe.”

Zain's support to this initiative comes in line with its keenness on supporting all efforts that serve the nation, reflecting Kuwait's deep-rooted values. The company's participation in the campaign affirms its role in achieving social sustainability and the role of the private sector within the local community.

Greek ambassador congratulates Kuwait Times

KUWAIT: Ambassador of Greece to Kuwait Konstantinos Piperigos congratulated Kuwait Times on its 60th anniversary. In a letter to Editor-in-Chief Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan, Ambassador Piperigos wrote the following:

"On the occasion of the 60th anniversary of Kuwait Times, the first local daily published in English language in the State of Kuwait, I would like to convey my warmest congratulations to you personally and the staff of Kuwait Times. The increasing popularity and success of your newspaper is well deserved. It is the result of exemplary professionalism, dedication and hard work of the Kuwait Times staff, during the past 60 years. I am confident that, building on this successful legacy, Kuwait Times has a bright future prospects. Wishing you excellent health and every success in your challenging task and endeavors. I avail myself of this opportunity to reiterate my highest esteem and consideration."



Konstantinos Piperigos

Armenian envoy congratulates Kuwait Times

KUWAIT: Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Armenia to Kuwait Sarmen Baghdasarian congratulated Kuwait Times on its 60th anniversary. In a letter to Editor-in-Chief Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan, Ambassador Baghdasarian wrote the following:

"On the occasion of the 60th anniversary of Kuwait Times, I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to you and all our colleagues working at the publisher. Being established in the wake of Kuwait's independence, your reputable newspaper has been one of the main English language dailies in the Gulf region. Today, Kuwait Times provides a unique service for expatriates, reporting local and foreign news. I would like to wish you all the success in your future undertakings to continue providing the readers with the best knowledge and information they need."



Sarmen Baghdasarian

Society launches campaign to help kidney patients

KUWAIT: Kuwait Humanitarian Friendship Society Chairman Ahmad Al-Sarraf announced launching a campaign to help kidney patients in need in Kuwait. The society obtained a license from the Ministry of Social Affairs to organize the campaign, entitled "Khaima fi Kuwaitna" (our welfare is in our Kuwait) between the third and 30th of October, Sarraf said.

Meanwhile, the society's Director General Khaled bin Sabt highlighted the importance of supporting the campaign "that aims at helping more than 1,000 kidney dialysis for Kuwaiti and expatriate patients in various hospitals." Bin Sabt urged the public to support the campaign and help relieve the burden of costly fees on needy patients, saying that it is "a matter of life and death for those who suffer renal failure." He added that donation of any amount can help in the treatment of kidney patients and reduce their suffering.

Donors are welcomed through contacting the society directly or making donation online on the society's website, Bin Sabt said, reminding that the society does not deduct any amount from the donations as all proceeds go for those who are in need.



Ahmad Al-Sarraf

Dubai ruler visits Kuwait's Pavilion at Expo 2020



DUBAI: United Arab Emirates Vice President, Prime Minister and ruler of Dubai Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum visited the Kuwait pavilion at the Expo 2020 Dubai yesterday. Kuwait Pavilion's Commissioner General, Undersecretary of Kuwait's Ministry of

Information Muneera Al-Huwaidi welcomed Sheikh Mohammad and escorted him in a tour around the pavilion.

Kuwait's pavilion at the Expo reflects the struggle of the Kuwaiti people who spent their lives in building a civilized state among the world coun-

tries. The Kuwaiti pavilion, held under the slogan 'New Kuwait... New opportunities for Sustainability', represents the Arabic culture and Islamic identity. Visitors flock to the Kuwaiti pavilion to learn about the country's rich history, heritage and traditions. —KUNA and AFP photos

Indian Embassy celebrates 152nd 'Gandhi Jayanti'

KUWAIT: The Embassy of India in Kuwait celebrated Gandhi Jayanti marking the 152nd birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi on Saturday. Indian Ambassador Sibi George paid floral tribute to the statue of Mahatma Gandhi and welcomed members of the Indian diaspora and representatives of Indian associations in Kuwait, a press release issued by the embassy said. The ambassador, in his opening remarks, highlighted the importance of Mahatma Gandhi's principles of altruism and non-violence. Videos of the song 'Vaishnav Jan to Tene Kahiye' sung by Kuwaiti and European artists were screened during the ceremony.

The ambassador felicitated winners of the Ambassador's Cup for the elocution competition held in August 2021. Two local Indian artists presented portraits of Mahatma Gandhi to the ambassador. Indian artists staged a scintillating dance performance based on the composition of Gandhiji's famous message 'My life is my message'. The event was concluded by paying floral tribute to the statue of Mahatma Gandhi by representatives of all Indian associations in Kuwait. The event received a huge response from Kuwait on the embassy's social media, the release added.



KUWAIT: Indian Ambassador Sibi George with winners of the Ambassador's Cup for the Elocution Competition.

NBK launches its annual breast cancer awareness campaign

KUWAIT: On the occasion of breast cancer awareness month, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) launches its annual campaign to raise awareness for female health during the month of October. The campaign is a part of NBK's continuous efforts to increase social awareness on breast cancer and promote ways of prevention.

NBK's Public Relations Officer, Joanne Al-

Abduljaleel, said that this awareness campaign reflects NBK's commitment towards corporate social responsibility. NBK strives to highlight its support to its employees as part of this commitment through health and well-being activities and events.

"The breast cancer initiative aims at educating our employees on the importance of early detection and encouraging our female employees to get routine checkups", Abduljaleel added. "This awareness campaign reflects NBK's commitment towards our employees who represent a completely foundational priority at NBK, and is one of our six main sustainability focus areas," she noted.

The campaign is shared with employees through NBK social media channels by including awareness tips and videos about the treatment of breast cancer

and early warning signs with Dr Anwar Munawer Al-Nouri - Medical Oncology Consultant. In support to raising awareness against breast cancer, NBK collaborated with breast cancer survivors to share their stories and offer patients knowledge and inspiration. Breast cancer is the second most common cancer in women and men worldwide. The survival rate of early stage breast cancer is 80-90 percent. Get checked.



Joanne Al-Abduljaleel



Georgia's ruling party leads polls, opposition alleges electoral fraud

Fears of 'election subversion': Trump flirts with 2024 bid



KABUL: Taliban supporters attend an open air rally in a field in Kabul yesterday. —AFP

Afghan Taliban hold victory rally

Bomb blast rocks Afghanistan capital

KABUL: Taliban supporters and senior figures held their first mass rally near Kabul yesterday, but their show of strength was overshadowed by a bomb blast near a mosque in the Afghan capital. No foreign government has yet recognized the Islamist former rebels' rule, though their hold on power within the country is becoming stronger, seven weeks after they took the capital.

But in a sign that the Taliban victory has not brought an end to violence after Afghanistan's 20-year conflict, an explosion killed at least two civilians and wounded several more outside Kabul's Eid Gah mosque. Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid had said on Saturday that a prayer ceremony would be held at the mosque for his mother following her recent death. He made no reference to this yesterday as he tweeted that the blast had killed civilians in the area.

Civilians in bloodied clothing were seen by AFP arriving at the nearby Kabul Emergency Hospital, and interior ministry spokesman Qari Sayed Khosti told AFP: "Our initial information shows two civilians were killed and three wounded in the blast." Taliban fighters arriving at the hospital handed over their weapons and stripped off their body armor to go in to donate blood, and the hospital said on Twitter that four patients were being treated.

'Leave Afghanistan to Afghanistan'
The blast, which could be heard across the centre of the capital, came shortly after the new Taliban "interim government" staged a rally just outside the capital, from which they were driven out in 2001 in a US-led operation launched after the 9/11 attacks. A ban on unauthorized demonstrations has meant protests, many led by women, against Afghanistan's new masters have dwindled. But yesterday's pro-Taliban rally in Kohdaman township in the hilly outskirts of Kabul was attended by 1,500 men and boys.

"This is the day we waited for," said Khalil Haqqani, the new minister for refugees who in 2011 was labeled a terrorist by the United States with a \$5 million bounty on his head. He is a prominent leader of the Haqqani militant network founded by his brother Jalaluddin. "We have achieved our goal, but it requires protection," he told the gathering, with his rifle leaning against the lectern, boasting that the country has a "bright future" despite

being shunned by international donors.

"My advice to the world is that they leave Afghanistan to Afghanistan." Flanked by armed Taliban fighters in combat gear, leading officials and commanders addressed an audience sat in rows of chairs under awnings, celebrating victory over the United States and praising suicide bombers. One speaker urged the crowd to "respect elders" because they were the "mujahids who fought against the Soviets" in the 1980s. Another, introduced as Rahmatullah from nearby Mir Bacha Kot, said the Taliban's victory was "the result of those youths who stood in queues to register for suicide attacks".

Pakistan's 'critical role'

The United States, European nations and other powers that were major donors to the former Afghan government before the Taliban takeover have warned they will not recognize the new administra-

tion - made up largely of hardliners and no women - unless it becomes more inclusive. Afghanistan's neighbor Pakistan has urged the world to engage with the Taliban, while stopping short of itself recognizing the new regime.

US Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman, who will be in Islamabad next week, has pressed for an inclusive government in Kabul, and said Washington looks to "Pakistan to play a critical role in enabling that outcome". But while hundreds turned out for Saturday's rally, the Taliban have been loath to allow similar gatherings by those opposed to their rule. Last Thursday, the Taliban violently cracked down on a small women's rights demonstration in eastern Kabul, firing shots into the air to disperse protesters.

Gunmen then forced back the protesters as they tried to continue with the demonstration. Isolated anti-Taliban rallies - with women at the forefront - were staged in cities around the country after the group seized power, including in the western city of Herat where two people were shot dead. But protests have dwindled since the government issued an order banning demonstrations that do not have prior authorization, warning of "severe legal action" for violators. —AFP

Fuming France in no hurry to mend Australia ties

PARIS: More than two weeks after the shock scrapping of a submarine contract with Australia, France is in no hurry to mend ties with Canberra as it weighs up whether to extract a cost for its ally's "betrayal". France recalled its ambassador to Canberra to protest the September 15 announcement by Australia that it was scrapping the multibillion-dollar submarine contract with France in favor of a new deal negotiated in secret with the US and Britain. The envoy is still in Paris, with no date set for his return, in a diplomatic snub intended to underline French outrage over the new AUKUS security pact between Canberra, Washington and London.

French leader Emmanuel Macron has also declined requests for a call from Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison who wants to clear the air. By contrast, the French ambassador to the United States, who was withdrawn at the same time in protest by Paris, has already returned to Washington and Macron spoke to US President Joe Biden on September 22. "We need to have a conversation of substance" with Australia, an aide to the French leader said last week on condition of anonymity, adding that the conversation would take place "at an appropriate time." The exchange would be organized only once ambassador Jean-Pierre Thebaud returns to Canberra "with a message from France that will set out a framework for our exchanges with Prime Minister Morrison." Morrison, who was a guest of Macron's in the French capital in June, has acknowledged that he will need to be "patient", adding: "We understand their disappointment." Australian Trade Minister Dan Tehan is due in Paris next week, but his French counterpart Frank Riester has declined to meet him, a source close to the French minister said.

'Stronger protest'

France's anger stems not only from the loss of the submarine deal - worth Aus\$50 billion (31 billion euros, \$36.5 billion) in 2016 - but also the shattering of an alliance that it saw as a cornerstone of its Indo-Pacific security strategy. So far, Paris has reacted differently to each of the three English-speaking countries involved in AUKUS which will see US-designed nuclear submarines replace diesel-powered French ones. Following their call, Macron and Biden said they would meet in person later this month, while US



SYDNEY: A file photo shows French President Emmanuel Macron (2nd left) and Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull (center) standing on the deck of HMAS Waller, a Collins-class submarine operated by the Royal Australian Navy. —AFP

Secretary of State Antony Blinken arrives in Paris on Monday to build bridges. France never withdrew its ambassador from London, and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Macron spoke last week. "It's a stronger protest (against Australia) because in some ways we can allow ourselves to do it," Bruno Tertrais from the Foundation for Strategic Research, a Paris-based think-tank, told AFP. "Australia is a friendly country, but we don't have as deep relations with her as with Britain and the United States. In other words, it's easier and less costly to freeze official relations with Canberra than it would have been with London or Washington."

'Australian punch'

Beyond diplomatic posturing, one area where France could extract a cost is in talks over a new trade deal between the European Union and Australia. The European Union is Australia's third-biggest trading partner and the two sides had hoped to reach a deal before the end of the year.

"I don't see how we can have confidence in our Australian partner," French Europe Minister Clement Beaune said in the aftermath of the announcement of AUKUS, raising the prospect of France scuttling any advances. On Friday, a long-planned round of talks was postponed by a month. "If there are any retaliatory measures, they will be limited," said Tertrais who was skeptical that France was alone in pushing for the trade talks to be delayed. "I don't think France is in a state of mind of wanting to punish Australia." He expects that joint military operations, a feature of the once blossoming relations, will resume in due course, as well as contacts between the governments, who share common security concerns about China. In France, some commentators have reached for ruder metaphors to describe the impact of the loss of submarine - and the recovery time needed by Paris. "We got an Australian punch, an American late-tackle and a British eye-gouging," said Senator Philippe Folliot during a hearing in the upper house this week. —AFP

Tunisia TV host, MP held over comments on president

TUNIS: Tunisian authorities yesterday arrested a television journalist and an MP who appeared on his show for criticizing the recent power grab by President Kais Saied, their lawyer told AFP. It is the latest detention of a legislator after the immunity of MPs was lifted under Saied's July 25 suspension of parliament. He also sacked the government and put himself in charge of the prosecution. Last month Saied followed up with measures that allow the president effectively to rule by decree, in the only democracy to emerge from the Arab Spring uprisings of a decade ago.

The lawyer, Samir Ben Omar, identified the arrested lawmaker as Abdellatif Al-Alaoui and named the Zitouna TV presenter as Amer Ayad, saying they were being held on charges of "plotting against state security". In the Hassad 24 program they both criticized the president's September 29 appointment of Najla Bouden as Tunisia's first female prime minister, with Ayad scoffing that she would function only as "servant of the sultan".

Ayad speculated that Saied had been unable to find a man to fill the prime minister's post. In his remarks the legislator Alaoui added that he had "the courage to say" the Saied's measures were "a coup d'etat". Both were arrested on the request of a military court for "the expression of their own opinions during this broadcast," their lawyer said. Alaoui is a member of ultraconservative Islamist-nationalist party Al-Karama, an ally of Islamist-inspired Ennahdha which had the largest number of seats in the parliament which Saied suspended.

The president made his power grab after months of political stalemate and during the COVID-19 pandemic which further aggravated the North African country's economic and social difficulties. Zitouna TV is considered close to Al-Karama and Ennahdha, two parties which are the foes of Saied. Military justice arrested Al-Karama's head Seifeddine Makhlof on September 22 for "undermining the dignity of the army," his lawyer said at the time. —AFP

International

In Cyprus, migrant parents decry separation from kids

'I can live neither in Lebanon nor in Syria'

KOFINOU: "I can only cry. I'm devastated - my family too," said 25-year-old Syrian Kawthar Raslan, cradling her newborn child in a migrant camp on the Mediterranean island of Cyprus. She was dumped at the camp by authorities after being separated at sea from her husband and other children, aged just one and three.

The family left Lebanon's capital Beirut on August 22 on board a boat carrying dozens of other Syrian migrants, destined for Cyprus, a European Union member state 160 kilometers away. Around 10 kilometers from the Cypriot coast, the boat was intercepted by coastguards seeking to send the vessel back to Lebanon. A video filmed on board, seen by AFP, shows migrants crying out "Help us!" to the coastguards. Seeing the pregnant Kawthar was close to giving birth, the coastguards took her to Cyprus.

But they left most of the other passengers - including the rest of her family - in the boat, which returned to Lebanon. Lebanon is home to more than a million Syrian refugees who have fled their country's decade-old civil war. And Lebanon has been beset by a devastating economic crisis, which has propelled hundreds of Syrians towards Cyprus. But Cyprus, with the EU's highest proportion of asylum seekers per capita, last year signed an agreement with Lebanon to send back all illegal migrants who attempt to reach the island by boat.

'Mummy'

"I almost died when I heard about my family being sent back to Lebanon," Kawthar told AFP, sitting on a mattress on the floor of a prefabricated cabin in Kofinou camp in the south of the island.

"They knew that my husband and my children were with me and they prevented them from following me," she said of the Cypriot coastguards. "I will never forget that moment." Kawthar gave birth to a son, Yazan, on August 23, a day after being picked up by the coastguard. Originally from Idlib in north-western Syria, she urged Cypriot authorities to "show compassion" and allow her to be reunited with her family. "I can live neither in Lebanon nor in Syria," she said.



Migrants crying out 'Help us!'

Cypriot authorities say only migrants with refugee status have the right to be reunited with their families. But among the 7,700 Syrian asylum seekers who have arrived here since 2018, less than two percent have achieved this status, the UN refugee agency UNHCR says. Back in Lebanon, Kawthar's husband is struggling to care for the family. "The children are traumatized, only one word comes out of their mouths - 'Mummy'", Hassan Al-Ali told AFP in the village of Ain El-Tefaha, where he rents a room, around 30 kilometers from Beirut.



KOFINOU: Kawthar Raslan, 25-year-old Syrian refugee who reached Cyprus on boat while pregnant and was separated from the rest of her family, holds her baby Yazan at the Kofinou asylum centre near the Cypriot coastal city of Larnaca. — AFP

"We were on board the boat under a scorching sun and the children were very thirsty," he remembered. "My daughter wasn't moving - I thought that she was going to die," he added, his voice breaking with emotion. Like Kawthar, Issa Chamma, another Syrian on board that day, found himself in Kofinou

camp. Originally from Aleppo, the 37-year-old migrant suffers from lung problems, and he was also separated from his family after losing consciousness onboard. His wife and three children, aged from two to 11, even "spent two days in prison on their return to Beirut," Issa said. — AFP

French Catholic probe uncovers paedophiles

PARIS: Some 3,000 paedophiles have operated inside the French Catholic Church since 1950, the head of an independent commission investigating the scandal told AFP days ahead of the release of its report. The commission's research uncovered between 2,900 and 3,200 paedophile priests or other members of the church, said Jean-Marc Sauve, adding that it was "a minimum estimate". The commission's report is due to be released on Tuesday after two and a half years of research based on church, court and police archives, as well as interviews with witnesses.

Sauve, senior French civil servant, said the report, which runs to 2,500 pages, had attempted to quantify both the number of offenders and the number of victims. It also looked into "the mechanisms, notably institutional and cultural ones" within the Church which allowed paedophiles to remain, and will offer 45 proposals. The independent commission was set up in 2018 by the Bishops' Conference of France (CEF) and the national congregations conference (CORREF) in response to a number of scandals that shook the Church in France and worldwide.

Its formation also came after Pope Francis passed a landmark measure obliging those who know about sex abuse in the Catholic Church to report it to their superiors. Made up of 22 legal professionals, doctors, historians, sociologists and theologians, its brief was to investigate allegations of child sex abuse by clerics dating back to the 1950s. When it began its work it called for witness statements and set up a telephone hotline, then reported receiving thousands of messages in the months that followed.

'A bomb'

The report will be delivered to the CEF and the CORREF and released at a press conference Tuesday to which representatives of victims' associations are invited. "It's not going to go easy on anyone," said Philippe Portier, a sociologist who was part of the commission. "It will have the effect of a bomb", added Olivier Savignac, of the victims' association Parler et Revivre. Bishop Eric de Moulins-Beaufort, the president of the CEF, said he feared the report would reveal "significant and frightening figures", during a meeting with parishioners from his diocese.

A message from Church authorities to priests and parishes ahead of weekend masses warned that the report's publication would be "a harsh and serious moment", which calls for "an attitude of truth and compassion". Sauve had said in November that the handling of suspected paedophile cases "in the past has often been faulty". He said it was "extremely serious that there could have been some institutions and some communities, in small number, where systemic abuses could have been committed".

In most cases, however, prosecution is unlikely because the abuse occurred beyond French statutes of limitations, and it remains unclear what actions the church itself will take against offenders. The report is expected to be closely studied at the Vatican, where the issue was raised by the pope in September during a meeting with French bishops. "I expect that we will be forced to confront this burden, as bleak as it is, so that we can then take the necessary measures," said Veronique Margron, president of the CORREF conference. — AFP

Tens of thousands march for abortion rights in US

WASHINGTON: Wearing pink hats and T-shirts and shouting "Hands off my body," tens of thousands of women took to the streets across the United States on Saturday in protests aimed at countering a conservative drive to restrict access to abortions. In Washington, about 10,000 protesters rallied in a square near the White House under sunny skies before marching to the US Supreme Court, which will have the final say on the contentious issue.

The protesters held signs that read "Mind your uterus" and "Make abortion legal," with several women - and men - dressed like late Supreme Court justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, America's iconic women's rights crusader, who died last year. The perennial fight over the procedure in America has become even more intense since a Texas law went into effect September 1 banning almost all abortions, unleashing a fierce counterattack in the courts and Congress, but with few public demonstrations until now.

Two days before the Supreme Court is due to reconvene, the rallies took place in more than 600 cities, according to organizers, who said that

hundreds of thousands of people gathered across all 50 states. "Women are humans, we are full humans, and we need to be treated like full humans," said Laura Bushwitz, a 66-year-old retired Florida teacher protesting in Washington, wearing a dress with portraits of women activists and politicians. "We should be able to have our own choice on what we want to do with our bodies. Period."

Michaelyn Martinez, a woman in her seventies with closely cropped hair, told AFP she got pregnant at the age of 19, several years before the landmark 1973 Roe v Wade case, when the Supreme Court guaranteed the right to an abortion up until a fetus is viable outside the womb.

Martinez ended up having a daughter and getting married only to divorce two years later. "It changed my whole life — not having access to birth control and abortion," she said. "I don't want us to go back to the time when I was a young woman." At the Supreme Court, the marchers were met by counterprotests. A chain of riot police kept the two groups apart.

'Will not be silent'

In New York, activists gathered in



WASHINGTON: Pro-Life activists counter-protest the Women's March and Rally for Abortion Justice at the US Supreme Court in Washington, DC, on October 2, 2021. — AFP

Manhattan's Foley Square holding signs that read "We are not ovary-acting" and "I have a vagina." Juliette O'Shea, 17, organized about 30 teens from her Manhattan high school to attend the rally to "show solidarity" with Texas. "We're trying to show that we are a strong and unified group of people who will not be silent when crazy abortion bans like the one in Texas are put into place," O'Shea told AFP. The Supreme Court has already refused to block the Texas law and has agreed to review a restrictive Mississippi law that could provide an

opportunity to overturn Roe v Wade.

So far this year, 19 states have adopted 63 laws restricting access to abortions. In Texas, where conservative Governor Greg Abbott signed his state's abortion bill into law in May, hundreds gathered outside the capitol building in Austin holding signs with messages such as "My body, my choice" and "Abort Abbott." Similar scenes played out coast to coast in major cities such as Chicago and San Francisco, as well as smaller locales such as Great Falls, Montana and Lubbock, Texas. — AFP

Fears of 'election subversion': Trump flirts with 2024 bid

WASHINGTON: The US presidential election of 2000 hinged on a few votes in Florida and was ultimately decided in the Supreme Court. The 2020 White House contest gave birth to the "Big Lie" and saw supporters of the losing candidate storm the US Capitol. Just wait and see what 2024 has in store. Donald Trump, the first president in US history to refuse to accept the outcome of an election, is flirting with another White House run in what could be a make-or-break moment for American democracy.

Robert Kagan, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, set alarm bells ringing in political circles last week with a chilling doomsday scenario opinion piece in The Washington Post. "The United States is heading into its greatest political and constitutional crisis since the Civil War," Kagan wrote. The neo-conservative scholar warned of a "reasonable chance over the next three to four years of incidents of mass violence, a breakdown of federal authority, and the division of the country into warring red and blue enclaves." Polls suggest a majority of Americans share at least some of Kagan's concerns: 56 percent of the respondents in a recent CNN-SSRS survey said US democracy is under attack. Thirty-seven percent said it is being "tested." Only six percent said it is in no danger. Trump's unceasing and unfounded claims that the November 2020 presidential vote was "stolen" by Democrat Joe Biden have seeped into the political bloodstream.

Seventy-eight percent of the Republicans surveyed by CNN-SSRS said they do not believe Biden legitimately won the presidency, a figure in line with the findings of other opinion polls. "It's a new phenomenon in American elections," said Edward Foley, a constitutional law professor at The Ohio State University. "There have been fights over hanging chads - like Bush vs Gore in 2000 - and there have been recounts for as long as there have been elec-



ARLINGTON: In this file photo, the Twitter account of US President Donald Trump is displayed on a mobile phone in Arlington, Virginia. — AFP

tions in America," Foley said. "But the 'Big Lie' is a new thing. It's disconnected from reality and it's kind of a social pathology."

'By whatever means necessary'

Richard Hasen, a law and political science professor at the University of California, Irvine, said in a recent research paper that the United States finds itself in a moment of "democratic peril," facing an unprecedented danger of "election subversion." "The United States faces a serious risk that the 2024 presidential election, and other future US elections, will not be conducted fairly, and that the candidates taking office will not reflect the free choices made by eligible voters under previously announced election rules," Hasen wrote. In his opinion piece, Kagan said the 75-year-old Trump and his Republican allies are laying the groundwork to ensure a 2024 victory "by whatever means necessary." Trump, who retains an iron grip on the Republican faithful and is all but certain to be the party's presidential nominee if he does decide to run, appears to be setting the stage for the "Big Lie 2.0," said Foley. The strategy involves restrictions such as voter identification laws passed by the legislatures of some Republican-led states which Democrats claim are intended to suppress the minority vote and Republicans say are designed to protect the integrity of the ballot. — AFP

German parties meet as coalition haggling begins

BERLIN: German political parties began exploratory talks yesterday as they jostle to form the next government after a close election, with the centre-left Social Democrats (SPD) battling Angela Merkel's conservatives for the chancellorship. The SPD and its candidate Olaf Scholz narrowly won last week's vote on 25.7 percent, with Merkel's CDU-CSU alliance plunging to an all-time low of 24.1 percent as she prepares to leave the stage after 16 years in power. The result leaves the SPD in pole position to form a government, but conservative leader Armin Laschet has also vowed to begin coalition talks in a last-ditch effort to keep the ailing CDU-CSU in power.

In the complex calculations for a coalition, the makeup of the next German government essentially hinges on which of the two parties can persuade the Greens and the liberal FDP to sign up for a partnership. First up in what Der Spiegel magazine has described as the "poker game for power" is the SPD, which will huddle with the FDP and the Greens in the evening. Their rivals, the CDU-CSU, will meet with the FDP in the evening and the Greens tomorrow.

In a poll for the ZDF broadcaster on Friday, 59 percent of respondents said they were in favor of an SPD-Greens-FDP coalition, also known as the "traffic-light" combination after the parties' colors. Only 24 percent said they would prefer the combination led by the CDU, a coalition known as "Jamaica" after the colors of that country's flag. Some 76 percent said they thought Scholz should be the next German chancellor, with just 13 percent backing Laschet. — AFP

International

Georgia's ruling party leads polls, opposition alleges electoral fraud

Vote marred by 'widespread' allegations of intimidation: OSCE

TBILISI: Georgia's ruling party led yesterday in municipal polls held after ex-president Mikheil Saakashvili's arrest, with the opposition alleging electoral fraud as a protracted political crisis in the Caucasus nation deepened. After almost all precincts were counted, the ruling Georgian Dream party led with 46.6 percent of the votes in Saturday's elections, while all of the opposition parties combined garnered 53.4 percent, official results showed.

Critics have denounced a backsliding on democracy in Georgia, saying parliamentary elections held last October were rigged and accusing the ruling party of using criminal prosecutions to punish political opponents and journalists. Under an EU-brokered inter-party agreement in May, Georgian Dream had pledged to hold snap parliamentary elections if it won less than 43 percent of the municipal vote. But it unilaterally withdrew from the pact in July, sparking harsh criticism from the West, and Saturday's result frees them from the obligation to call snap polls.

Georgian Dream said in a statement that the closely-watched elections "were held at the highest democratic standards." But opposition parties said yesterday widespread irregularities undermined the credibility of the elections, held in a tense atmosphere after Saakashvili, the country's foremost opposition leader and former president, was arrested on return from exile.

"The election results were falsified. We have witnessed intimidation and bribing of voters prior to the elections, multiple voting on the election day," Giorgi Baramidze, a leader of Saakashvili's United National Movement (UNM), told AFP. "The elections' credibility has already been undermined by

the fact that the leader of the opposition was first forced into exile and then arrested," he said referring to Saakashvili. "We will use all the legal means to reverse the falsification."

Badri Japaridze, a leader of opposition Lelo party, said: "The elections were marred by large-scale intimidation and bribing of voters, seriously affecting the electoral results." In a number of major cities - including capital Tbilisi - second round runoffs



Saakashvili on hunger strike

will have to be held on October 30 between mayoral candidates from the Georgian Dream and the UNM, the country's main opposition force.

Hunger strike

Saakashvili, 53, secretly returned to Georgia on Friday from Ukraine - where he heads a government agency steering reforms - ahead of the elections and was quickly detained for alleged abuse of office. The flamboyant pro-Western reformer and president in 2004-2013, denied any wrongdoing, denounced a six-year jail sentence in absentia as politically motivated and went on hunger strike fol-



RUSTAVI: A photograph shows a view of the prison in Rustavi, outside Tbilisi. Former Georgia's President Mikheil Saakashvili has been arrested and placed in Rustavi prison upon his return from exile. — AFP

lowing his arrest. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said yesterday he will be pressing for Saakashvili's return to Ukraine as he is a Ukrainian national and was stripped of his Georgian passport.

Saakashvili's jailing aggravated the political crisis that engulfed Georgia last October when opposition parties denounced parliamentary elections as rigged, refused to take up their seats in the newly elected legislature and staged mass protests to demand snap polls. Prior to his arrest, Saakashvili had called on supporters to take to the streets "to protect election results." But opposition parties have so far refrained from staging protests, awaiting

the conclusions from international monitors who are due to present their assessment later on.

The United States has hinted at possible sanctions against Georgian officials over the country's backsliding on democracy. In comments to AFP through a representative, who visited him in prison on Saturday, Saakashvili said he returned to Georgia despite looming arrest "to fight to the end against the oligarchic rule which kills Georgian democracy." He was referring to former prime minister Bidzina Ivanishvili, a powerful oligarch and ruling party founder who is widely believed to be calling the shots in Georgia despite holding no political office. — AFP

Iraq election: How it works, main players

BAGHDAD: Iraqi voters are to elect a new parliament next Sunday in the fifth such vote since a US-led invasion toppled dictator Saddam Hussein in 2003. A total of 329 seats are up for grabs in the election, which was moved forward from 2022 as a concession to youth-led pro-democracy protests that erupted in late 2019.

But many voters are expected to stay away amid widespread anger over corruption and ineffectual governance that has failed to meet the aspirations of Iraq's 40 million people, 60 percent of whom are aged under 25. There are fears voter turnout could drop below the 44.5 percent figure registered in 2018. More than 25 million citizens are eligible to vote. They are supposed to present a biometric card for what was conceived as a fully electronic voting process.

However, some voters have not received the cards and authorities say provisions have been made to ensure they are not excluded. More than

3,240 candidates are in the running, including 950 women. One quarter of seats are reserved for female candidates, and nine for minorities including Christians and Yazidis. A new single-member constituency system is supposed to boost independents and reduce traditional political blocs, largely centered on religious, ethnic and clan affiliations. Two days before polling day, voting will be organized for security forces, displaced citizens and prisoners. This year nationals living abroad will not be voting.

The major factions

Groups from Iraq's Shiite Muslim majority have dominated since the overthrow of Saddam's Sunni Arab-dominated government, but they are divided among themselves. There are also groups representing the Sunni Arab and Kurdish minorities. Here is a look at the main ones.

Sadrists

The biggest bloc, with 54 seats in the last assembly, has been led by populist firebrand Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr, a former leader of anti-US militia. He has emerged as a vocal critic of crooked and corrupt politicians and inept public authorities, even if his supporters are also



MOSUL: An electoral banner hangs on the facade of a damaged building in Iraq's second city of Mosul, in the northern Nineveh province yesterday ahead of the upcoming parliamentary elections. — AFP

active at all levels of the state apparatus. The Sadr-led Saeroon bloc could strengthen its hold in parliament after scoring big in the 2018 elections.

Pro-Iran factions

Candidates representing pro-Tehran paramilitary groups were elected to parliament for the first time in 2018, a year after their fighters were key in defeating Islamic State jihadists. The Conquest Alliance is led by Hadi al-Ameri, who also heads the Badr organization, one of the factions of the

Hashed al-Shaabi, former paramilitaries now integrated into the regular forces. Another major player is Houqouq, which is close to the Hezbollah Brigades, another group under the Hashed umbrella. Former prime minister Nuri Al-Maliki, who led Iraq from 2006 to 2014, heads the State of Law Alliance. The Alliance of State Forces brings together the groups of former prime minister Haider Al-Abadi, who led the fight against the IS, and Ammar Al-Hakim, who leads the moderates in the Shiite camp. — AFP

Europe-Japan space mission captures images of Mercury

PARIS: The European-Japanese BepiColombo spacecraft has sent back its first images of Mercury, the nearest planet to the Sun, the European Space Agency said Saturday. The images were obtained almost three years after the unmanned mission vessel was launched aboard an Ariane 5 Rocket. The cameras attached the BepiColombo provided black-and-white images, the ESA said in a statement.

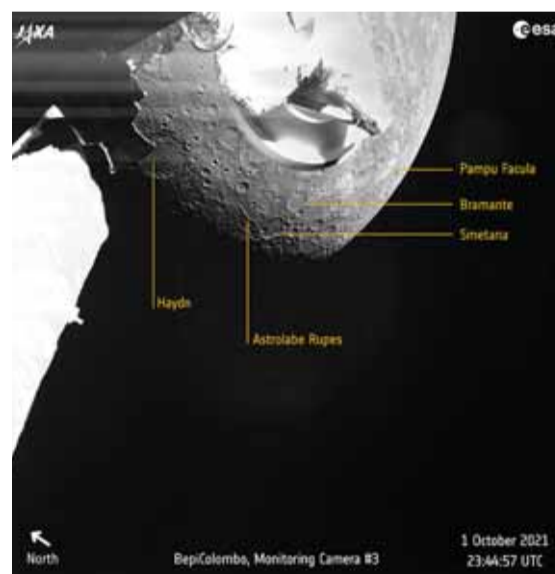
But as the spacecraft arrived on the night side of the planet, conditions were "not ideal" for taking images at its closest approach to the planet, an altitude of 199 kilometers, so the closest was from about 1,000 km. The region shown is part of Mercury's northern hemisphere, including large craters and an area flooded by lava billions of years ago. "The flyby was flawless from the spacecraft point of view, and it's incredible to finally see our target planet," said Elsa Montagnon, Spacecraft Operations Manager for the mission.

The BepiColombo mission will study all aspects of this mysterious inner planet from its core to sur-

face processes, magnetic field and exosphere, "to better understand the origin and evolution of a planet close to its parent star", said the agency. Mercury is also the only rocky planet orbiting the Sun beside our own to have a magnetic field. Magnetic fields are generated by a liquid core but given its size, Mercury's should have grown cold and solid by now, as Mars did.

This anomaly might be due to some feature of the core's composition, something BepiColombo's instruments will measure with much greater precision than has been possible so far. On its surface, Mercury is a planet of extremes, vacillating between hot days of about 430 degrees Celsius (more than 800 degrees Fahrenheit) to super-frosty nights of minus 180C (minus 290F). Those days and nights last nearly three Earth months each. Earlier missions have detected evidence of ice in the deepest recesses of the planet's polar craters.

Scientists speculate that this may have accumulated from comets crashing onto Mercury's surface. BepiColombo is due to make five more flybys of Mercury during a complex trajectory that will also see the satellite fly past Venus and Earth. It could not be sent directly to Mercury, as the Sun's pull is so strong that a huge braking manoeuvre would be needed to place the satellite successfully, requiring too much fuel for a spacecraft of this size. The mission will last for around another five years. The



IN SPACE: A handout photo shows a view of Mercury captured on October 1, 2021 by the joint European-Japanese BepiColombo mission as the spacecraft flew past the planet for a gravity assist manoeuvre. — AFP

gravity exerted by the Earth and Venus - known as gravitational assist - allows it to slow down 'naturally' during its journey — AFP

US blasts China over 'provocative' military action near Taiwan

WASHINGTON: The United States yesterday slammed China for "provocative" and "destabilizing" military activity, after Chinese fighter jets and bombers made their largest-ever incursion into Taiwan's air defense zone. "The United States is very concerned by the People's Republic of China's provocative military activity near Taiwan, which is destabilizing, risks miscalculations, and undermines regional peace and stability," US State Department spokesman Ned Price said in a statement.

"We urge Beijing to cease its military, diplomatic, and economic pressure and coercion against Taiwan," Beijing marked its National Day on Friday with its biggest aerial show of force against Taiwan to date, buzzing the self-ruled democratic island with 38 warplanes, including nuclear-capable H-6 bombers. That was followed by a new record incursion on Saturday by 39 planes, said Taiwan, which accused Beijing of "bullying" and "damaging regional peace."

"It's evident that the world, the international community, rejects such behaviors by China more and more," Premier Su Tseng-chang told reporters on Saturday. Democratic Taiwan's 23 million people live under the constant threat of invasion by China, which views the island as its territory and has vowed to one day seize it, by force if necessary. Beijing has ramped up pressure on Taipei since the 2016 elec-

tion of President Tsai Ing-wen, who has said she views the island as "already independent" and not part of a "one China."

Under President Xi Jinping, Chinese warplanes are crossing into Taiwan's air defense identification zone (ADIZ) on a near daily basis. In the last two years Beijing has begun sending large sorties into Taiwan's ADIZ to signal dissatisfaction at key moments-and to keep Taipei's ageing fighter fleet regularly stressed. Xi has described Taiwan becoming part of the mainland as "inevitable." US military officials have begun to talk openly about fears that China could consider the previously unthinkable and invade. Protection of Taiwan has become a rare bipartisan issue in Washington and a growing number of Western nations have begun joining the United States in "freedom of navigation" exercises to push back on China's claims to the South China Sea and Taiwan Strait. — AFP

News in brief

Jihadist chief, 18 fighters killed

JOHANNESBURG: A local jihadist leader and 18 rebels were killed during a military strike on their base in Mozambique's insurgency-hit north, a bloc of southern African nations said Saturday. Al-Qaeda-linked jihadists have been terrorizing Mozambique's gas-rich Cabo Delgado region since 2017, raiding villages and towns in a bid to establish a caliphate. Local jihadist leader Rajab Awadhi Ndanjile was killed along with 18 other fighters in an offensive on September 25 on the militants' base in the Nangade district of Cabo Delgado, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) regional grouping said. Many members of the 16-nation bloc have deployed troops in Mozambique to fight the insurgents. — AFP

NZ tightens travel rules

WELLINGTON: New Zealand (NZ) announced yesterday tighter border restrictions, as new cases of COVID-19 emerged in areas previously free of the coronavirus. "We are introducing the requirement for air travelers aged 17 and over, who are not New Zealand citizens, to be fully vaccinated to enter New Zealand," COVID-19 response minister Christ Hipkins said. The national flag carrier Air New Zealand also announced it was introducing a "no jab, no fly" policy for passengers on all international flights from February 1. The country has been hugely successful at containing the virus - reporting just 27 deaths in a population of five million - thanks to tight border controls and lockdowns, allowing pre-pandemic life to mostly resume. — AFP

Children dying of malnutrition

KABUL: Children are dying of starvation in Afghanistan, local and international sources said Saturday, following warnings that a million youngsters there could face life-threatening malnutrition by the end of the year. In Ghor, one of the affected provinces, at least 17 children among those who made it to hospital have died from malnutrition in the last six months, the province's public health director Mullah Mohammad Ahmadi said. Almost 300 have been treated for the effects of hunger. Hundreds of children are at risk of starvation in central parts of the country, he said. A spokesman for the United Nations children's agency in Afghanistan said he could not confirm the number of deaths in Ghor but feared "a lot of children are paying the ultimate price". — AFP

Honduras burns tons of cocaine

TEGUCIGALPA: Honduras has burned more than 3.3 tons of cocaine on Saturday, out of the 14 tons seized since the beginning of the year, authorities said. The burning, held in front of local media, was aimed at bolstering President Juan Orlando Hernandez's reelection bid. "This is the largest burn ever carried out here in the premises of the military police," MP spokesman Mario Rivera said. Since the beginning of the year, during multiple operations, police have seized 14 tons of cocaine, he added. "These drugs reduced to ashes are a direct attack against the criminal organizations" of drug trafficking, declared the spokesman for the public prosecutor's office, Carlos Morazan. — AFP

Business

MONDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2021

Mounting gas rates buoy oil prices ahead of OPEC+ meet

Oil producers meet today to scale up production plans

LONDON: The sharp rise in wholesale gas prices is spilling over into the oil market, with looming demand for electricity generation and heating likely to further spur the sector this winter. The spike in demand and consumption could lead the OPEC+ alliance of oil exporters, which meets in Vienna today, to scale up their production plans.

"We could see an additional oil demand boost of nearly one million barrels per day (bpd) for December 2021, half of which we deem quite likely to materialize from incremental oil-for-power generation in Asia," said Bjornar Tonhaugen, an analyst Rystad Energy. "The remaining half is more uncertain and hinges on a colder-than-normal start of winter in the Northern Hemisphere, which would drive oil for heating."

Switch to oil

If gas prices remain prohibitively high, some countries in the Middle East and Asia may explore temporarily increasing use of their oil-fired power plants, according to Fitch analyst Dmitry Marichenko. Overall, oil-fired generation represents only a small portion of global electricity production, around three percent in 2019, according to the International Energy Agency (IEA).

That lags far behind 37 percent for coal and 24 percent for natural gas. However, Tony Syme, macroeconomic expert at the University of Salford Business School, said that only "a small minority of power plants" in Britain and the US can switch between coal and gas for power generation.

"This number has been declining over the last three decades as the environmental impact of burn-

ing fossil fuels has become more important," he said. The price of crude oil, which is subject to many other factors, has risen following the surge in gas prices, but not as sharply.

OPEC intervention?

The additional demand for oil amid the gas price spike is difficult to quantify, but could be "up to 320,000 bpd... over the next six months in Asia and Europe", according to S&P Global Platts Analytics. US bank Goldman Sachs estimated "the potential capacity for gas-to-oil substitution could be larger should gas rally further, of up to 1.35 million bpd in power and 0.6 million bpd in industry" in Asia and Europe.

However, this volume represents only two percent of global oil demand, which is expected to pass the 100 million barrels per day mark next year, according to the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, or OPEC. "While manageable from an oil market perspective, such a one-standard deviation weather shock would nonetheless represent \$5 per barrel upside to our \$80 per barrel Brent forecast," Goldman Sachs said. Members of the oil exporters' cartel and its allies, together known as OPEC+, must decide whether to ramp up oil production or risk further price inflation. Olivier Daguin, an investor at OFI AM, told AFP the extent of the switch from gas to oil "will depend mainly on the difference in price between the two". The gap has widened considerably in recent days.

'Irresistible'

In Europe, gas prices continue to soar. The Title



Transfer Facility (TTF), a Europe-wide virtual trading point for natural gas in the Netherlands, reached the 100 euros (\$116, £86) per megawatt-hour (MWh) mark for the first time in its history on Friday. This is five times more than at the start of the year, while oil prices have doubled over the same period.

European gas is now roughly twice as expensive as Brent North Sea crude oil—which cost

\$80.75 dollars per barrel on Tuesday, its highest price in three years—using notoriously difficult conversion methods. "Asia spot natural gas prices are now trading at near the equivalent of \$180 per barrel of Brent crude, meaning that oil's appeal as a gas substitute for power generation is almost irresistible," said Jeffrey Halley, senior market analyst at OANDA. — AFP

Supply chain woes dog global recovery

PARIS: Power outages in China, chaos in Britain's petrol stations, factory closures in Germany—supply chain problems around the world are threatening to gnarl up a global recovery as countries try to re-emerge from pandemic-induced recessions. This week saw a number of examples of the supply chain issues currently dogging economic activity across the globe—China ran out of coal for its power stations; the UK had insufficient lorry drivers to transport petrol to the fuel pumps; and gas prices are soaring all across Europe as demand outstrips supply.

"The risk is that even though the economies are reopening, growth slows down because we cannot produce the things people demand," said Nicolas Pottiers, a researcher at the Bruegel institute in Brussels. The difficulties are already being seen in the economic data: China's manufactur-



LE GUILVINEC, France: Fishing boats are moored at the port of Le Guilvinec, western France. Power outages in China, chaos in Britain's petrol stations, factory closures in Germany—supply chain problems around the world are threatening to gnarl up a global recovery as countries try to re-emerge from pandemic-induced recessions. — AFP

ing activity shrank in September for the first time since the beginning of the year.

In France, manufacturing activity fell to its lowest level since the start of 2021. And in Japan, industrial output declined in August for the second month in a row. Companies are finding it difficult to get their hands on the raw materials and components they need

to keep production lines running.

Chip shortages

The auto industry, for example, is suffering from a severe shortage of semiconductors—the electronic chips without which their models—both conventionally and electrically powered—cannot function. Japanese giant Toyota slashed its production forecasts last

month, and Stellantis said it would have to halt production at the German plant of its Opel subsidiary until the beginning of next year.

The industry is set to lose \$210 billion in revenues this year, twice as much as anticipated at the start of the year, according to consultancy Alix Partners. The textiles industry has similarly found itself exposed—Swedish giant H&M complained of "disruption and delays in product supplies" in September. Freight costs between China and the west coast of the US have risen more than five-fold over the year as a result of pressures arising from the post-pandemic recovery, according to Freightos Baltic.

No double-dip recession

"Interconnectedness of the global container industry is such that it is difficult for that industry to adjust rapidly enough to such big supply shocks," said Jacob Kirkegaard, of the Peterson Institute for International Economics (PIIE) in Washington. But he told AFP the supply chain problems would likely prove to be just "a delay in the recovery. I don't expect it to be a negative shock big enough to have a double dip recession". — AFP

Nigeria looks to revive ailing palm oil sector

OKOMU, Nigeria: Standing beside the piles of dark red palm fruits ready for crushing for their essence, Nigerian farmer Micah Ojo hopes to cash in on the government's drive to revive the country's once thriving palm oil business. His farm is one of the small plantations scattered across southern Nigeria where the government is investing heavily in the industry as part of its drive to diversify away from petroleum and help create jobs.

Once a major producer, Nigeria now imports from Indonesia and Malaysia, further straining foreign exchange reserves already battered by a fall in global crude oil prices and the pandemic. But the story appears to be changing as Nigeria's government, through the central bank (CBN), is pumping billions of naira in loans to assist farmers and investors in the industry.

Several states, including southern Edo and Akwa Ibom, where roads are lined by hectares of dark green palm trees and moribund factories, are injecting new life into the sector. "We need assistance. The business is capital-intensive," Ojo said at his farm in Edo. "We need government to come to our aid to assist us." Across the globe, the palm oil industry has faced heavy criticism for deforestation, loss of community land and claims of worker abuses on Southeast Asian plantations.

But the oil, which is used in cooking, foods and cosmetics products, is a major industry in Indonesia and Malaysia, and Africa has also seen growth in



OKOMU, Nigeria: A worker pours steamed palm fruits into a local machine for crushing at Parrtern oil farm, a local processing oil mill at Udo Town in Edo State, mid-western Nigeria. — AFP

recent years. Supporters say it helps create local jobs and development. With an agriculture credit scheme and other programs, Nigeria is supporting operators to buy quality and up-to-date seedlings and set up new plantations and mills.

At Okomu Oil Palm Company in Edo state, there are three palm and rubber plantations sitting on over 33,000 hectares of land, partly funded by a 14-billion-naira (\$34-million) loan. "It has assisted us greatly to expand our footprints in the sector," said managing director Graham Hefer, a South African executive who has run the company since 2007. But as with other industries, logistical and infrastructure problems in Africa's most populous nation are hindering growth which would allow the industry's output to meet local demand.

"The level-playing-field, which people talk

about, is not level in Nigeria," Hefer said, pointing to problems such as a lack of roads, electricity, multiple taxation and congestion at ports.

"We are seriously lobbying government to look into these concerns," Nigeria, the world fifth largest palm oil producer, consumes around two million tons of palm oil per year, half of which is imported, with local output at 800,000 to one million tons.

Hefer said the big players like Okomu account for just 30 percent of local production, while small growers represent 70 percent. Established in 1976, Okomu has three oil mills, producing 40,000 tons of crude palm oil (CPO) per year. One mill is in operation, while the second is due for commissioning this month and the third expected to come on stream next year. The company expects to double production to 80,000 tons per year by 2025. — AFP



NEW YORK: A food cart is pictured near Radio City Music Hall in New York. — AFP

New York's street vendors still waiting for COVID recovery

NEW YORK: After his small Manhattan food stand lost its customers during the coronavirus pandemic, Abdul Rahman—an Afghan vendor who arrived in New York in 1992 — has resumed service, albeit at a fraction of former business since offices are still far from full. Rahman and the thousands of street vendors like him, emblematic of New York's sidewalks, were hoping things would finally go back to normal in September.

But that's far from the case: "The business is like, 20, 30 percent (less) than before the pandemic," Rahman, 44, told AFP, standing in front of a display case of doughnuts and other pastries. On the counter is a jug of coffee, which he says he has trouble emptying. With a wave of his arm, he points to where customers used to form long lines in front of his mobile stand.

Like yellow taxis, the metal food carts—stocked with coffee, muffins, bananas and hard-boiled eggs—are part of New York's cityscape. An estimated 20,000 vendors are on the streets of the Big Apple, and many of them are immigrants who have no other way of earning money.

A city hall permit is clearly visible on Rahman's cart, as is a photo of his three children, all born in the United States. It has been 20 years since Rahman arrived in New York to escape the war back home in Afghanistan.

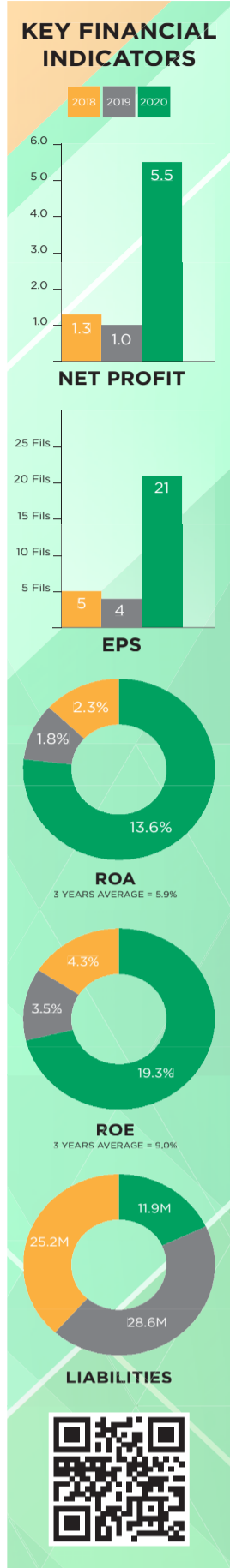
He set up shop on the sidewalk of Whitehall Street, in the south of Manhattan. It is a good location, at the foot of office buildings, near a subway exit and not far from the docks where ferries full of tourists leave and return for the Statue of Liberty, as well as boats transporting workers from Staten Island.

Some customers are loyal, such as Mike Reyes, a maintenance worker, who says he comes every morning. "We need affordable (things) like donuts, coffee, because I do know in the city it's very expensive," he explained. "To me, they are really essential." — AFP

Business

Al-Terkait: Al-Safat Investment relists on Boursa Kuwait in landmark move

Trading to commence on October 11 • Company enters next phase of growth



KUWAIT: Chairman of Al-Safat Investment Company Abdullah Hamad Al-Terkait said relisting the company on Boursa Kuwait is the result of the company's continued efforts, as well as that of its board of directors and executive management during the preceding years and long-term reforms. He said the completion of the financial structure and going forward with settling the company's debts had a great impact on Al-Safat in recovering its competitive capabilities and the start of a new stage that guarantees the strengthening of shareholder equity in the future.

Al-Terkait said during a press conference, which Al-Safat Investment held on the occasion of its relisting, that the company was keen during the past period to present a bundle of services and products in accordance with its adopted vision. Al-Safat Investment is looking forward to becoming one of the leading investment entities locally and contribute to the prosperity of the Kuwait market through a local and regional presence that includes the Middle East, North Africa and Asia. The company is also looking forward to presenting a business model that reflects the real situation of markets through presenting promising opportunities that emulate the aspirations of capital owners, he added.

Historic moment

Al-Terkait added Al-Safat shares will be traded from Oct 11, 2021, which is a historic moment in the company's march as it enters the next stage of growth and development. He said Al-Safat is proud of the achievements it made during the recent years and the dynamic transformation in its activities and operations following a period that was not void of recession, debts and court cases, and this comes after the company met all conditions to be listed.

Best practices

Al-Terkait said relisting Al-Safat shares on Boursa Kuwait represents a launchpad towards a dynamic and varied investment environment that is built on best international practices, "which makes us look for increasing the private sector's contribution to the growth and development of the economy". He said Al-Safat Investment is looking forward to entering new projects including the technology sector, besides discussing mergers and acquisitions under the group's umbrella, adding there is an increased interest in seizing promising opportunities that guarantee good returns for the company. He said listing on the bourse will provide an added value that constitutes extra keenness to improve its financial situation, besides the increase of efficiency, transparency and credibility levels of the company.

Strengthening company status
Al-Terkait said joining an elite group of listed companies on Kuwait bourse once again will strengthen Al-Safat's status in the capital market, and this will increase opportunities for new investors and attract the attention of funds and investors who are considered strategic partners who are experienced and have added value.

Financial solvency
He said financial solvency enabled the company to face various challenges inflicted by the coronavirus pandemic since the start of 2020 and achieve an extraordinary financial and operational performance, which allows for continuing with the success march and take the company to wider horizons. Al-Terkait added that the company has a new strategy that focuses on achieving ambitious goals representing its culture, which is basically interested in increasing revenues and benefiting from promising investments through maintaining supervisory mechanisms and seeking feasible opportunities.

Strategic acquisitions
Al-Terkait said the company is interested in acquiring strategic shares in operational companies that enjoy abundant cash flow which will contribute to increasing revenues for the parent company, adding that Al-Safat has strategic ownerships and shares in listed companies, including 20.9 percent in Synergy Holding and 8.25 percent of Al-Shuaiba Industrial Company, in addition to other stakes. About associate entities that are owned by the company, he said Al-Safat Investment's map includes strategic shares in Al-Qudra Holding - UAE, which is operating through its subsidiaries in real estate investment, financing, healthcare, oil, gas, project management and the hospitality sector both in the UAE and the world. It also includes shares in local companies such as Shuaiba Industrial Company that is involved in various industrial and services aspects.

Goals and purposes
Al-Terkait said the company concentrates on small and medium projects within operational frameworks, including investment in real estate, financial, medical, industrial, energy, farming, food and other sectors through established specialized companies or purchasing shares and bonds of these companies or managing projects in various sectors. He said the group is working through one of its subsidiaries on focusing on industrial operational activities, as "we are working on building a new chemical plant in Subhan over 2,000 sq m, which will contribute to meeting the local market demands and increase company sales". He said Al-Safat is working on managing finances of public and private establishments and investing the money in various economic sectors and preparing reports on technical and economic evaluations and consultations, as well as presenting feasibility reports on projects related to investment. He said the investment aims of the company include lending and borrowing and presenting loans to others, while adhering to the rules of the Central Bank of Kuwait.



Abdullah Hamad Al-Terkait

using investments through maintaining supervisory mechanisms and seeking feasible opportunities.

to participating in health projects in Kuwait and abroad, as it has major ownerships in the Liquid Capital General Trading, Al-Asriyah Printing, Publishing and Distribution and the Middle East Chemicals Manufacturing Company.

The company portfolio

Al-Terkait said Al-Safat Investment portfolio has a series of various operational entities including Al-Safat Holding, Al-Safat Consulting, Dar Al-Safat General Trading, The Roots Stock Brokerage in Egypt, Al-Safat Palm Real Estate and Al-Ahmedi Project, in addition to Touristic Prosperity Real Estate Company, which has its hospitality activities concentrated in Lebanon. He explained that supporting and developing activities of the said companies will have direct effects on increasing the total revenue of the company portfolio to achieve the sought after growth, and in turn maximize shareholders' equity. Al-Safat Investment also aims to provide its subsidiaries and associates promising advantages in the market. Al-Terkait said Al-Safat Investment seeks to establish and operate major funds that target sectors such as food and beverages, venture capital, education and others.

Goals and purposes

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Al-Terkait added the company's role includes working as an issuance manager for bonds issued by companies and authorities, act as an investment trustee and trade in shares and bonds of local and international government companies, in addition to other operational activities, as the company was licensed by the Capital Markets Authority (CMA) to carry out the following activities: Investment advisor, investment portfolio manager, joint investment manager, investment supervisor and underwriting agent. "We also seek to diversify the activities and company licenses according to a pre-planned strategy," he added. He said assets that are managed for the company's clients reached nearly \$120 million, and Al-Safat seeks to increase this.

The working team

Al-Terkait said Al-Safat Investment looks to the future with optimism, as after completing all legal challenges that burdened it for around 10 years, the achievements that were made lately will allow for a new page of opportunities and diversifying investments, while the company is committed to a strategy that was prepared despite the difficulties that will continue until 2023.

Al-Terkait thanked the board of directors, executive administration and company employees for their efforts to overcome consecutive crises - the latest of which is the repercussions of the coronavirus pandemic - which brought back Al-Safat Investment to the right path again. He lauded the role of shareholders and their continued support to enable the company restore its status and resilience.

Listing Announcement

AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

شركة الصفاة للاستثمار

The listing of Al-Safat Investment in the Main Market of Boursa - Kuwait, as of October 11, 2021

Al Safat Investment Company was established on 15th September 1983 as a Kuwaiti Shareholding company with a current capital of KD 26,978,637. The Company conducts its business in accordance with Islamic Sharia laws as well as the rules and regulations of the Capital Markets Authority, the Central Bank of Kuwait and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

The Company has investments and widespread interests in the real estate sector, finance, health services, oil services, industrial services, brokerage and others. In addition to providing a variety of financial and advisory services that support its objectives and those of its shareholders' goals and interests.

Upon approval of the CMA, Al Safat Investment Company shares will be traded in Boursa Kuwait (Main Market) as of 11th October 2021.

Financial indicators	Financial year 2018	Financial year 2019	Financial year 2020	Half yearly 2021
Nominal value (Fils)	100	100	100	100
Book value (Fils)	81	81	87	91
Earnings per share (Fils)	4.5	3.4	28.2	3.6
Retained earnings for shareholder (KD)	3,514,813	4,219,103	3,840,460	4,803,110
Share capital (KD)	25,693,940	25,693,940	25,693,940	25,693,940

Financial indicators	Financial year 2018	Financial year 2019	Financial year 2020	Half yearly 2021
Net Profit (KD)	1,149,042	866,511	7,227,530	929,296
Total Revenue (KD)	3,823,509	4,044,804	3,016,583	1,552,595

ASSETS	Financial year 2018	Financial year 2019	Financial year 2020	Half yearly 2021
Cash and bank balances	4,959,191	3,527,514	2,556,345	1,602,057
Term deposits	4,025,522	1,843,712	1,360,488	1,356,688
Accounts receivable and other assets	1,286,227	4,572,571	2,150,956	2,287,638
Inventories	12,930,997	1,142,247	534,329	459,687
Investment securities	4,419,303	12,221,730	3,267,584	3,062,210
Investment in associates and joint ventures	1,487,479	4,618,614	3,666,893	4,554,061
Goodwill and other intangible assets	3,992,451	1,285,140	4,622	3,614
Investment properties	9,893,127	16,179,711	17,937,478	18,555,270
Property, plant and equipment	11,276,986	12,157,602	9,041,317	8,901,360
Wakala receivables	-	-	-	32,767
TOTAL ASSETS	54,271,283	57,548,841	40,520,012	40,815,352

LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	Financial year 2018	Financial year 2019	Financial year 2020	Half yearly 2021
Liabilities				
Wakala payable	21,107,286	21,089,883	-	-
Bank overdrafts	24,473	102,544	236,868	256,682
Notes payable	55,779	165,502	55,087	15,663
Other liabilities	4,098,338	3,434,759	8,075,774	7,394,285
Lease liabilities	-	3,843,569	3,575,692	3,491,051
Total liabilities	25,285,876	28,636,257	11,943,421	11,157,681
Equity				
Share capital	25,693,940	25,693,940	25,693,940	25,693,940
Share premium	259,677	259,677	259,677	259,677
Statutory reserve	505,263	591,965	1,334,805	1,334,805
Voluntary reserve	505,263	591,965	1,334,805	1,334,805
Treasury shares	(307,393)	(307,393)	(307,393)	(307,393)
Treasury shares reserve	615,002	615,002	615,002	615,002
Asset revaluation surplus	194,258	194,258	231,655	231,655
Other reserves	-	-	376,538	376,538
Fair value reserve	(9,717,718)	(10,759,671)	(10,517,317)	(10,467,052)
Foreign currency translation reserve	(459,132)	(477,797)	(472,938)	(446,754)
Retained earnings	3,514,813	4,219,103	3,840,460	4,803,110
Equity attributable to equity holders of the Parent Company	20,803,973	20,621,049	22,389,234	23,428,333
Non-controlling interests	8,181,434	8,291,535	6,187,357	6,229,338
Total equity	28,985,407	28,912,584	28,576,591	29,657,671
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	54,271,283	57,548,841	40,520,012	40,815,352

Number of shares outstanding	2018	2019	2020	2021
Number of shares outstanding	256,136,389	256,136,389	256,136,389	256,136,389

Net profit (KD)	Financial year 2018	Financial year 2019	Financial year 2020	Half yearly 2021
Net profit (KD)	1,149,042	866,511	7,227,530	929,296

Total revenue (KD)	Financial year 2018	Financial year 2019	Financial year 2020	Half yearly 2021
Total revenue (KD)	3,823,509	4,044,804	3,016,583	1,552,595

Listing Advisor

(965) 22266608

شركة الاستثمار الوطنية
NATIONAL INVESTMENTS COMPANY

Business

KAMCO GCC Markets Monthly Report

Kuwait stocks buoyant; mid-caps, small-cap stocks drive the gains

GCC index up marginally as DFM dents overall rally

KUWAIT: GCC equity markets maintained the upward trend during September-2021 witnessing gains, albeit marginal, for the eleventh consecutive month. Majority of the exchanges in the region closed the month with a gain, but the overall performance was affected by a 2.0 percent decline in the DFM General Index. Qatar and Bahrain, on the other hand, were the best performing markets during the month with gains of more than 3 percent during the month. In terms of YTD-2021 performance, ADX continues to lead with a return of 52.6 percent, one of the highest globally, followed by Saudi Arabia and Kuwait with gains of 32.3 percent and 23.8 percent, respectively.

The sector performance chart for the month was skewed toward decliners, however, gains in large-cap sectors like Materials, Energy and Banks, more than offset these declines. The Pharma & Biotech (-11.5 percent) sector followed by Insurance (-6.5 percent) and Healthcare (-6.1 percent) sectors witnessed the biggest declines during the month, reflecting a shift in focus away from sectors that benefitted from the pandemic amid normalization and a steep decline in new cases. On the other hand, the Materials sector witnessed the biggest gain of

8.6 percent reflecting a global rally in commodity prices.

The month also witnessed significant activity in the GCC primary equity market with announcements of several big ticket IPOs and M&A deals. ADNOC's drilling unit witnessed significant investor demand making the company increase the IPO size to \$1.1 billion with orders worth \$34 billion.

Boursa Kuwait

Kuwaiti equity market was up for the seventh consecutive month during September-2021. However, unlike the previous month when large-cap stocks outperformed, the gains during September-2021 was mainly led by mid-caps and small-cap stocks. This was seen in the Main Market stocks with the Main 50 Index recording a gain of 1.5 percent outperforming the Premier Market index that recorded a gain of 0.9 percent. The broader Main Market index reported a higher gain of 2.0 percent resulting in a 1.1 percent monthly gain for the All Share Index. Kuwait remained the third-best performing market in the GCC in terms of YTD-2021 returns that stood at 23.8 percent for the All Share Index. The Main 50

Index was up 27.0 percent vs. 23.9 percent gains for the Premier Market Index.

The sector performance chart for the month showed gains for the bulk of the sectors with merely 3 out of 13 sectoral benchmarks ending in the red. The Technology Index reported a marginal decline of 2.0 percent led by an equivalent decline in its sole constituent, Automated Systems Co. The Telecom and Insurance indices followed with declines of 1.6 percent and 0.6 percent, respectively. The gainers side was topped by the Consumer Goods Index with a gain of 5.9 percent followed by the Financial Services and Real Estate indices with gains of 4.7 percent and 2.9 percent, respectively. Within the Consumer Goods Index, shares of Mezzan Holding Co and Palms Agro Production Co reported gains of 6.9 percent and 4.6 percent, respectively. Large-cap sectors like banks and industrials showed marginal gains during the month whereas Telecom reported a decline of 1.6 percent. In a key development for the banking sector, reports suggested that there will be no extension to the deferment of consumer loan installments that were implemented to help banking customers during the pandemic.

In terms of trading activity, volume traded during the month declined by 14.3 percent to reach 5.8 Bn shares in Sep-2021 as compared to 6.8 billion shares in Aug-2021. The aggregate value of shares traded during the month also declined by 22.1 percent to reach KD 991 million as compared to KD 1.3 billion during Aug-2021. NBK topped the monthly value traded chart with KD 79.2 million worth of shares traded followed by KFH and AUB Bahrain at KD 69.3 million and KD 51.6 million, respectively. On the monthly volume chart, Investors Holding Group Co topped with 350 million traded shares followed by Mazaya Holding Co and GFH Financial Group at 349.4 million and 297.2 million shares, respectively.

NCCI was the best performing stock in Sep-2021 with a gain of 124.8 percent followed by Gulf Franchising Co and Warba Capital Holding Co with gains of 86.6 percent and 64.7 percent, respectively. On the decliner's side, Al-Madar Finance & Investment Co topped with a decline of 21.7 percent followed by Metal & Recycling Co. and Investors Holding Group Co with declines of 16.0 percent and 13.5 percent, respectively.

Burgan Bank reveals winners of Yawmi account draw

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced yesterday the names of the daily draw winners of its Yawmi account draw, each taking home a cash-prize of KD 5,000.

The lucky winners are:

- Hajar Khaleel Al-Sayegh and Kamel Khaleel Al-Sayegh
- Sayedah Zahraa Al-Muhri
- Waleed Khaled Al-Aqeel
- Basma Talib Al-Naqib
- Ayman Ayad Shehata

In addition to the daily draw, Burgan Bank also offers a quarterly draw with more chances to win higher rewards, offering the chance to one lucky customer to win KD 125,000 every three months. The Yawmi Account offers daily and quarterly draws, wherein the quarterly draw requires customers to maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 in their account for two months prior to the draw date. Additionally, every KD 10 in the account will entitle customers to one chance of winning. If the account balance is KD 500 and above, the account holder will be qualified for both the quarterly and daily draws.

Burgan Bank encourages everyone to open a Yawmi account and/or increase their deposit to maximize their chances of becoming a winner. The higher the level of the deposit, the higher the likelihood to win.

Gulf Bank announces 10 winners of Al-Danah draw for September

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank held its monthly Al-Danah draw yesterday to announce the winners for September. The 10 lucky winners received cash prizes of KD 1,000 each. The winners are:

- Mohammad Saleh Mohammad Al-Faddaghi
- Jarrah Naser Ibrahim Al-Sabah
- Dalal Adnan Abdulaziz Al-Hasan
- Eissa Youssef Eissa Al-Othman
- Maryam Abdelreeda Taher Al-Khawaja
- Fahida Manada Hamed Al-Onaizy
- Basmah Mansour Ali Al-Qattan
- Tamather Khalid Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah
- Hasan Yosef Moh Hussaian
- Mohamed Ab Aref Mohamed Hafny

The Al-Danah account is one of the most rewarding savings accounts in Kuwait, with its periodic draws that award valuable prizes and multiple benefits for account holders. Gulf Bank's Al-Danah account offers monthly opportunities to win KD 1,000 to ten lucky winners, in addition to two quarterly draws with KD 100,000 prizes each, a semi-annual draw prize of KD 1,000,000 and a grand draw prize of KD 1,500,000.

Numerous benefits

The Al-Danah account is the only account that rewards customers for their loyalty by providing loyalty chances. Loyalty chances are the total chances gained in the previous year, which are then transferred to the current year to reward customers for their loyalty to the Bank. Accordingly, all chances gained by existing Al-Danah customers in 2020 (from January 1 to December 31, 2020) have been transferred to the 2021 draws. It is also worth noting that all account draws are attended by a representative from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, with the quarterly and annual draws also reviewed by Ernst & Young.

Malaysian ambassador meets LuLu management to boost bilateral trade

KUWAIT: Malaysia Ambassador to Kuwait Dato' Mohammad Ali Selamat paid a visit to the regional head-office of LuLu Hypermarket in Kuwait on 30 September. The ambassador was received on arrival by top management of the hypermarket. During the visit, Ambassador Selamat held talks with the hypermarket's

AUB wins 'Best Business IT Innovation Award - Kuwait 2021'

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank (AUB) reiterated its successes in the information technology field by winning the "Best Business IT Innovation Award - Kuwait 2021" from the specialized "International Finance" magazine once again, after receiving the same award in 2019.

AUB's prime focus on digitization has helped it deliver outstanding performances and unique customer experiences over the years. Ahli United Bank is a leading bank in Kuwait because of its outstanding banking best practices which continue to reinforce the bank's long-established vision of delivering digital transformation and exceptional customer experiences. The bank's achievement is credited to its highly competent information technology team, its project management personnel, and support staff who possess vast experience in managing complex technology projects. Ahli United Bank has sought technology for the creation of a new digital banking model alongside enhancing the existing services.

AUB has embarked on a myriad of futuristic digital innovations that are simple yet relatively new and original in the industry. These digital innovations include enhanced and additional services on the ATMs operational excellence through Robotics, enhanced Mobile Banking, and highly resilient banking applications among others. The services provided by the bank are promising for customers

who seek sustainable financial inclusion. This way, the bank is also able to discover new, more efficient ways to deliver services that go beyond contemporary banking systems and business models. These factors have contributed greatly for Ahli United Bank Kuwait to win the 'Best Business IT Innovation-Kuwait 2021.'

For the judgment panel, the first level of evaluation is done by Internal Evaluation Team of the International Finance magazine, after which, the details are forwarded to an External Evaluation Agency to conclude with the final level of evaluation. Upon receiving the judgment report, the magazine announced the award winners on their website. Announcement is done through a points system that includes the findings of the initial evaluation report, rating from external research partners along with inputs from the Industry Experts.

Commenting on this award, the CEO of Ahli United Bank, Jehad Saud Al-Humaidhi, said, "This new award is a distinct addition to the record of awards and achievements attained by the bank, which reaffirms its notable success in developing its infrastructure and technical systems, reflecting in the bank's increased ability to provide the best banking services for its customers, especially under the repercussions of COVID-19 pandemic, which posed several challenges and opportunities at the same time, whereby we have been able to demonstrate our ability to provide banking services that meet the needs of our customers, especially digital banking services."

Al-Humaidhi expressed her thanks and appreciation to AUB team work that enabled the bank to win this award, stressing that the bank is always keen to

Al-Tijari announces winners of Al-Najma draws

KUWAIT: Commercial Bank conducted the weekly and monthly draws on Al-Najma Account and Salary Transfer Campaign yesterday. The draws were conducted in the presence of Ministry of Commerce and Industry representative Ahmed Al-Basman.

The results of the draws were as follows:

- 1- Al-Najma monthly draw - the prize of KD 20,000

Joyalukkas reopens its renovated showroom in Thrissur



THRISUR, India: The grandly renovated Joyalukkas showroom in Thrissur (Round East) was inaugurated by Mary Jacob, sister of Joyalukkas and her husband Jacob Kattukaran, in the presence of Joyalukkas (CMD Joyalukkas Group) and his sisters.

top-level management that centered around further enhancing imports of food in particular palm oil products and non-food items from Malaysia. In the course of discussions, the Malaysian ambassador underlined the strong bilateral relations between Malaysia and Kuwait and plans to further strengthen these ties, including by focusing more in the areas of food security, where retailers like LuLu Hypermarket have a major role to play.

For their part, the LuLu officials expressed their utmost satisfaction with the products sourced from Malaysia. Pointing out that the hypermarket already imports and stocks more than a 100 different products in various categories from Malaysia, the officials added that

they planned to import even more products in the future.

The talks also revealed that the hypermarket is preparing to hold a major Malaysian products promotion in the upcoming months, to showcase the wide variety of Malaysian foods and non-food items available on the hypermarket's shelves. In this regard, it is worth pointing out that LuLu Hypermarket has its own dedicated sourcing center located in Malaysia that manages the sourcing, storing and shipping of products from the country on a regular basis. The hypermarket is also a major retailer in the country with three hypermarkets already catering to the public, and more outlets planned in the coming years.



make every effort to develop pioneering banking solutions that meet the aspirations of our valued customers by building an integrated digital environment that provides them with an incomparable banking experience.

On his part, Abdullah Jaragh General Manager Information Technology at AUB said, "Winning this award boosts our endeavors aimed at relying on the cutting-edge banking technologies to enable us to continue our development and growth. During the past period, we were keen to continue our efforts to enhance information technology being a strategic enabling tool in achieving the ability of banks to compete under the successive technical changes."

Jaragh added, "Ahli United Bank has the pride to be at the forefront in providing everything new in the IT field. It is also proud of the numerous initiatives it implemented to provide the best products and services to its customers. Nevertheless, the bank is still looking forward to reaching the highest standards of quality and innovation to provide customers with exceptional services and innovative easy-to-use products."

debt up to KD 1,000. The bank stated that Al-Najma Account prizes are distinguished by the highest cash prize and diversity of prizes throughout the year clarifying that the account offers weekly prize of KD 5,000, monthly prize of KD 20,000 and a semi-annual prize of KD 500,000 in addition to the largest prize - linked bank account payout of KD 1,500,000.

Al-Najma Account can be opened by depositing KD 200, and customer should maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 to be eligible to enter all draws on Al-Najma Account prizes. As for the chances of winning, the more balance a customer maintains in Al-Najma Account, the more chances the account holder will get to win, the account also offers additional benefits like the ATM card, a credit card against customer's account and all CBK banking services that customer can enjoy.

ABK congratulates winners of 'Want To Win KD 100?' campaign

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) announced the names of the first draw winners of the 'Push Notifications' campaign 'Want to win KD 100?'. The draw was held under the supervision of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and the lucky winners were:

- Md Nipun Abdalsalam
- Walid Mohamed Ali

The campaign will run through to 24th November 2021, awarding 2 lucky winners each month KD 100 cash. With 'Push Notifications' customers will benefit from the convenience of transaction updates and smooth browsing of saved transaction history. The service is particularly valuable to travellers, who in the absence of a roaming network, can access the service as long as they are connected to a WIFI network.



Business

Al-Shall Weekly Report

Kuwait's budget revenues for current fiscal year could reach KD 17.2 billion

Average price for Kuwaiti oil for September stands at \$75 per barrel

KUWAIT: With the end of September 2021, the 6th month of the Kuwaiti fiscal year 2021/2022 ended and the average price for Kuwaiti oil for September stood at \$75 per barrel, higher by \$30 or 66.6 percent than the new hypothetical price in the current budget of \$45 per barrel. By the end of September, half of the current fiscal year 2021/2022 has ended during which the average Kuwaiti oil price scored \$70.8 per barrel, which is higher by \$27.2 than the average price for the past fiscal year at \$43.5 per barrel, while it is lower by \$19.2 per barrel than the new budget's parity price (\$90 per barrel) according to the Ministry of Finance's estimation, after cancelling the deduction of 10 percent to the benefit of the future generations' reserve.

Kuwait is supposed to have achieved actual oil revenues in September of about KD 1.4 billion. Assuming that production and prices would continue at the current levels -an unrealistic assumption- Kuwait's total oil revenues for the current fiscal year would amount to nearly KD 15.4 billion, after deducting production cost for the entire current fiscal year. That value is KD 6.3 billion higher than that estimated in the current budget at KD 9.1 billion. Adding KD 1.8 billion in non-oil revenues, total budget revenues for the current fiscal year would reach KD 17.2 billion.

If the Cabinet's decision to reduce current budget expenditures by at least 10 percent is adhered to (ie decreasing expenditures from KD 23 billion to approximately KD 20.7 billion), then it is likely that the general budget for the fiscal year 2021/2022 will record a deficit of KD 3.5 billion. But it is an unlikely commitment, because all decisions and actions taken in reality contradict it, so it is expected that the hypothetical deficit according to the estimates of the current budget and the performance of the past six months will reach KD 5.8 billion and the deficit being lower than original estimated figures is not to be credited to the public administration, but to the stability of oil prices.

Performance of Boursa Kuwait

September's performance was mixed compared to August's. The average daily trading value decreased but with positive performances regarding all indices. The Premier Market Index rose by 0.9 percent, the Main Market Index rose by 2 percent and the All-Share Market Index (the outcome of both mentioned

markets) rose by 1.1 percent, also the BK Main 50 index rose by 1.5 percent. Boursa Kuwait's total liquidity during September was lower than August's. The traded value in September decreased to KD 991.2 million compared with KD 1.273 billion in August. The average daily trading value in September was KD 45.1 million, declining by -25.7 percent below August's average of KD 60.6 million. Traded value during the first 9 months of 2021 (181 working days) totaled KD 9.486 billion, with an average daily trading value of KD 52.4 million. This represents an increase of 43.2 percent over the same average for the same period of 2020, which stood at KD 36.6 million (Q2 of 2020 was the period that got affected the most by the pandem-

half of the listed companies. On the contrary, it strongly favors companies with small market value. The liquidity distribution between the two markets during September 2021 was as follows:

Premier Market (25 companies)

It captured KD 553.9 million or 55.9 percent of Boursa's liquidity, and half of its companies (12 companies) captured 83.4 percent of its liquidity and 46.6 percent of total Boursa's liquidity, while the other half obtained 16.6 percent of its liquidity. Liquidity concentration rate in the Premier Market reached a high level, as 8 companies obtained 71.3 percent of its liquidity. During the first 9 months of 2021, the Premier Market captured 61.8 percent of total Boursa's liquidity.

Main Market (140 companies)

It captured KD 437 million or 44.1 percent of Boursa's liquidity; within it, 20 percent of its companies captured 78.4 percent of its liquidity while 80 percent of its companies got 21.6 percent of its liquidity. Only time will filter out the illiquid listed companies whose choice remains between increasing their liquidity or withdrawing from the market. The Main Market obtained 38.2 percent of total Boursa's liquidity during the first 9 months of 2021.

When comparing the distribution of liquidity between the Premier and the Main markets, we notice an improvement in the share of liquidity for the Main Market during 2021 compared to its distribution for the whole year of 2020, when the Premier Market obtained 83.6 percent of total liquidity leaving 16.4 percent for the Main Market, which is a good development if it persists.

Banking sector - first half 2021

The banking sector comprising 10 Kuwaiti banks achieved a remarkable growth in net profits during the first six months of this year versus the same period in 2020. The first half profits of 2021 after deducting taxes and minority rights scored about KD 385.5 million, a KD 166.3 million increase or by 75.9 percent compared to KD 219.1 million profit in the same period in 2020. Kuwaiti banks achieved KD 199.4 million profits during Q2 2021 versus KD 186 million for Q1 2021, an increase of KD 13.4 million or 7.2 percent. Kuwaiti

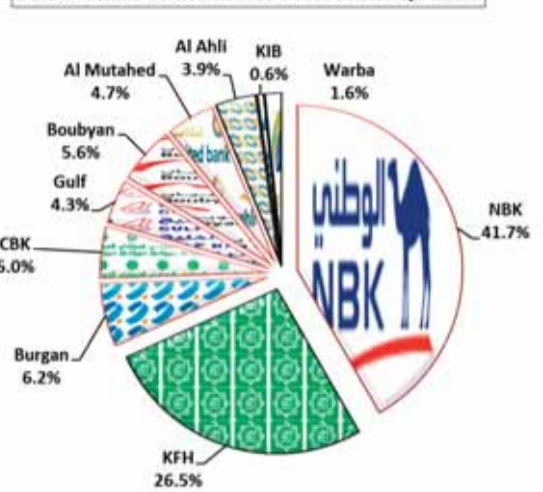
banks continued to hold provisions against non-performing loans; therefore, the total withheld provisions in the first half reached KD 369.9 million compared with KD 530.3 million, a KD 160.4 million decrease or 30.2 percent. A large part of the increase in net profits was due to the decrease in the total provisions.

Five conventional banks' profits scored KD 235.5 million and representing 61.1 percent of total net profits of the ten banks, rising by 65.7 percent compared to the same period last year. The Islamic banks' share was KD 150 million and representing 38.9 percent of total net profits of the ten banks, increasing by 94.8 percent over their level in the same period last year. This means that the Islamic banks' performance during the first half of the current year recovered from the pandemic effects quicker than the traditional banks' performance.

The price-to-earnings multiplier (P/E) for the ten banks of the banking sector (calculated on an annual basis) registered at 24.6 times versus 35.2 times (improved) for the same period last year. Return on total assets (ROA) calculated on an annual basis rose to 0.8 percent versus 0.5 percent. Also, return on equity (ROE) calculated on an annual basis increased to 6.7 percent versus 4.2 percent.

Comparing the ten banks' performance, National Bank of Kuwait "NBK" continued to achieve the highest value in profits among the ten banks, reaching KD 160.8 million (21 fils EPS) or about 41.7 percent of the net profits of the banking sector, an increase of 44.7 percent compared to with the same period in 2020 due to the increase in the operating profit and decrease in provisions. Kuwait Finance House "KFH" achieved the second highest profit at KD 102.2 million (12.21 fils EPS) or 26.5 percent of the net profits of the ten banks, and an increase of 79.5 percent compared to the same period of the previous year, as a result of the significant decrease in provisions and despite the bank's declining operating profit. Kuwait International Bank achieved the highest relative growth in profits at 2047.4 percent, as its profits reached KD 2.2 million compared to KD 103,000, as a result of the increase in all items of operating income. The Commercial Bank of Kuwait achieved the second highest relative growth by 1498.7 percent, reaching KD 19.1 million profits compared to KD 1.2 million as a result of the increase in operating profit and the decrease in provisions.

Banks' Share of the Sector's Net Profit Q2 2021



ic). This also represents an increase of 17.9 percent over the same average for the entire previous year (KD 44.4 million).

Liquidity trends since the beginning of the year indicate that half of the listed companies represent only three percent of total liquidity, including 50 companies obtaining 0.6 percent of that liquidity and four companies without any trading. As for the small liquid companies, 12 companies whose market value equals 3.4 percent of all listed companies' value captured about 21.7 percent of total market liquidity. This means that major liquidity activity is still deprived in almost



شركة الصفاة للاستثمار
AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON
30 SEPTEMBER 2021

Market	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
Premier Market	30,313	7,496.50	-0.3%	0.9%	23.9%	327,626,389	105,321,652	17,611	29.2	2.3	75.7%
Main Market	9,728	5,618.67	0.2%	2.0%	23.4%	1,389,156,516	143,148,346	46,931	21.0	3.7	24.3%
All Share	40,041	6,864.83	-0.2%	1.1%	23.8%	1,716,782,905	248,469,998	64,542	27.2	2.6	100%

Sector	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
BANKS	23,286	1,576.23	-0.4%	1.0%	24.9%	148,943,447	64,364,019	6,333	33.3	2.3	57.45%
BASIC MATERIALS	972	1,088.67	1.3%	0.5%	21.2%	5,188,272	3,634,848	894	24.1	1.6	2.40%
CONSUMER DISCRETIONARY	574	1,117.19	0.6%	2.5%	49.7%	88,052,705	8,267,691	4,119	9.6	41.2	1.42%
CONSUMER STAPLES	239	783.50	1.2%	5.9%	-4.3%	2,738,884	1,626,414	304	16.2	1.6	0.59%
ENERGY	287	1,376.83	0.2%	1.1%	7.8%	152,549,289	4,385,615	2,405	14.1	1.3	0.71%
FINANCIAL SERVICES	3,660	1,318.92	0.6%	4.7%	41.9%	721,922,998	90,566,390	26,244	8.8	1.7	9.03%
HEALTH CARE	395	795.89	0.5%	0.5%	-3.7%	18,766	9,202	35	27.4	5.3	0.97%
INDUSTRIALS	4,135	1,167.09	0.0%	0.1%	31.0%	134,861,931	25,163,885	7,753	26.5	1.8	10.20%
INSURANCE	605	1,450.07	0.0%	-0.6%	25.4%	9,530,416	1,568,968	674	10.6	1.2	1.49%
REAL ESTATE	2,751	1,279.43	-0.1%	2.9%	34.3%	411,013,098	39,340,933	13,415	27.4	1.3	6.79%
TECHNOLOGY	10	714.41	-1.8%	-2.0%	42.1%	33,122	3,264	11	-	0.8	0.02%
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	3,361	1,095.62	-0.5%	-1.6%	-0.6%	35,803,717	8,087,360	1,867	15.8	2.1	8.29%
UTILITIES	261	623.68	0.0%	1.7%	-14.4%	6,126,260	1,451,408	488	20.5	5.0	0.64%

Top Gainers

Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
WARBACAP	128	60.2	12,810,311	1,371,458	810
NCCI	183	45.2	106,410,476	17,966,216	5,597
MARAKEZ	67.5	45.2	993,482	61,757	105
EQUIPMENT	45	21.0	14,466,717	620,569	634
GFC	59.9	19.8	184,768	10,236	60

Top Losers

Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
KMEFIC	153	-5.0	161,673	24,144	53
GFH	66	-4.9	92,240,467	6,206,568	2,703
FCEM	42.8	-4.9	12,520	556	5
ARKAN	120	-4.8	826,039	100,049	53
ARGAN	95.3	-4.6	69,500	6,618	8

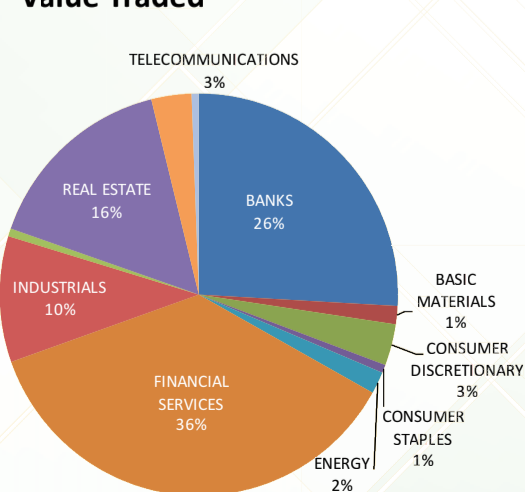
Top Volume

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
GPI	25	4.2	144,411,237	3,699,179	1,861
NCCI	183	45.2	106,410,476	17,966,216	5,597
KRE	152	4.1	93,276,796	14,003,521	2,160
GFH	66	-4.9	92,240,467	6,206,568	2,703
AAYAN	165	3.8	69,300,300	11,395,873	1,623

Top Value

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
NCCI	183	45.2	106,410,476	17,966,216	5,597
CBK	500	0.0	30,030,519	15,015,263	62
KRE	152	4.1	93,276,796	14,003,521	2,160
NBK	953	-0.7	14,339,988	13,690,291	1,381
KFH	822	-0.4	15,102,702	12,435,016	1,833

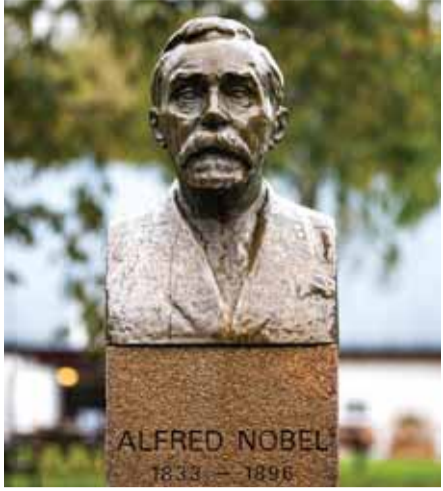
Value Traded



Market Summary:

- Premier market volume and value decreased 25% which can be related to the period before the Q3 financial announcement. This can also be a time for accumulation of selective stocks. Main market volume and value increased 40% and 26% respectively. This might be attributed to the increase of the day to day trading.
- All Share and Premier indexes retreated from their highest points reached during the week and closed below last week which shows reaching a resistance that couldn't be overcome due to weak trading. Main Index closed higher than last week but below the highest point 5636.
- Technically, All Share index closed at 6864 creating support level at 6830 and 6805. Staying above 6850 will lead to 6905 passing the resistance at 6875. Premier index closed at 7496 creating support level at 7490, 7460, and 7440. Staying above 7500 will lead to 7590 passing the resistance at 7517. Main index closed at 5618 creating a support level at 5616, 5600, and 5575. Staying above 5600 will lead to 5665 passing the resistance at 5641.

Lifestyle | Features



A bust of Alfred Nobel is pictured outside Bjoerkborn Manor, where Nobel lived during the summer periods of the last years of his life, in Karlskoga, Sweden.



This handout picture released by Eurenco shows raw material used for the making of explosive and propellant products inside the Bofors Eurenco plant owned by French company Eurenco in Karlskoga, Sweden. Alfred Nobel's last laboratory still exists, a stone's throw from a big explosives plant. In Sweden and around the world, the industrial legacy of the Nobel Prize founder is still making sparks fly. — AFP Photos

Nobel prize season returns under pandemic spotlight

COVID-19 vaccine pioneers, media watchdogs, climate activists and Belarus opposition leaders are just some of those tipped for Nobel glory when the latest prize recipients are announced from today against the background of the pandemic. Launched 120 years ago, the medicine, physics, chemistry, literature and peace awards created by Swedish inventor Alfred Nobel, as well as the more recent economics prize, will be given out in Stockholm and Oslo from October 4-11.

While the list of contenders is a closely

Other fields that could be honored include cell communication, the workings of the immune system, the discovery of the breast cancer gene, epigenetics and antibiotic resistance. The medicine prize opens the Nobel season on Monday, followed by the awards for physics on Tuesday, chemistry on Wednesday, literature on Thursday and peace on Friday. The economics prize wraps up the Nobel season on October 11.

Peace prize for the climate?

Other experts believe the time may be right for organizations fighting for freedom of information and the rights of journalists, such as Reporters Without Borders or the Committee to Protect Journalists. Non-violent opposition of Belarus's autocratic regime, spearheaded by Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, is also seen as a worthy winner. Although earlier deemed favorites, the World Health Organization and the Covax vaccine-sharing scheme have been hampered by the slow distribution of jabs to poor countries.

'Discover a genius'

For the literature prize, to be announced on Thursday, punters suggested the Swedish Academy may look further afield after honoring several European and North American laureates. "I do believe they really want to discover a genius from a previously neglected area," said Jonas Thente, literary critic at Swedish daily Dagens Nyheter. He suggested "someone with a primary interest in cross-cultural experiences", such as 44-year-old Nigeria-born Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. "She is probably too young, but she would fit the profile."

Some names have been bandied about in Stockholm's literary circles for years-Hungary's Peter Nadas, Canada's Margaret Atwood, Syrian poet Adonis and Somali author Nuruddin Farah. Some newer names to emerge include India's Vikram Seth, China's Liao Yiwu and Mozambican writer Mia Couto. Last year, the honor went to American poet Louise Glück. While the names of the Nobel laureates are kept secret until the last minute, the Nobel Foundation has already announced that the glittering prize ceremony and banquet held in Stockholm in December for the science and literature laureates will not happen this year due to the pandemic.

Like last year, laureates will receive their awards in their home countries. A decision has yet to be made about the peace prize ceremony held in Oslo. This year's winners take home 10 million Swedish kronor (just under one million euros, \$1.13 million), to be shared if more than one person is honored in a discipline. — AFP

Cash-strapped Nobel Institute seeks fresh funding

In the throes of a cash crunch, the librarians at Oslo's Nobel Institute for a time donned gloves and tended to the gardens after the landscapers were laid off. The prestigious institution behind the Nobel Peace Prize has been hard hit by rising costs and funding cuts-made worse by the expense of running its vast and old offices. With staff reduced from eight to five people since the 1990s, it is now turning to Norway's parliament for support-raising concerns about the institution's independence. "For the past 20 years, our income has been reduced while our costs have continued to rise," Nobel Institute Director Olav Njolstad told AFP.

"Without additional income, our cash flow will be exhausted in two or three years' time," he told AFP from his office, lined with history books on Adolf Hitler and the Cold War. Now, it is under pressure to sell its historic yellow-tinged building near the city's lush Royal Palace Park, which has hosted Nelson Mandela and the Dalai Lama. Given out at gilded ceremonies attended by Norwegian royalty, the Nobel Peace Prize has been won by dozens of people and organizations since 1901, including Barack Obama, Malala Yousafzai and the World Food Program. It will be awarded this year on October 8.

Political pressure

The Nobel Institute in Oslo handles the



Photo shows the interior of the laboratory of Alfred Nobel, where powder trials and experiments with artificial rubber and synthetic threads were carried out.— AFP

Five things to know about Nobel prizes

Since 1901, the Nobel prizes have been awarded to men, women and organizations for work that has led to great advances for humankind, in line with the wishes of inventor Alfred Nobel. Here are five things to know about the prizes and their creator.

A misunderstanding?

On April 12, 1888, Alfred Nobel's elder brother Ludvig died in Cannes, France. But newspaper Le Figaro mixed up the brothers and announced Alfred's death on its front page under a rather inflammatory headline: "A man who can hardly be called a benefactor of humanity died yesterday in Cannes. He is Nobel, inventor of dynamite." Many credit this slight as the inspiration for Nobel's creation of the prizes, pointing to the wording in his will that the prizes should go to those who "have conferred the greatest benefit to humankind".

"But we can only imagine" because the incident is not mentioned in his correspondence, his biographer Ingrid Carberg told AFP. As for the visitors who came to offer their condolences at the inventor's Parisian mansion, they were surprised to be greeted by a very much alive Alfred, as reported by Le Figaro the following day.

Older and older discoveries

In Nobel's will, the rewards were to go to those who had served humanity "during the preceding year". However, from the awards' inception in 1901 and onwards, this has rarely been imperative. It often takes time for the true impact of discoveries to become known, and the number of worthy recipients is accumulating. As a result, work that is several decades old is often rewarded. Goodenough, for example, in 2019 became the oldest person to win a Nobel, at the age of 97. He is now the oldest living Nobel laureate, at 99. The youngest was Malala Yousafzai of Pakistan, who received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2017 at 17.

Posthumous awards

Since 1974, the statutes of the Nobel Foundation stipulate that the award may not be given posthumously. But a person may be awarded the honor if she or he dies between the time of the announcement in October and the formal prize ceremony in December. Before the change, only two people had won a Nobel posthumously. One was Dag Hammarskjold, the Swedish secretary-general of the United Nations

administration to support a five-person committee that selects the peace prize winner-the awards for science and literature are handled by separate committees-and promotes research into peace. Most of the institution's funding comes from an annual grant of 5.3 million Swedish crowns (523,000 euros, \$605,000) by the Nobel Foundation in Stockholm.

The Swedish chemist and engineer died in 1896, bequeathing money to establish the prize in Norway, along with awards for literature and science in Sweden. But the funding was cut drastically in 2013 in the wake of the 2007-8 financial crisis, and hasn't risen since. What money there is doesn't stretch as far, due to the impact of inflation and ballooning pension costs.

Njolstad is now appealing to parliament to step in to fill the yawning budget gap, but it has raised serious concerns about the institution's autonomy. "It is possible that in some future period there would be some pressure from one political group or another," said Dan Smith of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. "When money is given then you can expect that there would be a greater voice," he told AFP.

In line with Alfred Nobel's will, parliament already appoints the committee's members. For decades it has made a modest contribution to the institute's library, but Njolstad has now asked for a substantially larger annual handout of eight million Norwegian kroner (789,000 euros, \$913,000), which will be considered by parliament in the coming months. He insists the grant would only be used for running costs and would not compromise the committee's independence. "Other institutions in society are financed-sometimes up to 100 percent-by the state but nobody questions their independence," Njolstad said, using the examples of the courts and academic research.—AFP



Photo shows the laboratory of Alfred Nobel, where powder trials and experiments with artificial rubber and synthetic threads were carried out, in Karlskoga, Sweden.

guarded secret, Nobel experts say research on messenger RNA (mRNA), which forms the basis of the Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines, is a hot favorite for the medicine or chemistry prizes. "It would be a mistake if the Nobel Committee did not give the prize to mRNA vaccine technology," Swedish science journalist Ulrika Bjorksten said.

She cited as possible laureates Katalin Kariko of Hungary and Drew Weissman of the United States, whose pioneering research led directly to the first mRNA vaccines. These have been injected in over a billion people worldwide in a race to ease a pandemic that has claimed the lives of more than 4.7 million people. Kariko and Weissman have already received several accolades, including the Lasker Prize in the US, often seen as a precursor to the

Among those generating buzz for the peace prize-the only one to be given in Oslo-are media watchdogs, Belarusian opposition leaders and climate campaigners, such as Swedish activist Greta Thunberg. The image of the prestigious award has been hit hard over the past years as one of its previous laureates, Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, became embroiled in a war. Another, Myanmar's Aung San Suu Kyi, was accused of defending the massacre of members of the Rohingya minority. Last year, the World Food Program won.

There is speculation that climate activists are next in line as the world experiences a torrent of deadly weather disasters, from asphalt-melting heatwaves to flash floods and untameable wildfires. "It is the most important issue at the moment," said Nobel historian Asle Sveen.

Decade after Jobs' death, has Apple traded magic for profit?

Ten years after Apple founder Steve Jobs' death, the firm has grown into a colossus of devices and services that is the world's most valuable company, but the tech legend's diehard fans lament its lost aura of revolution. "Apple doesn't innovate anymore" or "Steve Jobs is turning in his grave" are the type of disillusioned tweets that pop up especially during product launches led by Tim Cook, who took Apple's reins in Aug 2011. On the surface, Jobs - who died Oct 5, 2011 after a battle with pancreatic cancer - left the company DNA imbued with his demanding intensity. At every launch, Cook delivers the same hyperbolic turns of phrase that Jobs once did to unveil even incremental changes to the cameras or chips in its range of phones, tablets and other devices.

But are these game-changing innovations in the post-Jobs era? "Apple lost the ability to bring out products that could revolutionize a market," said Tech industry analyst Rob Enderle of Enderle Group. "They became a financially-focused company very effective at milking its faithful users," he added. The company has impacted hundreds of millions of lives since its 1976 founding in a



A picture shows an image of Apple founder and late CEO Steve Jobs in the interior of the US pavilion at the Dubai Expo 2020. Expo 2020 opened in Dubai, hoping to attract millions of visitors with its imaginative pavilions and technological advances.— AFP

garage, with devices like the iPod launched in 2011 and the 2007 release of the iPhone that put the internet in people's pockets.

Since then, Apple has released an internet-connected time piece, the Apple Watch. "The measure of Apple is always innovation, that's what people focus on... another aspect of a company being successful is its ability to change themselves," noted analyst Carolina Milanese. Apple has indeed diversified by adding many services carefully integrated into its devices: music, payments, videos and games. The company had to learn a world outside of the hardware business, a strategy Milanese described as "more ropes that bring people to Apple... and keep them here". It's a direction that would probably not have been rejected by Jobs, who always tried to control his customers' experience from start to finish, according to the biography written by Walter Isaacson.

In any case, the company under Cook has delighted Wall Street: The Apple brand was worth about \$350 billion ten years ago - and is worth \$2.358 trillion today. "In our opinion (Apple is) going to \$3 trillion over the next six to nine months," predicted analyst Dan Ives. Like many observers of the Californian behemoth, and unlike some fans of Jobs, he believes that Apple has never stopped inventing.

In particular, he cites the development of the M1 chip, which replaces Intel in some new devices. "I think Apple evolved with time and so has Cook, and I think the one thing that Jobs was a huge believer in was innovation organically," said Ives. He noted the iPhone will continue to be the "heart and lungs" of Apple's growth story for years to come, but he sees a virtual reality headset and even an Apple car by 2024. —AFP

Lifestyle | Features



In this picture taken on April 8, 2021, beekeepers collect honeycombs at Sujampur village in the Pathankot district of Punjab. — AFP photos



A populated bee colony is seen before being transported outside Kashmir during winter in Srinagar.



Kashmir beekeepers head south for warmth, honey and cash



A beekeeper checks a honeybee hive box.

As the winter months near, Kashmiri beekeepers like Abid Hussain are preparing for an annual migration southward in search of warmer climates, more honey and bigger payouts. Hussain wears protective gear on his arms and face as he readies to send his convoy of bees hundreds of kilometers from the Himalayan region into the desert state of Rajasthan. "Everything comes to a halt in Kashmir in winter, including nature," says Hussain, who takes his colonies 750 km to vast mustard fields around Sri Ganganagar on the edge of Rajasthan's Thar desert.

Dozens of his fellow beekeepers make the same autumn journey, travelling across twisting mountain highways and the northern Indian plains to reach warmer provinces. Honeymakers started taking the journey in the 1980s, when an insect disease nearly wiped out the local population



In this picture taken on Oct 20, 2020, a honeybee sucks nectar from a saffron flower in the outskirts of Srinagar.

and a replacement European species - much more sensitive to the Himalayan cold - was introduced. Now hundreds of millions of bees feast on rich farm crops to the south of Kashmir every year and help feed

a honey-making boom for the beekeepers.

Each hive can net Hussain, who transports tens of millions of bees, as much as 9,000 rupees (\$120) worth of honey during his time in Sri Ganganagar. While the bees get fed, the mustard farmers are happy to have their crops pollinated for future harvests. For the beekeepers, the annual pilgrimage is crucial to their survival, says Parvez Ahmad Sofi, a professor at Kashmir's agriculture university. "Migration saves the bees from the harsh weather, helps them reproduce colonies and produce honey," he said.

Without it, the beekeepers have only two harvests a year, instead of four if they travel south. As temperatures rise in February, Hussain will begin his return north, stopping for two months in the ancient city of Pathankot near the Pakistan border. He will lease land and wait for the

flowers on lychee trees to blossom in early April, allowing him one more harvest before the final journey home.

But back in the Kashmir Valley, authorities say the region's temperatures are rising, while freak winter storms remain a threat to its wildlife. Nearly 750 tons of honey were produced there last year and, while experts say the region could make more, storms, warmer winters and unpredictable rains have hit production in recent years. Hussain says the changing climate in Kashmir makes the annual migration increasingly vital to his livelihood. "Hot weather can destroy the flowers and the bees cannot collect nectar," he said. "In recent times, there has been more heat and too much rain." —AFP

Venezuela village on stilts slowly succumbs to mud

Congo Mirador was once an idyllic spot: A community of homes on stilts that seemed to float on the calm waters of a lagoon in western Venezuela. Now, the community is inundated with mud, a victim of silt generated by the Catatumbo river. Most of its residents have left, and Congo Mirador is slowly fading away. The river's source is in Colombia, and it flows into Venezuela's Lake Maracaibo, one of the biggest lakes in South America.

The Catatumbo's path has been diverted numerous times over the years, slowly sending muddy sediment, plant life, tree branches and other debris into the village - to the point where it has been overwhelmed by the mess. Where once there were fish, now there are weeds. "There was a magnificent lake, and now it's become a jungle," laments Euclides Villasmi, one of the few residents of Congo Mirador who has remained there.

Only about 10 families, out of 200 who once lived there, are still in their homes.

islands formed. An aerial view of the village captured by a camera drone leaves the false impression that Congo Mirador exists in the middle of a lush green field - in fact, it's a swamp and life is increasingly difficult. Along with the mud, there are snakes, toads and other creatures, and parasites that have progressively changed the ecosystem to such an extent that the village is a ghost town.

'Little Venice'

Only a few pillars remain of the medical clinic that once served the village's 700 residents. Some homes have been ransacked, stripped of anything of value: from the doors to the windows, even the faucets and pipes. Some people even dismantled their homes to rebuild them on a neighboring lagoon. Janeth Diaz, 59, is among those who abandoned her home. She now lives in Puerto Concha, a three-hour journey by boat from Congo Mirador, which she reminisces about fondly.

"June 1, 2016 was one of the saddest

after they left Congo Mirador.

Douglas Camarillo, 62, refuses to leave. Submerged in mud up to his chest, with sweat on his brow, he spent two weeks clearing a path of just 130 m so that he and his neighbors could use their boats. "I'm not going to let my village die. As long as I am alive, the village will not die," he pledged. The church has remained intact, even if it's been several years since anyone celebrated Mass there.



View of a church in Congo Mirador.

A rusted chalice sits atop the altar adorned with plastic flowers that have survived the ravages of time, all under the watchful gaze of a statue of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, the patron saint of seafaring communities. The exodus from Congo Mirador has made life even harder, as the power plant that provided electricity to the village has not been operational for years, and the telephone antenna does not work.

Fuel, which used to be nearly free in this oil-producing nation, has been hard to acquire and expensive in recent years as Venezuela spiraled into political and economic uncertainty. "My mother died in Maracaibo, two (of my eight brothers) and myself could not go to her burial because we didn't have any gas," said Erwin Gotera, 33, who was born in the area. Gotera, a father himself, says half of what he makes from fishing is now used to pay for fuel. "Here, gas is killing us," he said. — AFP

days of my life," she said, referring to the date she left the village. Diaz says Congo Mirador was her "little Venice" where "we were all one big family." But when the mud came, she said, "I felt like it had a hold on me." Her mother died only a few months



Aerial view of stilt houses in Congo Mirador, Zulia state, Venezuela, on September 6, 2021.

The village once was buoyant and loud; now, it's dead quiet. No one knows exactly when the invasion of Congo Mirador actually began, but residents say sedimentation was already starting to ruin the pristine waters back in 2013, when tiny mud



Fishermen prepare their fishing nets in front of their stilt houses.— AFP photos



Juan Carlos Rodriguez and his wife Haydee, founders of Chuwie's Sloth Rescue Center, check a sloth (*Bradypus tridactylus*) after being rescued from palm trees where it took refuge in an urban area after being attacked by dogs in San Jose de Los Altos, Miranda state, Venezuela on Sept 23, 2021. — AFP photos

Venezuelan couple goes all out for smiling but endangered sloths

Haydee Rodriguez has just set free a sloth named Maruja 58 in a forested area outside Caracas and is watching her get settled. "Look how pretty! It's dancing in the trees," said Rodriguez, who along with her husband Juan Carlos shares a passion for the lethargic mammals that spend a lot of time hanging upside down from treetops. Maruja 58 is the 58th sloth the couple has rescued, cared for and freed through the Chuwie Foundation, the organization they founded that works to help these animals native to the rainforests of Central and South America.

Chuwie was the first sloth they rescued, and his face provides the logo of the foundation, located in San Antonio de los Altos, a suburb of Venezuela's capital. "We also want to help with research. To know how many sloths there are, for instance, and how they live," said Juan Carlos Rodriguez. There are no official figures for the sloth population in Venezuela, but deforestation in Latin America has reduced the size of the animals' habitat, says the World Wildlife Fund (WWF).

The International Union for Conservation of Nature says the pygmy three-toed sloth is in danger of extinction, and another species - the maned three-toed sloth - is considered "vulnerable". Near Caracas, the sloths face three main threats: Dogs that attack them, getting hit by cars and, above all, high voltage wires that run through forested areas. The sloths try to cling to them and are electrocuted.

That is what happened to Chuwie. He lost part of his left arm and suffered severe burns. The Rodriguez family, who had turned the injured animal over to a vet, adopted him. To raise awareness of the story, Haydee, who works in the news media, and Juan Carlos, a graphic designer, created a social media account - @Chuwieelgalan - that now has almost 10,000 followers on Instagram.

They learned from environmental specialists in Costa Rica how to care for these animals, and in just a few months, the Rodriguez family started going out to help injured ones. "Without even trying, we became sloth rescuers," said Haydee. She

and Juan Carlos have kept their day jobs, but the sloths now take up most of their time. They currently have six sloths with them at home recovering so they can be released. One was severely bitten by dogs, a baby one was found without its mother and another suffered a shock from a high voltage cable. The couple wants to build a bigger facility to shelter more animals.



A sloth rests inside a cage while remaining in recovery at Chuwie's Sloth Rescue Center to later be released into its natural habitat.

'Curse of the eternal smile'

Juan Carlos goes out every day to find fresh leaves from specific trees to feed the sloths he is hosting, and says he needs 1.6 kg of them. To pay for all of this, Haydee Rodriguez developed and now sells things with Chuwie's face on them, such as caps, coffee mugs, T-shirts and earrings. "People are really moved by Chuwie. He is a survivor," says Juan Carlos, "but we will never be able to release him." The animal is severely disabled now.

On their website, the couple carefully avoids posting photos of them with Chuwie in their arms. "They are not pets or stuffed animals," said Juan Carlos. "Sloths have the curse of the eternal smile. Even when they are in agony, it looks like they are smiling," he said, adding that people who want to domesticate them are one of the dangers facing these creatures. —AFP



A sloth called "Chuwie", who lost the claws of three of his four legs when he was electrocuted on power lines and rescued after suffering serious burns, remains hanging while being fed at Chuwie's Sloth Rescue Center.

Sports

Feisty Indian cricket star Ashwin a divisive figure with rare talent

Bowler accused of deviating away from 'spirit of cricket'

NEW DELHI: Ravichandran Ashwin is one of cricket's leading spin bowlers and a superstar in India, but more than once he has been accused of flouting the spirit of the sport. The 35-year-old all-rounder, who is not short of confidence or afraid to say what's on his mind, was again at the center of fierce debate last week in the money-spinning Indian Premier League (IPL).

Australian cricket legend Shane Warne called it "disgraceful" after Ashwin ran a controversial single for the Delhi Capitals in a testy encounter. The feisty Ashwin had a sharp exchange with Kolkata Knight Riders skipper Eoin Morgan and with Tim Southee following a throw that ricocheted off his partner Rishabh Pant's arm.

Usually, a batsman avoids a run when the ball from a fielder hits him and deviates away because it is seen as against the spirit of cricket, although there are no rules prohibiting a run. "Why does Ashwin have to be that guy again?" the retired Warne tweeted, with some on social media on Ashwin's side and others against him.

Ashwin did not hold back in mounting his defense and said he also had no remorse for the ugly set-to with Morgan and Southee. "Did I fight? No, I stood up for myself and that's what my teachers

and parents taught me to do and please teach your children to stand up for themselves," he told his 10.4 million followers on Twitter.

It was not the first time that Ashwin has courted controversy in the IPL and ignited debate about the "spirit of cricket". In 2019, he ran out Jos Buttler when the batsman was backing up at the non-striker's end. The so-called Mankad form of dismissal is legal, but often viewed as unsportsmanlike.

“

I stood up for myself

”

Blowing dirt

Ashwin's rise to the top started in his hometown of Chennai and through the years he has added variations to his repertoire of tricks. He mastered the "carram" delivery, or "sudoku ball" — "flick of the fingers" in his native language Tamil — while playing with a tennis ball. He has taken 413 Test wickets

and over 200 scalps in limited-overs internationals, and emerged in the last five years as cricket-mad India's number one spinner.

Ashwin played a key role in India's historic Test win in Australia early this year and, underlining his supreme confidence, said: "I think I have done enough to say I am the best spinner." But that did not prevent his exclusion from India's Test XI in the recently concluded tour of England — former England captain Michael Vaughan called that "madness".

Ashwin last played a limited-overs match for his country in 2017 but he looks set to play a major part for India at the upcoming Twenty20 World Cup in the United Arab Emirates and Oman. He is also more than a useful batter. "I see a lot of myself in Ashwin. He is a fantastic cricketer with a lot of work ethic," said India spin legend Anil Kumble. "Obviously, he is a far better batsman than me."

With a knack for breaking partnerships and picking wickets at crucial points of a game, Ashwin could be India's spin weapon on the UAE's sluggish pitches. But watch out for more fireworks from a man whose determination to win sometimes rubs his rivals up the wrong way.



MANCHESTER: In this file photo taken on September 8, 2021, India's Ravichandran Ashwin attends a team practice session ahead of the fifth cricket Test match between England and India at Old Trafford in Manchester, north-west England. — AFP

Amid all the talk this week about the spirit of cricket, former India opener Virender Sehwag revealed how Ashwin had once picked up some dirt from the pitch and blown it as a cheeky send-off to Glenn Maxwell

after dismissing the Australian in the IPL. Sehwag said he didn't like it, but told Indian media: "The spirit of the game also says that players should leave what happens inside the ground as is and move on." — AFP



Jurgen Klopp

Klopp compares anti-vax movement to drink driving

LIVERPOOL: Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp said people should get vaccinated against coronavirus for the same reason they should not drink and drive, as he revealed his squad are "99 percent" vaccinated. Take-up of the vaccine has been mixed among elite athletes, with reports last week suggesting only seven of the 20 Premier League clubs have over 50 percent of their squads fully vaccinated.

Klopp said that has not been an issue at Liverpool, where he has not had to convince his players to get jabbed. "I can say we have 99 percent vaccinated," said Klopp. "I didn't have to convince the players, it was more a natural decision from the team. I can't remember talking to a player and explaining him why he should because I am not a doctor."

And he offered a withering analogy for those holding out against getting vaccinated due to personal choice. "It's a little bit like drink driving. We probably all had a situation where we had a beer or two and thought 'I could still drive', but under the law we are not allowed to drive. The law is not there to protect me when I've had two beers and want to drive, it is there to protect all the other people because I am drunk and want to drive a car."

"With the vaccination, all the specialists out there tell us the vaccination is the solution for the situation at the moment. It is the same. I don't take the vaccination only to protect myself but to protect all the people around me. I don't understand how that is a limitation of freedom, because if it is then not being allowed to drink and drive is a limitation of freedom as well, but we accept that."

Klopp, 54, said he had consulted doctors he trusted before taking the vaccine. "Where did I get the knowledge from that I think it is makes sense to get the vaccination? I called doctors who I have known for years," he added. "I took the vaccination obviously because I am in the age group where it is not that easy anymore, otherwise it could be tricky." — AFP

Tapie brought glory, scandal to French football

PARIS: French businessman Bernard Tapie, who died yesterday aged 78, was the charismatic driving force behind Marseille's victory in Europe's premier club football competition in 1993. But his trophy-laden reign as president of the club culminated in a match-fixing scandal that stained his reputation.

When Basile Boli leaped to head in the goal that beat AC Milan on a balmy night in Munich 28 years ago, French football finally had the European crown it craved. Overcome with emotion, Tapie hugged the team's veteran Belgian coach Raymond Goethals as a team including the current France coach Didier Deschamps, German striker Rudi Voeller and Ghana star Abedi Pele celebrated.

Despite the huge injection of Qatari funds pumped into Paris Saint-Germain, Marseille remain the only French team to win what is now called the Champions League. Marseille also won the French championship four times while Tapie was president, meaning he will forever be adored by the football-mad southern port city — and by the players who played for him.

"RIP Bernard Tapie what a man. Legend," Chris Waddle, the English winger who had left the club a year before the European Cup win, tweeted yesterday. Yet Tapie's reign ended in shame and in the biggest scandal in the history of French football.

Two MLB playoff berths undecided as Rays rip Yankees

NEW YORK: Brandon Lowe smashed three home runs to power the Tampa Bay Rays over the New York Yankees 12-2 on Saturday, keeping Major League Baseball's last playoff spots up for grabs. On the penultimate day of the six-month regular season, New York's home loss kept the Yankees from clinching one of two undecided American League wildcard playoff berths.

The Boston Red Sox hoped to clinch a wildcard spot but needed a victory at Washington and losses by Seattle and Toronto. The Canadian club ensured that wouldn't happen by thrashing visiting Baltimore 10-1, keeping Toronto in the playoff chase to the final day.

San Francisco, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, Atlanta and St Louis have already sealed National League playoff berths while Tampa Bay, Houston and the Chicago White Sox have grabbed

AL playoff spots. The Giants-Dodgers race for top spot in the NL West Division will come down to the final day of the season. A Los Angeles loss Saturday night would have clinched the title for the Giants, but the Dodgers routed Milwaukee 8-3 to get within a game of San Francisco.

The Yankees missed a chance when the Rays delivered a blowout defeat at Yankee Stadium. Lowe's three-run homer to right field gave Tampa Bay a 3-0 lead over the Yankees in the first inning. Anthony Rizzo answered for New York with a solo homer in the first.

But Lowe blasted another three-run homer off Yankees starting left-hander Jordan Montgomery in the third inning and Mike Zunino followed with a solo homer for a 7-1 Rays lead and New York replaced Montgomery with lefty reliever Lucas Luetge. Gio Urshela's



MARSEILLE: Supporters stay near the portrait of late Bernard Tapie, former owner of the French football club Olympique de Marseille, displayed in front of the Velodrome Stadium in Marseille yesterday after the announcement of his death. — AFP

Just days after the glory in Munich, accusations emerged that Marseille had tried to bribe Valenciennes, their lowly northern opponents in a match before that European final, to ensure Marseille's players were given an easy ride.

The principal piece of evidence was 250,000 francs, worth roughly 55,000 euros or \$64,000 today, found buried in the garden of the aunt of Valenciennes player Christophe Robert. Then it emerged Tapie had paid a visit to the prosecutor of Valenciennes for what he called "a courtesy visit".

After a year and a half of claims, counter-claims and an investigation played out across the front pages of newspapers, Tapie was found guilty of

"complicity in corruption" and given a two-year jail sentence, of which just one year was suspended.

The sentence was eventually reduced on appeal and Tapie served 165 days behind bars. The accusations kept coming. In 1995, Marseille director Jean-Pierre Bernes admitted there had been a fund of as much as six million francs to buy off referees as well as opposition players and coaches.

Yesterday, as they digested news of his death following a long battle with cancer, Marseille supporters focused on the glory Tapie brought to the club. "He owes everything to Marseille and Marseille owes him a lot too," Didier Bertrand, 57, a fan sitting at a cafe in the city's Vieux Port area told AFP. — AFP



NEW YORK: Brandon Lowe #8 of the Tampa Bay Rays follows through on his seventh inning home run against the New York Yankees at Yankee Stadium on Saturday in New York City. — AFP

triple in the fourth drove in Joey Gallo to pull the Yankees within 7-2 but the Rays answered in the sixth on Wander Franco's single that scored Randy Arozarena from third base.

Lowe belted a solo homer to open the seventh inning and Austin

Meadows sent a three-run homer into the rightfield stands to give Tampa Bay a 12-2 lead. At Toronto, the Blue Jays got homers from Vladimir Guerrero, Teoscar Hernandez, George Springer, Bo Bichette and Danny Jackson to rout the Orioles. — AFP

Jepkosgei, Lemma triumph at London Marathon

LONDON: Kenya's Joyciline Jepkosgei won the women's London Marathon yesterday as Ethiopia's Sisay Lemma triumphed in the men's race in the first full-scale staging of the event since the coronavirus pandemic. Brigid Kosgei, aiming to become the first woman to win three consecutive London Marathon titles since Germany's Katrin Dörre in 1994, came fourth.

Jepkosgei won in a personal-best time of 2hr 17min 43sec. Ethiopia's Degitu Azimeraw finished second in 2:17.58 and compatriot Ashete Bekere was

third in 2:18.18. Lemma failed to finish the Olympic marathon in Japan in August but bounced back to win in the British capital in 2:04.01.

Kenya's Vincent Kipchumba was runner-up for the second year running in 2:04.28 and Ethiopia's Mosenet Geremew came third in a time of 2:04.41. The London Marathon returned to normality for the first time since 2019 after being held without amateur runners or spectators last year due to COVID-19 restrictions.

The pandemic forced the event to be moved from April to October in 2020, with a small number of elite runners completing laps around St James's Park. But this year more than 40,000 amateur runners joined the elite athletes in covering the traditional 26.2-mile course from Blackheath, southeast London, to The Mall, which leads to Buckingham Palace.

Another 40,000 runners competed virtually as the race got under way to cheers and applause from

returning spectators under a blanket of cloud that later cleared. The elite women set a ferocious early pace, completing the first 10 miles in 52min 10sec and threatening the women-only world record set in London in 2017 by Kenya's Mary Keitany. Lonah Chemtai Salpeter, Kosgei, Jepkosgei, Bekere and Azimeraw formed a breakaway group after half-way.

Reigning New York Marathon champion Jepkosgei broke away after 1hr 55min, establishing an insurmountable lead with a few miles to go. It is the first time five women have completed the London Marathon in under 2hr 19min.

Jepkosgei called her victory a "great achievement" as she basked in the vibrant atmosphere and autumnal sunshine at the finish line. "I'm happy. The race was good. They cheered us all the way and motivated us. I'm so grateful and excited," she told the BBC. "I'm so happy for the London crowd. Every kilometre there were people cheering all the way." — AFP

Sports

Suarez deepens Barcelona crisis, Koeman insists he will continue

'Everything is perfect,' Koeman says after speaking to Laporta

MADRID: Luis Suarez piled more misery on Barcelona by scoring in a 2-0 victory for Atletico Madrid on Saturday, but Ronald Koeman insists he has the club's support to continue as coach. Barca president Joan Laporta had said a few hours before kick-off that Koeman would continue as coach "regardless of the result" at the Wanda Metropolitano, but another limp display will put that commitment to the test over the two-week international break.

Koeman confirmed after the game he spoke to Laporta on Friday night and Saturday morning. He said he welcomed the clarity over his future, which he believes will benefit the team. "Clarity is very important, for the confidence of the coach, for the players too, for them to know the coach is still here," said Koeman. "He has made his decision, as he said this afternoon, so everything is perfect."

Goal scorer Suarez put his hands together and looked up to the sky in what was initially a muted celebration, out of respect for his former club, where he spent six years and scored 198 goals. "(It was) out of respect, love, for the journey I had at Barca and for the period they're in at the moment, for the fans as well," said Suarez after the game.

But the Uruguayan also made a telephone gesture and appeared to aim it at Koeman, perhaps referencing the abrupt manner Barca's coach told him he was surplus to requirements at Camp Nou, just over a year ago. "That was for the people who think I'm still using the same number," said Suarez with a smile.

Thomas Lemar had already fired Atletico in front and, two down before half-time, Barcelona looked vulnerable to another hammering on the back of successive 3-0 defeats in the Champions League by Bayern Munich and Benfica.

They at least avoided more embarrassment in the second half and it remains to be seen now whether Laporta stays true to his word by giving Koeman more time to turn things around. Xavi Hernandez, Roberto Martinez and Andrea Pirlo have reportedly been the names under consideration as replacements.

However, it is possible Laporta has found none of them are keen, with Barcelona bottom of their Champions League group and restricted to a spending limit of 97 million euros by La Liga, only the seventh highest in the division. Barca sit ninth, while Atletico's win takes them level on points with Real Madrid at the top of the table.



Xavi, Martinez, Pirlo possible replacements

Joao Felix stars

They needed this result too, after a disappointing start to the season that had seen them win only two of their previous five games. Suarez might take the headlines but it was his partner Joao Felix who was arguably the star of the show, the youngster a menace in the first half and producing one of his best performances in a long time.

Atletico coach Diego Simeone said: "When the first half was over, I went over to Joao and said: 'This is what I need from you. This is what you have to do.'" It was the first time the Wanda Metropolitano had been full since March 2020 and



MADRID: Barcelona's Dutch coach Ronald Koeman gestures from the tribunes during the Spanish League football match between Atletico Madrid and Barcelona at the Wanda Metropolitano stadium in Madrid on Saturday. —AFP

the noise gave impetus to Atletico early on.

It was Felix's superb touch that created the opening goal, a delightful shift away from Ronald Araujo on the left wing opening the whole pitch up in a moment. Felix played inside to Suarez, who fired first-time across to Lemar and he finished into the top corner.

For Barca, Philippe Coutinho went close on the volley and Freddie de Jong came up just short when stretching for Memphis Depay's header across. But Atletico were tearing Barca open on the break and Suarez made it two just before half-time. Depay lost the ball up front and four passes later, Suarez

was in, Yannick Carrasco touching to Lemar, who bounced the ball off Felix and fired it right.

With Gerard Pique back-peddling onto the line, Suarez picked his spot. Coutinho had a chance to pull one back before the hour but Jan Oblak smothered the finish and that was Coutinho's last contribution before being replaced by Ansu Fati.

Antoine Griezmann came on for Atletico too, making his first appearance since leaving Barcelona, nominally on loan, on the last day of the transfer window. He had a great chance on the break but passed badly, a switch to Angel Correa sent straight out of play. —AFP

Locatelli strike gives Juventus derby victory

MILAN: Manuel Locatelli's 86th-minute goal grabbed Juventus a hard-fought 1-0 derby victory at Torino on Saturday as Massimiliano Allegri's men made it three straight Serie A wins, while Edin Dzeko came off the bench to inspire Inter Milan past Sassuolo.

Visitors Juve were poor for the majority of the match but improved late on and Locatelli netted for the second time in as many league games to continue Juve's recent resurgence. Back-to-back victories in Serie A had got their season up and running after a nightmare start before a 1-0 Champions League win over holders Chelsea in midweek.

"The coach expects a lot from me and I am trying to do everything to improve," Locatelli, a boyhood Juve fan, told DAZN. "It was tough today, Fede (Federico Chiesa) saw me and gave a great assist, it was a good goal. My dad and uncle always come to cheer me on. I have a whole family of Juventus supporters at home right now who are very happy."

Allegri will also be delighted by a first league clean sheet of the campaign as his team moved up to eighth in the table. He was brought back as coach to

help regain the title Juve lost to Inter last term and those hopes have been revived by the strong recent run.

Allegri named a more attacking line-up than the one which edged out Chelsea, with Moise Kean returning to lead the line up front. But Juventus were sluggish in the first half, failing to register a shot on target as Torino dominated possession.

Away goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny had to make an excellent save from Rolando Mandragora to keep the match level at the break. Juve started to pose more of a threat but Alex Sandro and Juan Cuadrado were both denied by Torino stopper Vanja Milinkovic-Savic.

Cuadrado had a strong penalty appeal waved away after being brought down by Tommaso Pobega just before the hour mark. But Locatelli ensured that any controversy would not take the headlines, collecting Federico Chiesa's pass with four minutes remaining and curling a fine low shot in off the far post from the edge of the box.

Dejan Kulusevski almost added a second in injury time, but slammed a low strike against the woodwork after a fine run. That will not matter to Juve, though, as they extended their unbeaten run against their city rivals to 15 matches.

Dominant Dzeko

Dzeko scored and won the match-winning penalty as Inter fought back to down Sassuolo 2-1 as the reigning champions moved a point clear of city rivals AC Milan into second place.



TURIN: Juventus' Italian midfielder Manuel Locatelli celebrates his goal during his team's Serie A football match against Torino at the Grande Torino Stadium in Turin on Saturday. —AFP

Domenico Berardi gave home side Sassuolo the lead from the penalty spot midway through the first half as Inter faced the prospect of slipping seven points behind Napoli this weekend.

But the game changed when Inter boss Simone Inzaghi made a quadruple change in the 57th minute, including bringing on Dzeko. The Bosnian striker netted just a minute later, meeting Ivan Perisic's cross with a diving header at the back post. That goal took the veteran level with Ciro Immobile at the top of the league's scoring charts on six, but he was not done there.

Dzeko got in behind and was adjudged to have been fouled by Sassuolo goalkeeper Andrea Consigli, with Lautaro Martinez sending Consigli the wrong way from the spot to put Inter ahead with 12 minutes remaining. Dzeko, who only managed seven Serie A goals for previous club Roma in the whole of last season, also had another effort ruled out for offside late on. Earlier on Saturday, promoted Salernitana claimed their first Serie A win for 22 years as a 1-0 victory over Genoa took them off the foot of the table. —AFP

Benitez's flying start silences Everton sceptics

MANCHESTER: Rafael Benitez's appointment as Everton boss was not a popular one with supporters given his past as a Champions League-winning Liverpool manager, but the Spaniard's tactical nous has the Toffees dreaming of European football.

Everton have lost just one of Benitez's first seven Premier League games in charge despite a limited budget due to financial fair-play restrictions and injuries to star strikers Dominic Calvert-Lewin and Richarlison. A 1-1 draw away to Manchester United kept Benitez's men level on points with the Red Devils and Liverpool and one ahead of Manchester City ahead of the champions' trip to Anfield yesterday.

United boss Ole Gunnar Solskjaer could afford the luxury of bringing Cristiano Ronaldo, Jadon Sancho and Paul Pogba on as substitutes, while Benitez had to name three teenagers to fill out his bench. But a point was the least the visitors deserved from a performance that married the defensive organization Benitez's sides are famous for with a potent threat on the counter-attack.

Everton's goal showed the impact the 61-year-old has had in just a few

months in charge. After an Everton outlay of £240 million (\$325 million) in transfer fees over the past three years, Benitez's spending was limited to £1.7 million to bring in Demarai Gray and Andros Townsend during the transfer window.

At the same time he had to shave down the wage bill with James Rodriguez frozen out before his move to Qatari side Al-Rayyan. But Gray and Townsend have shone as Everton have taken 14 points from a possible 21. Gray showed his blend of strength, determination and pace to twice dispossess Fred and set in motion the counter-attack for Everton's equalizer.

Abdoulaye Doucoure is another player transformed by Benitez's arrival and the Frenchman provided his fourth assist of the season by rolling the ball into the path of Townsend for his fifth goal in nine games as an Everton player.

Townsend form

Townsend was available on a free transfer from Crystal Palace with his career seemingly in decline but he has been revived by reuniting with Benitez after the pair worked together previously at Newcastle. "The manager demands the very best. He got the best out of me when I was at Newcastle and he seems to be getting the best out of me again at the minute," said Townsend. "If I keep working hard, keep listening to the manager, hopefully I can continue getting on the scoresheet."



MANCHESTER: Everton's Spanish manager Rafael Benitez celebrates with his players as they held Manchester United to a draw in the two teams' English Premier League football match at Old Trafford in Manchester, north west England, on Saturday. —AFP

But for a matter of centimeters Everton could even have grabbed their first victory at Old Trafford since 2013. Yerry Mina tapped home Tom Davies' cross in the dying minutes but the Colombian had just strayed offside, which was spotted by a VAR check.

Even a point felt like three for Benitez, given the side he had to cobble together due to injuries. "It is a good draw, mentally like a victory, with the players who aren't playing," said Benitez. "If we have everybody available and continue with the same

team spirit, we can win more games. Hopefully, we can bring back some players but be sure that we keep the same mentality, the same commitment, the same intensity."

Calvert-Lewin, Richarlison, captain Seamus Coleman and Andre Gomes could return after the international break to bolster a bid to qualify for Europe next season. That may be beyond a squad punching above its weight, but Benitez could not have asked for a better start to silence any lingering skepticism as to whether he was the best man for the job. —AFP

News in brief

Bologna thump Lazio

MILAN: Bologna gave coach Sinisa Mihajlovic room to breathe yesterday with a comfortable 3-0 Serie A win over Lazio which ended a worrying run of results. Mihajlovic's position on the Bologna bench had been under discussion ahead of the visit of their Roman opponents after three matches without a win which included shipping six goals at Inter Milan and last weekend's miserable defeat to Empoli. However two quick early goals from Musa Barrow and Arthur Theate gave the hosts an advantage that Lazio, who were without star striker Ciro Immobile, could not overcome. Scotland's Aaron Hickey sealed the three points in the 68th minute when he cut inside Manuel Lazzari and let off a low shot which squirmed under Pepe Reina. Bologna moved up to ninth in 11 points, level with Atalanta, Lazio and Juventus. —AFP

Nkunku saves Leipzig

BERLIN: RB Leipzig eased the pressure on coach Jesse Marsch as Christopher Nkunku scored twice in a 3-0 home win over Bundesliga strugglers Bochum on Saturday. Portugal striker Andre Silva scored just 42 seconds after coming on mid-way through the second-half to break the deadlock before Nkunku took his tally this season to nine goals in 10 games in all competitions. "It was a real struggle," said Marsch, "it was an important moment for Andre and for us when he scored." Leipzig CEO Oliver Mintzlaff before kick-off admitted results are "not what we imagined" after Tuesday's home defeat by Club Brugge in the Champions League which followed a 6-3 drubbing at Manchester City. After Nkunku netted Leipzig's second with a deft chip over Bochum goalkeeper Manuel Riemann, a relieved Marsch celebrated with his players on the sidelines. —AFP

Watford sack manager

LONDON: Watford yesterday announced the sacking of head coach Xisco Munoz after a poor start to the Premier League season. The Spaniard leaves with the club 14th in the Premier League table having collected just seven points from their opening seven games. "The board feels recent performances strongly indicate a negative trend at a time when team cohesion should be visibly improving," the club said in a statement. Munoz took charge at Vicarage Road in December and successfully guided the club back to the top flight with a second-placed finish in the Championship last season. The statement added: "The Hornets will always be grateful to Xisco for the part he played in securing last season's promotion and wish him well for his future career in football. "No further club comment will be available until the imminent announcement of a new head coach." —AFP

Man City hit back to deny Liverpool



LIVERPOOL: Liverpool's Egyptian midfielder Mohamed Salah (center) challenges Manchester City's Portuguese defender Joao Cancelo during an English Premier League match at Anfield yesterday. — AFP

LIVERPOOL: Manchester City twice came from behind to prevent Liverpool moving back to the top of the Premier League in a pulsating 2-2 draw at Anfield yesterday. Liverpool weathered a City storm in the first-half and hit the English champions with a sucker punch when Sadio Mane opened the scoring just before the hour mark. Phil Foden levelled before Mohamed Salah looked to have won the game with a moment of individual brilliance as he jinked around four defenders before firing past Ederson.

However, Kevin De Bruyne's shot that deflected in off Joel Matip nine minutes from time salvaged the point Pep Guardiola's men at least deserved. A share of the spoils leaves the title race tantalizingly poised with Liverpool a point behind leaders Chelsea and City two points off the top in third. It could have been much worse for City as a 0-0 draw at home to Southampton two weeks ago left them

three points off the top of the table ahead of two of the most daunting away trips in the Premier League.

However, rather than being cut adrift from the contenders to take their title, they have laid down a marker in schooling Chelsea on their own patch and doing the same to Jurgen Klopp's men for the majority of a thrilling contest. Guardiola's side won 4-1 when the sides met behind closed door last season, but City have still not won in front of a crowd at Anfield since 2003, long before an Abu Dhabi takeover transformed the club's fortunes.

They should have ended that run by putting the game beyond doubt in a dominant first-half when, not for the first time this season, they just lacked the finishing touch. Foden had the majority of the chances before the break, but could not find a way past Alisson Becker. Bernardo Silva's mazy run beyond five players cut open the Liverpool defense, but Foden's low shot was

repelled by the Brazilian international.

The England international then had strong claims for a penalty or a red card against James Milner for a foul outside the box waived away by referee Paul Tierney. De Bruyne headed over a glorious chance with Foden this time the creator before Alisson had to sprint off his line to block from Foden once more just before the break. Liverpool were clinging on for the half-time whistle, but were able to reorganize themselves at the break to turn the game into a far more competitive contest in the second-half.

Mane hit City with the sucker punch as Salah skipped past Joao Cancelo and played in the Senegalese to slot calmly into the far corner. Anfield was suddenly stirred and Liverpool's players crashed into challenges in response as they didn't allow City to get into the rhythm they enjoyed before the break. However, one slick move from Guardiola's men finally saw them find the net

to level 21 minutes from time.

Gabriel Jesus skipped across the face of the Liverpool box before finding Foden, who this time drilled the ball low into Alisson's far corner. Guardiola was then infuriated as Milner avoided a second yellow card after chopping down Silva. And moments later his mood soured even more when Salah's stunning solo goal swung the game in Liverpool's favor.

The Egyptian danced around Cancelo, Silva and Aymeric Laporte before firing on his weaker right foot high past Ederson. Guardiola was then booked for taking his protests too far, but five minutes later he was screaming in celebration as De Bruyne's effort from the edge of the box deflected in off Joel Matip. Liverpool had the best chance to win the game in a breathless finale, but Rodri blocked Fabinho's goal-bound effort after Ederson flapped at a free-kick. — AFP

Messi suffers first PSG defeat in loss at Rennes

PARIS: Lionel Messi suffered his first defeat as a Paris Saint-Germain player yesterday as their perfect start to the Ligue 1 season ended with a 2-0 loss at Rennes. The Argentina star smacked the crossbar with a free-kick in the first half at Roazhon Park before Gaetan Laborde volleyed Rennes ahead just before the break with his league-leading sixth goal.

Flavien Tait struck less than 20 seconds after half-time to double the lead, with Kylian Mbappe seeing a goal ruled out for offside as Rennes snapped PSG's eight-match winning run in the league this term. "We didn't start the match well but then we played the best 25-30 minutes of the season. It's a shame we didn't score. We conceded two goals that were hard to take," said PSG coach Mauricio Pochettino.

PSG lost in the league for the first time since April, when they were beaten 1-0 at home by last season's eventual champions Lille. "In general, I'm satisfied, we created a lot of chances. Rennes scored with their first and the goal had a big emotional impact," said Pochettino. "I don't like to lose, there's a bit of anger. To go 2-0 down after a good period... We're disappointed not to have finished off what we had. It leaves us a bit bitter and disappointed."

Messi lined up alongside Neymar, Mbappe and Angel Di Maria for just the second match, making only his second league start for PSG after missing the past two Ligue 1 games with a knee injury. Gianluigi Donnarumma again got the nod ahead of Keylor Navas in goal, having kept a clean sheet midweek in PSG's Champions League win over Manchester City. Looking to keep pace with the team that won its opening 14 games under Thomas Tuchel in 2018, PSG created a series of chances midway through the first half—all of which went to waste.



RENNES: Paris Saint-Germain's Argentinian forward Lionel Messi controls the ball during the French L1 football match between Stade Rennais (Rennes) and Paris Saint-Germain at Roazhon Park yesterday. — AFP

Neymar skied horribly after the ball broke kindly to the Brazilian inside the Rennes area and Mbappe was guilty of another glaring miss when he scooped over after getting in behind the home defense. Messi, who bagged a spectacular first goal for PSG against City on Tuesday, nearly got off the mark in Ligue 1 but watched his curling free-kick from 25 yards clatter the bar on the half-hour.

Rennes goalkeeper Alfred Gomis crucially stuck out a hand to deny Neymar a tap-in as Di Maria squared across the six-yard box, and PSG paid the price for their missed opportunities on the stroke of half-time. Kamaldeen Sulemana whipped in a cross from the left which was thumped beyond Donnarumma by Laborde, a deadline day signing from Montpellier Rennes, who spent 180 million (\$92.6 million) on new signings in the summer—more than anyone in France including PSG—caught the visitors cold right at the start of the second half to make it 2-0. Laborde, released

down the right, pulled back for Tait to sweep in first time—the goal upheld after a VAR check for offside, and greeted by a deafening roar from a full house of close to 30,000 once it was confirmed.

Sulemana fired a ferocious drive narrowly over but PSG appeared to have pulled one back when Mbappe squeezed beyond Gomis, only for it to be chalked off upon review. It could have been worse for Pochettino's side had a penalty awarded to Rennes not been overturned in the closing stages after replays exonerated Achraf Hakimi from a foul on Laborde. Instead PSG, who stay six points clear of second-placed Lens, must now reset after the international break that will see Messi jet off to South America for a gruelling series of three World Cup qualifiers. Hours after the death of former Marseille president Bernard Tapie at the age of 78, Jorge Sampaoli's side lost 2-0 at Lille as Jonathan David struck twice for the second league game running. — AFP

Real Madrid slip to Liga defeat against Espanyol



CORNELLA DE LLOBREGAT, Spain: Real Madrid's French forward Karim Benzema (right) vies with Espanyol's Spanish midfielder David Lopez during a Spanish League match at the RCDE Stadium yesterday. — AFP

MADRID: Real Madrid slipped to a 2-1 defeat at Espanyol yesterday as Carlo Ancelotti's side followed up a shock Champions League reverse with their first Liga defeat of the season. Real, who lost to Moldovan minnows Sheriff Tiraspol on Tuesday, blew a chance to pull ahead of Atletico Madrid, who beat crisis-hit Barcelona 2-0 on Saturday to draw level with their city rivals on 17 points.

Ancelotti said Real had played "our worst match of the season". "I agree, we played badly," the Italian coach added. "We now need to use the international break to think about why this team's attitude has changed in the space of a week."

Espanyol took the lead on 17 minutes at the RCDE Stadium in Catalonia

when Raul de Tomas found the net. Alexis Vidal scored a sparkling second goal after nutmegging Nacho and smashing the ball past Real 'keeper Thibaut Courtois 15 minutes into the second half.

The defeat leaves Real without a win in three games after they were held to a goalless draw by Villarreal in their previous league match. Karim Benzema had the ball in the net early in the second half but the goal was ruled out for Luka Jovic's offside.

Just as Espanyol appeared to be about to extend their advantage again, Benzema pulled a goal back on 71 minutes, firing into the bottom corner after the Frenchman collected a pass from Jovic for his ninth league goal in eight games this season. — AFP