



2 US official thanks Amir over Afghanistan evacuations



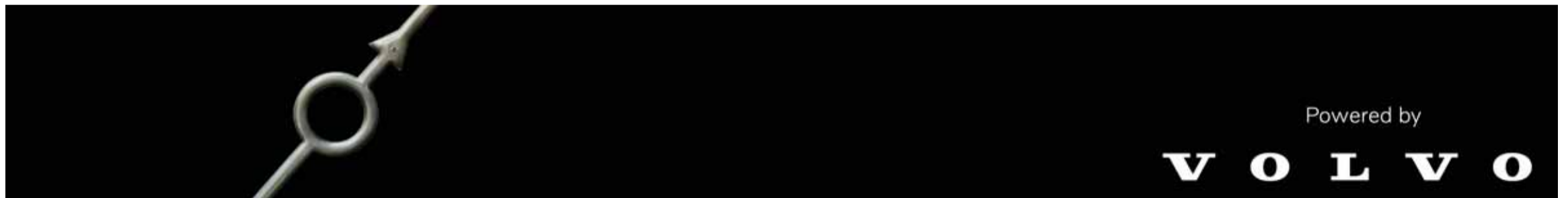
8 Dry year leaves Syria wheat farmers facing crop failure



11 Russian crew arrives at ISS to film first movie in orbit



16 Football fiasco symptom of rush to bring out games



National dialogue begins behind closed doors

General pardon, reforms debated at meeting amid positive atmosphere

BNK Automotive recognizes Kuwait's Olympic medalists



KUWAIT: (From left) Olympian Abdullah Al-Rashidi, BNK Automotive President Bader Al-Kharafi, Paralympian Ahmad Al-Mutairi and Paralympian Faisal Sorour are seen during an honoring ceremony at Volvo Studio at Khaleejiya Complex yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

KUWAIT: BNK Automotive, the official dealer of Volvo in Kuwait, gifted Kuwait's Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic heroes brand-new Volvo V90CCs at a ceremony at the Volvo Studio at Khaleejiya Complex yesterday. The athletes who were honored include Olympian Abdullah Al-Rashidi, who won the bronze medal in the skeet shooting event, Paralympian Faisal Sorour, who claimed bronze in the men's standing shot put F63 event, and Ahmad Al-Mutairi, also a Paralympian, who bagged the silver medal in the men's T33 100-meter wheelchair race.

The ceremony to celebrate and gift Kuwait's reigning Olympians was attended by the athletes and BNK Automotive President Bader Al-Kharafi,

who congratulated them on their outstanding achievements. "Their dedication, commitment and sportsmanship are an example to us all and we are very proud of our Kuwaiti brothers. This gift is a small token of our appreciation for their efforts to raise the name of Kuwait high across the world for all to see," he said.

The ceremony marks Volvo Car and BNK Automotive's continued commitment to and support of the people of Kuwait, and is one of the many community engagement events held at the Volvo Studio at Khaleejiya Complex, which have also included cancer awareness and female empowerment initiatives and celebrations of local artists. (See Page 3)

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The long-awaited national dialogue was launched yesterday with closed-door meetings between the government and representatives of the National Assembly, amid mixed reactions and hopes. HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, Minister of Islamic Affairs Essa Al-Kandari and Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs Mubarak Al-Harees represented the government.

The invitation for the dialogue was issued by HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah with the aim to resolve all political problems rocking the country, which have paralyzed the political scene for almost a year. No statement was issued by the government and the lawmakers on the outcome of the first session of the dialogue, but local media cited parliamentary sources as saying a positive atmosphere prevailed.

"An optimistic atmosphere prevailed and all parties are keen to emerge from the deadlock," the local Al-Oula24 TV quoted parliamentary sources as saying following the session. The sources added the session lasted for four hours and tackled issues including a general pardon, freedoms, economic reforms, the electronic crimes law and protecting the prime minister against grillings, adding that a

second session has been set for tomorrow, according to the TV channel.

But not all opposition members were happy about the meeting, amid signs of divisions among their ranks. Former opposition MP Faisal Al-Mislem, who is among several ex-MPs and activists living in exile in Turkey, criticized the "ill-prepared" dialogue. "Today, an ill-prepared and badly-represented dialogue starts" Mislem said on Twitter. "What can we hope from dialogue when its powerful parties aim to include MPs in the Cabinet, maintain Marzouq (Al-Ghanem) as speaker and fragment the (opposition) bloc of 31 MPs," the former lawmaker said.

But former minister and MP Ali Al-Omar said the dialogue should herald a new chapter between the two authorities - the government and Assembly - and lead to eliminating disputes and achieving a political breakthrough. He said MPs should insist on conveying several messages to the government, mainly its failure to execute the development plan, the absence of government priorities, low representation of MPs in Cabinet and failure to tackle economic, education and health issues and counter corruption.

Meanwhile, 26 non-profit organizations said in a joint statement that the national dialogue should discuss pressing reforms and pave the way for holding a larger national conference to resolve local issues.

Whistleblower calls to regulate Facebook

WASHINGTON: A Facebook whistleblower told US lawmakers yesterday that the social media giant fuels division, harms children and urgently needs to be regulated, drawing pledges Congress would take up long-delayed action. Ex-employee Frances Haugen testified in Capitol Hill after she leaked reams of internal research to authorities and The Wall Street Journal, which has fueled one of Facebook's most serious crises yet.

"I believe that Facebook's products harm children, stoke division and weaken our democracy," Haugen told a Senate sub-committee. "Congressional action is needed. They won't solve



WASHINGTON: Former Facebook employee and whistleblower Frances Haugen testifies before a Senate committee hearing on Capitol Hill yesterday. — AFP

this crisis without your help," she added. In her testimony, she noted the danger of the power in the hands of a service that is woven into the daily lives of so many people.

Continued on Page 2

News in brief

Some visas to be issued

KUWAIT: Kuwait will resume issuing entry visas (commercial visit visas and work permits) to foreigners to work in activities related to food security in the country, the government announced yesterday. The decision, which is effective immediately, covers the following activities: Farms, restaurants, catering and bakeries, fishing and selling fish, shepherding and dairy production, food factories, suppliers and supermarkets, and water and soft drink bottling companies.

Mawlid holiday on Oct 21

KUWAIT: The Civil Service Commission announced yesterday that Thursday, October 21 will be a public holiday to mark the Prophet's (PBUH) birthday in lieu of the original holiday which falls on Monday, October 18.

Woman kills self in detention

KUWAIT: A Filipino woman committed suicide by hanging herself with her clothes at Naeem police station in Jahra yesterday, after she was arrested for not having any identification documents with her. Maj Gen Farraj Al-Zoubi ordered an investigation into her death and the security lapses that led to the alleged suicide.

Nobel Physics Prize honors climate work

STOCKHOLM: US-Japanese scientist Syukuro Manabe, Klaus Hasselmann of Germany and Giorgio Parisi of Italy yesterday won the Nobel Physics Prize for climate models and the understanding of physical systems, the jury said. The Nobel committee said it was sending a message

with its prize announcement just weeks before the COP26 climate summit in Glasgow, as the rate of global warming sets off alarm bells around the world.

"The world leaders that haven't got the message yet, I'm not sure they will get it because we are saying it. But... what we are saying is that the modelling of climate is solidly based in physics theory," said Thor Hans Hansson, chair of the Nobel Committee for Physics. Manabe, 90, and Hasselmann, 89, will share half of the 10 million kronor (\$1.1 million) prize for their research on climate models, while

Continued on Page 2



STOCKHOLM: Portraits of the co-winners of the 2021 Nobel Prize in Physics (from left) Syukuro Manabe, Klaus Hasselmann and Giorgio Parisi are displayed on a screen at the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences in Stockholm yesterday. — AFP

Inequality, inflation hurting pandemic recovery: IMF

WASHINGTON: The global economic bounceback from the COVID-19 crisis will downshift this year as countries struggle with rising prices, high debt loads and divergent recoveries in which poor nations are slipping behind wealthier ones, the leader of the IMF warned yesterday. While the Washington-based crisis lender has hundreds of billions of dollars in new firepower to help countries recover from the catastrophe, IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said factors from rising food prices to unequal vaccine access were taking a toll.

"We face a global recovery that remains 'hobbled' by the pandemic and its impact. We are unable to walk forward properly," Georgieva said in a speech delivered virtually from Washington to Bocconi University in Milan. The IMF will release new growth forecasts next week, but Georgieva warned "we now expect growth to moderate slightly this year" from the six percent forecast in July, and "the risks and obstacles to a balanced global recovery have become even more pronounced."

These include a widening divergence between rich countries and poor countries in the trajectories of their recovery from the pandemic. "Economic output in advanced economies is projected to return to pre-pandemic trends by 2022. But most emerging and developing countries will take many more years to recover," Georgieva said. "This delayed recovery will make it even more difficult to avoid long-term economic scarring - including from job losses, which hit young people, women and informal workers especially hard." Georgieva's speech comes ahead of the fall meetings of the IMF and World Bank, where the former will unveil its latest World Economic Outlook offering forecasts on an array of topics. Since their previous report in July, the IMF's tool kit for dealing with global crises was greatly expanded with a \$650 billion increase in cash reserves for member nations known as Special Drawing Rights.

These reserves, \$275 billion of which went to emerging and developing nations, give countries funds to draw on as their economies recover. — AFP

Local

US official thanks Amir over Afghanistan evacuations

Benaim hails enduring US-Kuwait relationship

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: A visiting US official yesterday expressed gratitude to HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for his "excellent decision to work closely with the United States to partner in the evacuations from Afghanistan". "US Secretary of State Antony Blinken's visit to Kuwait showed how important we believe this US-Kuwait relationship is. Throughout history, US and Kuwait have proven that they are the strongest of allies and friends," said Daniel Benaim, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Arabian Peninsula Affairs in the Near East Bureau at the US Department of State.

"I wanted to meet government, civil society and business leaders to discuss many issues of importance that play into our strategic dialogue, and get a first-hand sense of key bilateral and regional issues that we have a chance to advance together," Benaim said during a roundtable discussion at the US Embassy yesterday. He praised Kuwait's diplomatic role in restoring the spirit of Gulf unity, "which was on display when the countries came together in New York and met the US as full partners, having put to rest the rift that had divided the US allies".

Benaim said discussions with Kuwaiti officials included policies related to Iran, Iraq and Syria. Benaim earlier yesterday met Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Majdi Al-Dhafiri, who previously served as Kuwait's ambassador to Iran. "President Biden has been committed to ensure Iran does not acquire a

nuclear weapon. We will consult closely with our partners and work with the international community to return to the nuclear deal (known formally as the JCPOA), to bring Iran's nuclear program back from the dangerous levels of enrichment it is currently engaged in," he said.

"Secretary Blinken has made it clear that the window of diplomacy is open, but it won't be open forever. We hope the new Iranian government will take the earliest opportunity to return to the table and engage in very serious diplomacy to address this threat to international security," Benaim added, refusing to be drawn when asked if the Biden administration would be prepared to pursue "other avenues" to ensure Tehran does not acquire a nuclear weapon.

Benaim vehemently denied that the US has lost interest in the Middle East. "The US has enduring interests, enduring values and enduring commitments in this region. I think the last two months have very vividly demonstrated that this region is fundamental to how America operates around the world, as we saw with the evacuation from Afghanistan. We will be here in the Middle East because it is the best way to advance our national interests, when countries are not able to proliferate nuclear weapons and terrorism is held in check. This can happen when partnerships are vibrant and healthy," he said.

Benaim was asked if the US will hand over the names of Kuwaiti members of Hezbollah to the Kuwaiti government. "Kuwait is a very good partner of the US on counterterrorism, and these kinds of sanctions help



KUWAIT: Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Arabian Peninsula Affairs in the Near East Bureau at the US Department of State Daniel Benaim holds a roundtable discussion at the US Embassy yesterday.

us ensure that Iran and its proxies and organizations cannot undermine the norms of international security and engage in terrorist behavior," Benaim replied, referring to US Treasury Department sanctions imposed on two Kuwaitis last month for supporting and financing Hezbollah.

Kuwait's daily COVID-19 infection to test ratio stands at 0.19 percent

KUWAIT: Ministers were briefed during the Cabinet's weekly meeting on the latest developments of the coronavirus pandemic situation, including the signs of improvement shown in declining infection cases and hospitalizations. The daily rate of infections stands at 0.19 percent of the number of swap tests, he said, attributing the improvement to the accelerating rate of immunization. The Cabinet members express satisfaction about the trends of improvement, underscoring the need to continue commitment to the health precautions to help contain the outbreak of the virus and protect the community, thus preparing for return to normal life.

Kuwait's Cabinet convened its regular weekly meeting at Al-Seif Palace on Monday under the chairmanship of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Hamad Al-Sabah. His Highness the Prime Minister briefed the ministers on the progress made in the implementation of the call of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for the country's executive and legislative authorities to start a national dialogue. The ministers reaffirmed backing for the call and agreed that a quiet dialogue could prod economic development, prepare the ground for balanced relations with the legislative authority and realize the aspirations of the people, said Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah. The ministers reviewed the constitutional and political aspects of His Highness the Amir's plea as well as its positive impacts on the legislative-executive cooperation and the domestic and regional situations.

Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser said he apprised the meeting of the outcome of his participation in the 149th session of the Ministerial Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). He noted that the GCC ministerial meeting, recently held in Riyadh, strongly denounced the

Yemeni Houthi militias for persisting in launching missile and drone attacks on civilian targets in sisterly Saudi Arabia. The Cabinet meeting reviewed the outcomes of the participation of Kuwait delegation, led by His Highness the Prime Minister, in the 76th session of the UN General Assembly as well as the outcomes of the talks held on the sidelines with missions of friendly countries to the session.

His Highness the Prime Minister also briefed the meeting on his visit to friendly United Kingdom and the talks with Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs Elizabeth Truss, and Minister of State for Middle East and North Africa James Cleverly. He apprised the meeting of his visit to sisterly Algeria where he handed a message from His Highness the Amir to President Abdelmadjid Tebboune on the bilateral relations. He put the ministers in the picture of his talks with Libyan Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Dr Najla Mangoush during her recent tour of the countries of the region. He noted that talks with Dr Al-Mangoush dealt with the latest developments on the regional and international scales as well as Kuwait's efforts to stabilize sisterly Libya.

Representative of His Highness the Prime Minister, the Minister of Information and Culture, and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi briefed the Cabinet meeting on his mission to Expo 2020 Dubai and the opening on Friday of Kuwait Pavilion at the global gala under the theme of "New Kuwait - New Opportunities for Sustainability." The Cabinet members congratulated sisterly UAE on the successful inauguration of the Expo, which is considered the world's biggest gala ever held in the Middle East. They debated the proposals of the legal



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

affairs committee regarding a number of international pacts, and agreed blueprints of some MoUs with other countries. On regional affairs, the Cabinet denounced the persistence of the Houthi militias in launching missile and drone attacks on civilians targets in sisterly Saudi Arabia, deeming such acts as blatant violation of the international humanitarian law.

They restated firm support to sisterly Saudi Arabia in whatever measures it might take to protect its safety, stability and sovereignty. The Cabinet members expressed sympathy with sisterly Oman and the UAE in the face of the tropical cyclone Shaheen that left scores of victims. They expressed condolences for the families of those who perished in the hurricane and wished the wounded a quick recovery. They also expressed condolences for UAE President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al-Nahyan and the brotherly people of the UAE over the tragic crash of an air ambulance. They congratulated Qatari Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani and the brotherly people of Qatar on the successful legislative elections, expressing best wishes of prosperity and welfare for Qatar. —KUNA

Whistleblower calls to...

Continued from Page 1

"The company intentionally hides vital information from the public, from the US government and from governments around the world," Haugen's statement said.

She spoke less than a day after Facebook, its photo-sharing app Instagram and messaging service WhatsApp went offline for roughly seven hours, hitting potentially billions of users and highlighting global dependence on its services. "Here's my message for (Facebook CEO) Mark Zuckerberg. Your time of invading our privacy, promoting toxic content and preying on children and teens is over," said Senator Ed Markey. "Congress will be taking action... we will not allow your company to harm our children, our families and our democracy anymore," he added.

Senator Amy Klobuchar said she sees the whistleblower disclosures as the long-needed push to get Congress moving. "I think the time has come for action, and I think you are the catalyst for that action," she told Haugen. US lawmakers for years have threatened to regulate Facebook and other social media platforms to address criticisms that the tech giants trample on privacy, provide a megaphone for dangerous misinformation and damage young people's well-being.

Facebook has pushed back hard against the whistleblower revelations and attacked Haugen's knowledge yes-

terday. Haugen "did not work on child safety or Instagram or research these issues and has no direct knowledge of the topic from her work at Facebook," tweeted Andy Stone, a spokesman for the company. Haugen, a 37-year-old data scientist from Iowa, has worked for companies including Google and Pinterest - but said in an interview Sunday with CBS news show "60 Minutes" that Facebook was "substantially worse" than anything she had seen before. Facebook's vice president of policy and global affairs Nick Clegg vehemently pushed back at the assertion its platforms are "toxic" for teens, days after a tense, hours-long congressional hearing in which US lawmakers grilled the company over its impact on the mental health of young users.

Facebook late Monday blamed the outage on configuration changes it made to routers that coordinate network traffic between its data centers. "This disruption to network traffic had a cascading effect on the way our data centers communicate, bringing our services to a halt," Facebook vice president of infrastructure Santosh Janardhan said in a post.

In addition to the disruption to people, businesses and others that rely on the company's tools, Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg took a financial hit. Fortune's billionaire tracking website late Monday said Zuckerberg's personal fortune plunged by nearly \$6 billion from the prior day to land at just under \$117 billion. Some people rejoiced at Facebook's tools being offline, but some complained to AFP that the outage had caused trouble for them both professionally and personally. —AFP

Nobel Physics Prize honors...

Continued from Page 1

Parisi, 73, won the other half for his work on the interplay of disorder and fluctuations in physical systems.

"Syukuro Manabe and Klaus Hasselmann laid the foundation of our knowledge of the Earth's climate and how humanity influences it," the Nobel Committee said. "Giorgio Parisi is rewarded for his revolutionary contributions to the theory of disordered materials and random processes," it added. "The discoveries being recognized this year demonstrate that our knowledge about the climate rests on a solid scientific foundation, based on a rigorous analysis of observations," Hansson said.

Manabe is affiliated with Princeton University in the US, while Hasselmann is a professor at the Max Planck Institute for Meteorology in Hamburg. Parisi, who also won the prestigious Wolf Prize in February, is a professor at Rome's Sapienza University. Working in the 1960s, Manabe showed how levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere correspond to increased Earth surface temperatures. He was influential in developing the physical models of Earth's climate and explored how the heat received by Earth from the Sun radiates back into the atmosphere.

Hasselmann was credited for working out how climate models can remain reliable despite sometimes chaotic variation in weather trends. The Committee praised his identification of climate "fingerprints" caused by both natural and human activities and how much climate change can be attributed solely to manmade emissions. Already three decades ago, Hasselmann issued an eerily accurate warning about where the climate was headed.

"In 30 to 100 years, depending on how much fossil fuel we consume, we will face a very significant climate change," Hasselmann said in a 1988 interview, according to a statement from the Max Planck Society in Germany. Speaking to the Nobel Foundation after the award was announced, Hasselmann stressed the need for urgent action. "There are many things we can do to prevent climate change," he said, adding that he thought the issue depended on "whether people will realise that something which will happen in 20 or 30 years is something you have to respond to now." —AFP

Nazaha invites public to report suspected corruption complaints

By Dana Al-Matar

Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) is an entity that is responsible for combatting corruption crimes in the State of Kuwait. This is a complex mandate that requires sophisticated action. In order to perform this task, Nazaha has developed its operational sectors accordingly. Two of the main sectors at Nazaha are the Financial Disclosure Sector and the Detection of Corruption and Investigation Sector.

The Financial Disclosure Sector receives and analyzes what is known as the "financial disclosure statements." In these statements, state officials disclose their wealth, including bank accounts, properties, valuable items, and others. The purpose of the statements is twofold: to preserve the integrity of state officials and detect corruption crimes. Statements must be submitted and updated by the state officials according to specific dates. They are also regularly examined by financial auditors for illicit enrichment, and in this case, they are referred to the Detection of Corruption and Investigation Sector.

Financial disclosure statements need to be submitted by specific state officials, those who are deemed to be more prone to corruption. These officials are identified in Article 2 of Law No 2 for the year 2016 on the establishment of Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority and the Special Provisions of Financial Disclosure. These state officials include the Prime Minister, ministers, speaker and members of the parliament, head of the judiciary council, judges, among others.

On the other hand, the Detection of Corruption and Investigation Sector receives and investigates complaints by whistleblowers and takes the required course of action in that regard. The complaints must be against the state officials mentioned above, and the crime should be among the corruption crimes stipulated in Article 22 of the said law which includes: bribery, abuse of power, money laundering, fraud and other crimes against public funds.

All complaints by whistleblowers are considered strictly confidential, and personal information is never disclosed. In fact, Nazaha provides whistleblowers with the maximum level of protection. It represents them in courts and challenges any administrative or legal action taken against them for submitting a complaint.

Since its establishment in 2016, Nazaha has received 367 complaints about corruption crimes. Yet, Nazaha does not solely rely on complaints. It monitors news about corruption crimes in newspapers, social media, and other sources. In this manner, Nazaha has detected 97 cases of suspected corruption crimes since 2016.

Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis are welcome to submit their complaints to Nazaha through booking an appointment online. They can then provide the information on the suspected incident of corruption to an assigned investigator along with the supporting documents.

● Dana Al-Matar is a Senior Legal Auditor at Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha)



Dana Al-Matar

Local

Honoring Kuwaiti medalists national duty: BNK Automotive President

Bader Al-Kharafi says medalists set example with hard work, dedication and achievement



KUWAIT: (From left) Tokyo Olympic medalist Abdullah Al-Rashidi, BNK Automotive President Bader Al-Kharafi, Tokyo Paralympic medalist Ahmad Al-Mutairi and Tokyo Paralympic medalist Faisal Sorour. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



BNK Automotive President Bader Al-Kharafi poses with the bronze medal that Abdullah Al-Rashidi won in the Tokyo 2020 Olympics.

KUWAIT: Honoring high-achieving Kuwaiti athletes is a national duty towards those who represent Kuwait and raise the country's flag high in international arenas, BNK Automotive President Bader Al-Kharafi said. Kharafi made his statement during a ceremony organized by BNK Automotive, the official dealer of Volvo in Kuwait, during which he gifted Kuwait's Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic medalists brand new Volvo V90CCs.

"Honoring our heroes Abdullah Al-Rashidi, Ahmad Al-Mutairi and Faisal Sorour is the least we could offer," he said at the ceremony held at the Volvo Studio at Khaleejiya Complex yesterday. "We will continue to honor them, following in the footsteps of our ancestors," he added. The athletes who were recognized were Olympian Rashidi, who won the bronze medal in the skeet shooting event, Paralympian Sorour, who claimed bronze in the men's standing shot put F63 event, and Mutairi, also a Paralympian, who achieved the silver medal in the men's T33



Hanan Al-Zubaid

100-meter wheelchair race.

Kharafi congratulated the three athletes on their accomplishment, noting that they have set a great example in hard work, dedication and achievement for the younger generation to follow. "Kuwait is worthy of all of our hard work," he said, expressing pride in the athletes' triumph "that motivates us all to seek excellence".

Kharafi reiterated his support to young Kuwaiti men and women, noting that the company continues to offer support as part



BNK Automotive President Bader Al-Kharafi (left) presents the keys of a brand-new Volvo V90CC to Kuwaiti Paralympic medalist Faisal Sorour.



Mohammed Al-Gharaballi

of its social responsibility in order to enable them to present a proper image of Kuwait at international competitions, urging them to exert all efforts in this regard.

Meanwhile, the three athletes expressed gratitude to Kharafi for the honoring, vowing to continue to work hard to win more medals as they prepare to participate in the 2024 Paris Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Meanwhile, Volvo Car Kuwait Marketing Manager Hanan Al-Zubaid said the company is keen

on supporting Kuwaiti athletes as part of its social responsibility towards the society. "This is a source of pride for us," she said of the sponsorship, noting that honoring Kuwaiti medalists "is the least we can offer to encourage them to seek further achievements."

Mohammed Al-Gharaballi, Brand Experience Professional at Volvo Car Kuwait, spoke about the Volvo Studio at Khaleejiya Complex, saying it is a place to showcase the latest Volvo models, while also offering spaces to host meetings and conferences, in addition to a green front yard. This concept can be found in only a few select countries, including Sweden, Italy, Japan, the US and Kuwait, he added.

The ceremony marks Volvo Car and BNK Automotive's continued commitment to and support of the people of Kuwait, and is one of the many community engagement events held at the Volvo Studio at Khaleejiya Complex, which have included cancer awareness and female empowerment initiatives and celebrations of local artists.



BNK Automotive President Bader Al-Kharafi (left) presents the keys of a brand-new Volvo V90CC to Kuwaiti Paralympic medalist Ahmad Al-Mutairi.



The three brand new Volvo V90CCs gifted to the athletes.



Abdullah Al-Rashidi in his brand-new Volvo V90CC.



Ahmad Al-Mutairi in his brand-new Volvo V90CC.



Faisal Sorour in his brand-new Volvo V90CC.

Local

Kuwait Times
Established 1961
The First Daily in The Arabian Gulf

THE LEADING INDEPENDENT
DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF
ESTABLISHED 1961

Founder and Publisher
YOUSUF S. AL-ALYAN

Editor-in-Chief
ABD AL-RAHMAN AL-ALYAN

EDITORIAL : 24833199-24833358-24833432
ADVERTISING : 24835616/7
FAX : 24835620/1
CIRCULATION : 24833199 Extn. 163
ACCOUNTS : 24833199 Extn. 125
COMMERCIAL : 24835618

P.O.Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait.
Email: info@kuwaittimes.com
Website: www.kuwaittimes.net

NBK sponsors 'Safe Education' campaign



KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) supports 'Safe Education' awareness campaign. The campaign came as a result of collaboration of the ministries of Education, Health, Interior and Information. The campaign aims to raise awareness and encourage students and their families to support the governmental efforts for a safe return to the academic year 2021-2022.

'Safe Education' campaign targets a safe start for the school year, making the school a place to learn and communicate with colleagues safely. It encourages students and teachers to abide by the health protocols put in place.

On this occasion, a delegation from the Department of Relations and Security Media at the Ministry of Interior, represented by Colonel Abdulelah Al-Abdul Salam and Colonel Yousef Mershed visited NBK and were received by Head of the Security Department, Khaled Al-Matrouk and NBK Public Relations Assistant General Manager, Manal Al-Mattar.

Mattar expressed her sincere appreciation to the national efforts in this campaign to ensure a safe return of students to their schools and a safe educational environment of the highest levels of prevention. "The safety of students and workers in the school is a top priority. This campaign aims to provide a safe educational environment of the highest levels of prevention after an absence of almost a year-and-a-half due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic," she noted.

"NBK is a key supporter of the current safety efforts. Since the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, NBK continued to fulfill its social responsibility and support to the government efforts," Mattar added. The campaign comes from the keenness of the concerned authorities and sponsors about the health and safety of the students and an embodiment of cooperation, solidarity and coordination between the state ministries to provide a safe educational environment of the highest levels of prevention.

The campaign aims to confirm the commitment of students, parents, and the administrative and educational bodies to apply the precautionary and health requirements and procedures, from the moment they leave the house and arrive at the school building. NBK maintains its leading position among the private sector institutions through its commitment to fully support social programs in the areas of healthcare, childcare, social, environmental, sports and education.

Capital governor appreciates KFH efforts, social role

KUWAIT: KFH Group Acting CEO Abdulwahab Al-Rushood emphasized KFH keenness to extend all kinds of support and back up to all efforts aiming to achieve the government plans and programs in various fields as part of the national development and society service efforts. The efforts include all works, and activities aiming to improve the cultural face of Kuwait, protect environment and enhance citizens' service. He praised, in this respect, the distinguished cultural program presented by the capital governor concerning the development and embellishment of Kuwait City and adding modernized features on its streets and vital locations.

Rushood reiterated, during the visit of HE the Governor of Capital Governorate, Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah, the significance of joining the private and public sectors' efforts to embellish the capital and make it one of the most developed and smart cities that represents Kuwait's cultural inheritance with modernized features. He indicated that the plan which the governor is executing is characterized by its comprehensiveness as it blends the past with the present and shifts the capital to another higher level of organizing and embellishment, thus keeping the city visitors and workers happy and achieving more prosperity to the utilities, services and shops therein.

Rushood expressed KFH's appreciation and warm welcome for the visit of the Capital Governor as they

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Flamingoes take flight at the Shuwaikh Beach yesterday. Flamingoes and other migratory birds visit Kuwait's inlets and bays from late fall until early spring as part of their annual migration route. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Al-Hamra pays tribute to legacy of late Amir of Kuwait

KUWAIT: In commemoration of the first-year anniversary of the late Amir of Kuwait, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and in honor of his exemplary works through the years, Al-Hamra Real Estate Company recently launched an exhibition at Al-Hamra Shopping Center. The retrospective exhibition highlights His Highness the late Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's life's journey, some of his memorable milestones and recognizes his positive role as a humanitarian leader and as the 'Dean of Arab diplomacy' by displaying rare photographs and footages for visitors to explore.

In collaboration with prominent local talent, Jassim F Al-Nashmi, founder of Manmade Studio, designer, architect and artist, the brand identity and title of the exhibition is called Tabassar or 'Enlighten', which was inspired by the memorable words of the late Amir of Kuwait, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah during one of his notable speeches, in which he reflected on the many blessings bestowed upon Kuwait and shared his gratitude to the Almighty for security, safety, stability, peace, tranquility, well-being and a good life. Al-Hamra Real Estate in collaboration with Nashmi started with the idea for the retrospective exhibition one year ago, soon after the demise of the beloved late Amir of Kuwait, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, by listening to his final public announcement which starts with the word Tabassar, which urges his children of Kuwait to not only observe what is happening in the world today, but also have an outlook on things to come. Pearls of wisdom which the late Amir of Kuwait, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah has reiterated in his previous speeches. This led to the design of the title which takes the shape of the human eye, manifested through typography.

The late Amir of Kuwait, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah proved to be the embodiment of Tabassar, who, through diligent leadership, practices, perseverance

and care, fostered national prosperity and became a formidable pillar of the community. Hence, the exhibition pays tribute to the essence of the late Amir of Kuwait, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's legacy and brings to life his significant role in Kuwait's development, and, at accelerating progress in the various sectors, shaping the country's social and economic growth that is widely acclaimed and admired across the world today. To achieve a successful launch of the historical timeline dated from his childhood in 1929 until his demise in the year 2020 (may his soul rest in peace) that chronicles his career and the proud heritage the late Amir of Kuwait, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah left his country and future generations, Al-Hamra Real Estate Company sought the expertise of renowned national talents - Engineer Maha Alessa - independent researcher and specialized museum educator, who was the curator of the exhibition, and Dr Abdullah Al-Najdi, Assistant Professor in Modern and Contemporary History at the College of Arts from Kuwait University.

The visitors of Al-Hamra Shopping Center, after reading the exhibition statement "Enlighten"; enter the circular gallery space with rounded edges known as the 'time capsule', where they can take a stroll through time and witness the late Amir of Kuwait, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's beginnings and lasting achievements and experiences locally, regionally, and internationally, highlighted in a chronological fashion and through walking in a circular motion to echo the movement of a clock dial. Each photo frame is made of smooth curves that feel light and graceful, treating the photos as precious artefacts, because they are rare and valuable photographs that need to be viewed with the utmost care and attention. The color palette is white and gold which represents purity and royalty.

The exhibition will be live until the end of 2021. Visitors can browse through a select collection of memoirs



Al-Hamra's Tribute Expo to the Late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

and biographies on the late Amir of Kuwait, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, contributed by notable members of the society and authors such as Dr Abdullah Al-Ghunaim, Abdullah Bishara, Abdullah Abbas Buwair, as well as by the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA).

Sheikh Faisal Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Khalifa Al-Sabah, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Al-Hamra Real Estate Company commented during the opening of the exhibition, that, "This is a rewarding moment for Al-Hamra Real Estate Company, as we honor and mark the footsteps of our late Amir of Kuwait, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah (may God have mercy on him) who paved the way for a future that all generations can be proud of. This exhibition stands as a reminder of the powerful impact he had on the world around us and how his ambitions for a better Kuwait profoundly transformed the nation for many segments of society.

The late Amir of Kuwait, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah was a true visionary, pioneer and symbol of generosity who played a critical role in many movements and projects such as the pursuit

for women's rights to vote, formation of Kuwait's foreign policy, Arab unity and philanthropic causes, that have left a dynamic impression everywhere."

"On behalf of everyone at Al-Hamra Real Estate Company, I would also like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to those who contributed to the success of the exhibition, dedicated their resources and efforts, and shared in our vision to build an experience that celebrates the name and legacy of our late Amir, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. I would like to thank and acknowledge the efforts of the Al Diwan Al Amiri, Dar Salwa, prominent Kuwaiti sculptor, Sami Mohammed, Kuwait Oil Company, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Al-Jarida, Al-Qabas, Al-Anbaa, Al-Rai and KUNA.

"We invite everyone to visit the exhibition at Al-Hamra Shopping Center and enjoy the tribute to the late Amir of Kuwait, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, who was an extraordinary man and iconic ruler, and, who through his outstanding contributions and inspirational leadership, forged exceptional diplomatic ties, peace and brought aid to the region and the world."



were able to exchange ideas and visions on the means of coordination and cooperation between the two parties to make Kuwait City more active and beautiful. The capital comprises the head offices of major companies, organizations, and banks. Also, it includes several malls. The Capital is considered as the most favorable destinations for the visitors of Kuwait and all those who wish to acquaint themselves with the state capital which includes cultural centers and highly sophisticated buildings with political and architectural connotations.

Capital Governor Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah expressed his thanks and appreciation to Rushood for KFH's efforts and initiatives, thus indicating that the project proposed by KFH to embellish one of the main entrances of the capital is considered as one of the most distinguished and beautiful embellishment projects. "The visual show which we have seen today regarding the project and the rendered services set a modern model that suites the governorate vision concerning the modernization and embellishment of the city," he added. "We shall see this project and other parallel projects in reality soon."

KIB sponsors 'Safe Education' awareness campaign

KUWAIT: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) continues to focus its social responsibility program towards supporting governmental efforts to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and ensure a safe and seamless return to pre-pandemic normal. Accordingly, the Bank recently announced its sponsorship of the 'Safe Education' campaign, currently being organized by a number of government bodies - including the Ministry of Interior (MoI), the Ministry of Health (MoH), the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Ministry of Information - to help spread awareness about how to keep students safe as they go back to school, whether in-person or virtually. The campaign has been tailored to various age groups and segments, including both private and public sector students and students with disabilities, in addition to targeting parents and school administrators.

Under the slogan #SafeEducation, the integrated campaign addresses various aspects of a safe return to schools, including traffic safety, in-class health precautions, dealing with and maintaining public property, and other similar matters. The campaign will also delve into other important aspects of the back-to-school season, including behaviors that can negatively impact the safety and security of students, such as cyberbullying, school violence, and encouraging or promoting drug use.

Speaking about the Bank's sponsorship, Executive

Manager of the Corporate Communications Unit (CCU) at KIB, Nawaf Najja, said: "Since the onset of this crisis, KIB has not spared any effort in dedicating all available resources towards supporting the government sector's efforts to combat the pandemic - alleviating the impact it has on our community. Within this vein, as we near the final stages of this prolonged crisis and prepare to go back to a more normal way of life, we have made a point to participating and supporting governmental initiatives to address the social and mental health toll of the pandemic. This toll has been especially high on students and young children, who have spent so long away from their classrooms and dealing with the stresses of remote learning."

Najja further noted that the 'Safe Education' campaign will be running across various channels and will use various print and digital tools to reach the largest possible audience. The campaign will include series of events and competitions, as well as various booths and interactive screens at key malls across Kuwait.

It serves to note that KIB's support of this campaign comes as part of the bank's leading social responsibility program, which constantly seeks to support social development across various areas. The bank is heavily active in promoting awareness campaigns that focus on key social issues impacting the people of Kuwait, especially youth, which KIB has always thought of as the cornerstone of Kuwait's future.



Nawaf Najja



Massive child sex abuse in French Catholic Church

Hypersonic missiles: An alarming must-have in military tech

Page 7

Page 6



PANAMA CITY: Photo shows an aerial view of the financial centre of Panama City. More than a dozen heads of state and government have amassed millions in secret offshore assets, according to an investigation published by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ). —AFP

Companies at the heart of 'Pandora Papers'

Secrecy can be used to evade taxes, facilitate corruption

PARIS: Offshore companies are a lynchpin in the system used by leaders and the ultra-rich to hide assets that was exposed in the trove of leaked documents dubbed the "Pandora Papers". Some 11.9 million documents from financial services firms, which were obtained by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ), showed how the elite used tax havens to stash assets worth hundreds of millions of dollars. So what is an offshore company and how are they used?

What is an offshore company?

An offshore company is one created in a jurisdiction other than where its owner is incorporated or resides. The term is usually considered to apply where the company has no business operations in the country where it is registered, and is created to take advantage of the low (or no) taxes, lax regulation and secrecy that the country offers.

While remote, often tropical islands were long the image of offshore havens—think the Caymans or British Virgin Islands—that is no longer necessarily the case. The US state of Delaware has long been popular for creating companies for the secrecy it offers, while South Dakota has emerged as a top spot for creating trusts for the same reason. Offshore companies are big business. According to the

latest figures by the European Commission, the capital and bank account holdings of offshore companies accounted for 10.4 percent of global economic output in 2016.

Why use them?

Ronen Palan, an economist and professor at City University of London, told AFP that "the use of these structure is to maintain some sort of secrecy," whether it be from competitors, a spouse, or tax authorities. This secrecy can be used to evade taxes, facilitate corruption and finance criminal and terrorist activities.

Are they legal?

Creating an offshore company is not illegal, but their use can be if the owners do not report their assets and earnings to the authorities in their country of residence, and any taxes due. The "Pandora Papers" contains many instances of assets that have been presumably hidden and not declared to authorities. The documents also contain many cases in which offshore companies have been used to "optimize" taxes in ways that are technically legal. But the media organizations that participated in the investigation pose the question whether such use is moral as it allows firms to drastically reduce their taxes, aggravating inequality. The use of

offshore companies by political leaders has also drawn scrutiny due to transparency and corruption concerns.

What is the role of intermediaries?

Offshore companies could not function without lawyers, accountants, notaries and bankers, and they are implicated in suspected wrongdoing uncovered in the "Pandora Papers". If the 2016 "Panama Papers" singled out the Panamanian law firm and corporate services provider Mossack Fonseca, the "Pandora Papers" faults 14 financial services firms that manage 29,000 offshore companies.

How to better regulate them?

University of California, Berkeley professor Gabriel Zucman, believes they ought to be banned. "It seems obvious that shell companies—corporations with no economic substance, whose sole purpose is to avoid taxes or other laws—should be outlawed," he said in a statement provided by the ICIJ. Palan said efforts to clean up the sector have been gamed as professional services firms located in tax havens that tightened their regulations, such as the Caymans or Jersey, have set up operations in less regulated places. "The good tax havens became facades for tax evasion," he said. —AFP

Hunger plagues Afghans in historic valley

BAMIYAN: They have long survived hand to mouth, but since the Taliban conquered the Bamiyan valley, rural Afghans living in its mountainside caves have been left weak from hunger and fear. Known as one of the most beautiful regions in Afghanistan, the rugged, central valley is home to several hundred families living in caves that were carved into sandstone cliffs by Buddhist monks in the fifth century.

The community is among the poorest in the country and the Taliban takeover in August has only exacerbated their hardship, with international aid cut off, food prices rising and unemployment spiking. They live a few kilometers from where the valley's famous giant, ancient Buddha statues once stood, before they were dynamited by the Islamist group when they were last in power two decades ago.

Fatima says her cave partially collapsed during heavy rains a year and a half ago, leaving the 55-year-old and three family members crammed into a tiny cavern measuring just six square meters (65 square feet). "We won't eat tonight. And winter is almost here. We have nothing to keep warm," she says, her face partially covered by a black veil. "We live in misery and misfortune."

Daily wage laborers and porters no longer bring home the little money they once did to settle rumbling stomachs. Only the harvesting of potatoes has continued—the single crop that can be grown in the area at an altitude of 2,500 meters. "I go to the Bamiyan bazaar every morning, but I come back with nothing," says Mahram, a 42-year-old bricklayer. "When there was work, I made 300 afghanis (\$3.75) per day." Now the family is surviving by sending their children to help harvest potatoes. "The farmers give them some instead of salaries," Mahram says. "That is all we have, with a bit of bread."

"But in 10 days, the harvest will be over, and we will really be hungry. People will die." Like most people living in the region, the families are Hazara, a mainly Shiite ethnic minority that has been marginalized and persecuted in Afghanistan for centuries. The victory of the Taliban, made up of Sunni hardliners who see the community as heretics, has caused panic. "It is very frightening," says Amena, a 40-year-old mother of five children. "But they have not come, and will probably not come all the way up to where we are."

Amena parts the curtain at the entrance to her cave to reveal a platform carved into the rock topped with two cushions, a threadbare carpet, and a rickety wood-burning stove that has covered the ceiling with a thick layer of soot. Near the doorway lies a bundle of potato branches, the family's only fuel. "Wood is too expensive," she says. —AFP

India warns of possible power shortages

NEW DELHI: India is facing possible energy supply problems in the coming months due to coal shortages and a post-pandemic surge in demand, the power minister said in a report published yesterday. His comments come as China and European countries face energy crises that are disrupting global supply chains and sending prices soaring.

"Normally the demand starts coming down in the second half of October... when (the weather) starts cooling," R K Singh told the Indian Express in an interview. "But it's going to be touch and go," Singh said, calling demand for electricity "tremendous". "Demand is not going to go away, it's going to increase... We've added 28.2 million consumers. Most of them are lower-middle class and poor, so they are buying fans, lights, televisions sets," he said.

India's coal-fired power stations had on average four days' stock at the end of September, the lowest in years. More than half the plants are on alert for outages and the government is mulling bringing idled power stations back into operation. Coal accounts for nearly 70 percent of India's electricity generation and around three-quarters of the fossil fuel is mined domestically. State-run giant Coal India, which produces most of the country's supply, has said it is on a "war footing" to ensure adequate deliveries.

On top of a rise in demand as Asia's third-largest economy rebounds following a coronavirus wave, India has been hit by recent monsoon rains that flooded mines and disrupted transport. This pushed up prices sharply for coal buyers, including power stations. Buying coal abroad is expensive because international prices have also soared. —AFP

A kuwaiti Healthcare services leading company is looking for

IT Supervisor

- Degree in computer science, IT or similar.
- Responsible for the supervision of the implementation of an ERP system, lab software
- Degree or completed courses in business administration would be advantageous.
- Proactively identify and communicate issues and risks
- Can join immediately

Certified nurse

- Experience in dermatology at least 2 years
- Expert in laser hair removal , in facial & body treatments
- Transferable license & residency
- Can join immediately

Executive secretary

- Minimum 5 years of experience
- An experience in Procurement & Stores is preferred.

MRP – Material Requirement Planner

- An experience in Procurement is a must, as well as an experience of no less than 2 years in the same position

Accountant

- Commerce graduate
- Minimum 5 tears of experience

Purchasing Officer

- An experience in Procurement is a must, as well as an experience of no less than 2 years in the same position.

Driver

- Handle all deliveries to outlets as well as support in warehouse and procurement teams.

Store Helper

- Handle the store items, loading, unloading, organization and the cleanliness of the stores.

Kindly send your cv by email

Newjobhiring21@gmail.com

International

Inquiry finds 'massive' child sex abuse in French Catholic Church

Vast majority of victims were pre-adolescent boys

PARIS: French Catholic clergy sexually abused some 216,000 minors in the seven decades since 1950, a "massive phenomenon" that was covered up for decades by a "veil of silence," an independent commission said yesterday. The commission's two-and-a-half-year investigation was prompted by outrage over a growing number of abuse claims and prosecutions against Church officials worldwide.

When claims against lay members of the Church such as teachers at Catholic schools are included, the number of child abuse victims climbs to 330,000 since 1950. "These figures are more than worrying, they are damning and in no way can remain without a response," commission chief Jean-Marc Sauve told a press conference. "Until the early 2000s, the Catholic Church showed a profound and even cruel indifference towards the victims." Archbishop Eric de Moulins-Beaufort, president of the Bishops' Conference of France (CEF), which co-requested the report, expressed his "shame and horror" at the findings.

"My wish today is to ask forgiveness from each of you," he told the news conference. Sauve denounced the "systemic character" of efforts to shield clergy from sex abuse claims and urged the Church to pay reparations even though

most cases are well beyond the statute of limitations for prosecution. The Church announced last spring a plan for "financial contributions" to victims to begin next year, and the commission's report included 45 recommendations for halting child abuse by clergy. "We expect clear and concrete responses by the Church," a collective of six victims' associations said.



Decades by a 'veil of silence'

'Deviant system'

The report, at nearly 2,500 pages, found that the "vast majority" of victims were pre-adolescent boys from a variety of social backgrounds. "The Catholic Church is, after the circle of family and friends, the environment that has the highest prevalence of sexual violence," the report said. Sauve had already told AFP on Sunday that a "minimum estimate" of 2,900 to 3,200 clergy members

had sexually abused children in the French Church since 1950. Yet only a handful of cases prompted disciplinary action under canonical law, let alone criminal prosecution. The commission began its work after Pope Francis vowed to address abuse by priests in May 2019, ordering people aware of cases to report them to Church officials.

In France in particular, the case of Philippe Barbarin, an archbishop initially convicted of not telling police of a priest's abuse of boy scouts, drew outrage after he was acquitted in January 2020. Francois Devaux, head of a victims' association, condemned a "deviant system" and called for a new "Vatican III" council to chart a way forward. "You have finally given an institutional recognition to victims of all the Church's responsibilities, something that bishops and the pope have not yet been prepared to do," Devaux said at the news conference.

'Courage'

The victim estimates were largely based on a representative study carried out by France's INSERM health and medical research institute. Sauve and his team of 21 specialists, all unaffiliated with the Church, also interviewed hundreds of people who came forward to tell their stories. "If the veil of silence covering the



LYON: Lyon French Archbishop Olivier de Germary talks to journalists in Lyon archdiocese yesterday on the day of the publishing of a report by an independent commission into sexual abuse by church officials (Ciase). — AFP

acts committed has finally been torn away... we owe it to the courage of these victims," he wrote. The commission also had access to police files and Church archives, citing only two cases of refusals by Church institutions to turn over requested documents. Overall, it found that 2.5 percent of French clergy since

1950 had sexually abused minors, a ratio below the 4.4 to 7 percent uncovered by similar inquiries in other countries. While that would imply an unusually high number of victims per assailant, "a sexual predator can in fact have a high number of victims, especially those who attack boys," the report found. — AFP

Chili peppers and hugs: What inspired Nobel Prize winners

WASHINGTON: David Julius was browsing a supermarket aisle filled with chili pepper sauces when he turned to his wife, a fellow scientist, and said he thought it was time he finally solved how certain chemicals cause the sensation of heat. "Well then, you should get on it," came her reply. Ardem Patapoutian, meanwhile, had long been driven to unlock the neglected mysteries of touch, which govern everything from how we discriminate between objects and how we feel when we hug another person, to how our bodies intuitively "know" where our limbs are, without looking.

Both American molecular biologists won the Nobel Medicine Prize for their groundbreaking advances, conducted independently of each other in the late 1990s and 2000s, that are now being turned towards developing treatments, especially of pain. Julius, of the University of California, San Francisco told reporters he had always been fascinated by how people interact with natural products in their environment, and by how certain plants contain chemical irritants, such as spice. Prior research had shown capsaicin was important as an activator of neurons involved in pain — but the underlying mechanism was unclear.

Julius discovered in 1997 the specific protein on the outer tip of sensory nerves responsible for the sensation of burning pain from chilies — and discovered it also responded to high temperatures. He then turned to compounds from menthol and mint to identify similar "receptors" responsible for cold, and used molecules from wasabi to learn about inflammatory pain. "I like doing experimental science because you get to work at the bench with your hands while you're also thinking, and that gives you an opportunity to really sort of enjoy what you're doing day to day, almost like a hobby," he said.

"There's a time when you make a discovery, where you're the only person on the planet, or at least you think you're the only person on the planet who knows the answer to a particular question, and that's a really thrilling moment." A number of drug candidates to stop chronic pain are in the pipeline, but have so far come up against challenging side effects. "You have to walk this line of wanting to inhibit pain that's chronic... but not eliminate pain sensation that's protective or acute," he said.

Immigrant success

Patapoutian, of Scripps Research, also made discoveries linked to temperature, but his investigations into pressure stood out even more. Specifically, he found two genes responsible for converting pressure into electrical signals through tests on lab-cultured cells. It was a painstaking progress arrived at by deleting one gene after another. "After working on this for a whole year and getting one negative result after another, the 72nd candidate ... wiped out this ability," he said at a press event. Armenian-origin Patapoutian, who grew up in war-torn Lebanon and came to the US aged 18, said it was hard for him to imagine the day would come he would win a Nobel. When the Nobel committee tried calling him at 2:00 am in California, his phone was on silent. — AFP

President Biden goes on offensive against 'reckless' Republicans

WASHINGTON: President Joe Biden went on the offensive Monday with a speech attacking Republicans over the looming threat of US debt default, while pressuring the Democratic Party to enact his stalled multi-trillion-dollar domestic spending agenda. Back from a rare weekend relaxing at home in Delaware, Biden plunged into the most consequential period of his presidency so far.

On one side, he faces Republican determination to cripple his momentum and recapture control of Congress in next year's midterm legislative elections. On the other, Biden is struggling with infighting between Democrats over his infrastructure and social spending bills. With the speech calling out Republicans and a trip to Michigan to promote his domestic spending plans, the 78-year-old political veteran hopes to regain the initiative.

While Biden's legacy may ultimately depend on the \$1.2 trillion infrastructure package and potentially \$2 trillion or more for a social spending package, the entire US and global economies could face dire fallout from a US debt default. Biden on Monday called Republican opponents "reckless and dangerous" for refusing to join Democrats in raising the debt limit.

Republican obstruction could push "our economy

over a cliff," Biden said in a White House speech, warning he could not "guarantee" that a resolution would be found. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen says that from October 18, the United States will not have the funds to meet its obligations to creditors if Congress does not relax the legal debt ceiling. Congress has done this dozens of times over the decades since setting borrowing limits, and the votes are usually bipartisan and drama-free.

This year, reflecting the extraordinary acrimony in Washington, Republicans are refusing to vote for lifting the ceiling and vow even to block Democrats from passing a simple vote by themselves along party lines. Instead, Senate Republicans are attempting to force Democrats to use a complex maneuver called reconciliation to take sole responsibility for the debt hike. Democrats so far are refusing, accusing the Republicans of taking the nation's financial standing hostage.

On Monday, Democratic Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said a debt ceiling lift should be voted through "by the end of the week, period." "We do not have the luxury of waiting until October 18th, as it is our responsibility to re-assure the world that the United States meets our obligations in a timely fashion," Schumer said. But Republican Senate minority leader Mitch McConnell, who wants to use the crisis to paint the Democrats as spendthrifts, said that by refusing the reconciliation avenue, Democrats were "sleepwalking toward yet another preventable crisis."

How much is enough?

The standoff means that Democrats, who control



DELAWARE: US President Joe Biden waves as he departs Brew Haha!, a coffee shop he ate at in Wilmington, Delaware after leaving church. — AFP

the Senate by only one vote, are bogged down in trying to manage the debt crisis while also trying to overcome internal differences over Biden's spending packages. Biden is trying to draw on every bit of experience from nearly four decades in the Senate and eight years as vice president under Barack Obama to find a formula that will unite the left and more conservative wings of his party. His trip to a trade union training facility in Howell, Michigan, will seek to highlight the White House's argument that the big spending plans are popular with voters and that Democrats would be committing colossal self-harm if their squabbling results in the entire legislative agenda collapsing. — AFP

California rushes to contain oil spill as wildlife, beaches hit

LOS ANGELES: A huge oil spill was killing wildlife and threatening California's beaches on Monday, in what officials said amounted to an "environmental catastrophe." Birds and fish had begun washing up on the shore as a 126,000-gallon slick of crude oil choked waters south of Los Angeles, after spewing from a pipeline connected to an offshore rig. A 15-mile stretch of coastline was closed to the public and fishing was halted as crews scrambled to clean up one of California's biggest spills in decades.

Beaches could remain closed for weeks or even months, Huntington Beach Mayor Kim Carr warned. "Our wetlands are being degraded and portions of our coastline are completely covered in oil," she said. The US Coast Guard, which is coordinating the response, said oil amounting to less than three percent of the spill plume—estimated to be 5.8 nautical miles long—had been recovered, and

that more than a mile of oil containment booms had been deployed. "Unfortunately, we are starting to see oil covered fish and birds washing up along our coastline," including in protected wetlands, the City of Huntington Beach said Sunday.

Amplify Energy, the company that operates the pipeline, said Monday that "as a precautionary measure, all of the company's production and pipeline operations at the Beta Field have been shut down." CEO Martyn Willsher pledged the firm will do "whatever needs to be done" to take care of the spill, and said the company had significant insurance to cope with associated costs. Willsher said a remotely operated vehicle had located the probable source of the leak, and divers would be visiting the spot on Monday afternoon.

'Just devastating'

Officials have warned people not



CALIFORNIA: Birds compete to eat a dead fish in the surf after an oil spill in the Pacific Ocean in Huntington Beach, California on October 4, 2021. — AFP

to touch or try to save any wildlife they find, but to instead call local authorities to alert them to animals affected by the oil. "This is just devastating for our marine life, our habitat, our economics, our entire community," Orange County Supervisor Katrina Foley said Sunday. "Our natu-

ral habitat we've spent decades building up and creating is just damaged in a day." The spill originated near the Elly platform, which was built in 1980 and is one of 23 oil and gas drilling platforms in federal waters off California, the Los Angeles Times reported. — AFP

Cardinal on trial as financial scandal case resumes

VATICAN CITY: The trial of a once powerful Catholic cardinal and nine others resumes yesterday at the Vatican over alleged financial fraud and a disastrous London property deal paid for with charity funds. Cardinal Angelo Becciu, who served as the equivalent of chief of staff for Pope Francis at the time of the deal and was later fired from another post, is being tried alongside high-rolling London-based financiers and other Church employees.

They are accused of crimes including embezzlement, fraud and corruption relating to the Church's loss-making purchase of a luxury property in London's upscale Chelsea district. Becciu was at the time number two at the Secretariat of State, the most powerful department in the Vatican's central administration.

The case against the 73-year-old, which carries charges of embezzlement, abuse of office and witness tampering, also includes separate allegations over hundreds of thousands of euros of Church funds paid to his brother's charity. The trial is unprecedented in going before a Vatican tribunal of three lay magistrates rather than a religious court, after Francis changed the law to strip cardinals and bishops of legal privileges. Becciu, one of only two defendants who attended a preliminary hearing in

July in the temporary courtroom at the Vatican Museums, insists he will prove his innocence "with respect to every charge".

The trial, which is expected to last months, follows a two-year probe into how the Secretariat of State managed its vast asset portfolio and, in particular, who knew what about the disastrous 350-million-euro (now \$407-million) London investment. Since becoming pope in 2013, Francis has vowed to clean up the Church's finances. The scandal is particularly embarrassing because funds used for risky ventures like the London one came from the Peter's Pence, money donated by churchgoers for the pope's charities. Ahead of the trial, prosecutors painted a picture of risky investments with little or no oversight, and double-dealing by outside consultants and insiders trusted with the financial interests of the Secretariat of State. — AFP

International

Extreme heat caused by global warming, urbanization: Study

Nearly a quarter of the world's population affected

NEW YORK: Rapid population growth and global warming are increasing exposure to extreme heat in cities, aggravating health problems and making moving to urban areas less beneficial for the world's poor, according to a study released Monday. The rise is affecting nearly a quarter of the world's population, said the report published in the "Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences." In recent decades, hundreds of millions of people have moved from rural areas to cities where temperatures are generally higher because of surfaces such as asphalt which trap heat and a lack of vegetation.

Scientists studied the maximum daily heat and humidity in more than 13,000 cities from 1983 to 2016. Using the so-called "wet-bulb globe temperature" scale, a measure that takes into account heat and humidity, they defined extreme heat as 30 degrees Celsius (86 degrees Fahrenheit). The researchers then compared

weather data with statistics on the cities' population over the same 33-year period. They calculated the number of days of extreme heat in a



Worst-affected city: Bangladesh's capital

particular year by the population of the city that year to come up with a definition called person-days.

The authors found that the number of person-

days in which city dwellers were exposed went from 40 billion per year in 1983 to 119 billion in 2016. Cascade Tuholse at Columbia University's Earth Institute, a lead author of the study, said the rise "increases morbidity and mortality." "It impacts people's ability to work, and results in lower economic output. It exacerbates pre-existing health conditions," he said in a statement. Population growth accounted for two-thirds of the exposure spike, with actual warming temperatures contributing a third, although proportions varied from city to city, they wrote.

Bangladesh's capital Dhaka was the worst-affected city, seeing an increase of 575 million person-days of extreme heat over the study period. That was largely attributable to its population soaring from around four million in 1983 to around 22 million today. Other big cities to show similar trends were Shanghai, Guangzhou, Yangon, Dubai, Hanoi and Khartoum as well as

various cities in Pakistan, India and the Arabian Peninsula. Major cities that saw around half of their exposure causing by a warming climate included Baghdad, Cairo, Kuwait City, Lagos, Kolkata and Mumbai.

The authors said the patterns they found in Africa and South Asia, "may crucially limit the urban poor's ability to realize the economic gains associated with urbanization." They added that "sufficient investment, humanitarian intervention, and government support" would be needed to counteract the negative impact. In the United States, some forty major cities saw exposure grow "rapidly," mainly in the Gulf Coast states of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida. The study was carried out by researchers at New York's Columbia, University of Minnesota Twin Cities, the University of Arizona at Tucson and the University of California, Santa Barbara. — AFP

China sends 56 jets into Taiwan defense zone

TAIPEI: Taiwan urged Beijing to stop "irresponsible provocative actions" after 56 Chinese warplanes crossed into its air defense zone on Monday in yet another record incursion. The defense ministry said it scrambled aircraft to broadcast warnings after 36 fighter jets, 12 H-6 nuclear-capable bombers and four other planes entered its southwest air defense identification zone (ADIZ). Four more fighters entered the zone in a night sortie, bringing the total to 56 planes, the ministry added. The Mainland Affairs Council (MAC), Taiwan's top China policy-making body, accused Beijing of "seriously damaging the status quo of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait" with its recent string of incursions.

"We demand the Beijing authorities immediately stop its non-peaceful and irresponsible provocative actions," MAC spokesman Chiu Chui-cheng said in a statement. "China is

the culprit for causing tensions between the two sides of the (Taiwan) Strait and it has further threatened regional security and order," he added, saying Taiwan "will never compromise and yield" to threats. The ADIZ is not the same as Taiwan's territorial airspace but includes a far greater area that overlaps with part of China's own air defense identification zone and even includes some of the mainland.

Self-ruled democratic Taiwan lives 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. In the last two years, Beijing has begun sending large sorties into Taiwan's defense zone to signal dissatisfaction at key moments-and to keep Taipei's ageing fighter fleet regularly stressed. Nearly 150 Chinese warplanes had breached Taiwan's ADIZ since Friday when Beijing marked its National Day with its then-biggest aerial show of force, buzzing the island with 38 planes.

That was followed by another incursion by 39 planes on Saturday, sparking criticism from Washington. State Department spokesman Ned Price reiterated Monday that the



TAIPEI: Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen poses for photographs in front of the Presidential Palace in Taipei yesterday during a ceremony to celebrate national day on October 10. —AFP

United States was "very concerned" by the "provocative" moves by Beijing. "This activity is destabilizing, it risks miscalculation and it undermines regional peace and security," Price told reporters. "We strongly urge Beijing to cease its military, diplomatic and economic pressure and coercion against Taiwan," he said, calling US commitment to the island "rock-solid".

China's foreign ministry on

Monday accused Washington of sending out "an extremely wrong and irresponsible signal" with "provocative" actions such as selling arms to Taipei and sending its warships to the Taiwan Strait. "The US should correct its mistakes, earnestly abide by the 'one China Principle'... prudently and appropriately handle the Taiwan issue, stop bolstering 'Taiwanese independence' separatist forces," said spokeswoman Hua Chunying. — AFP

In Iraq, Iran faces growing backlash

BAGHDAD: As Iraq heads to the polls on Oct 10, a spotlight has fallen on the outsized influence neighboring Iran wields - but also on the growing popular backlash against it. The parliamentary vote is being held early as a concession to a pro-democracy movement that railed against an Iraqi political system it decried as inept, corrupt and beholden to Iran.

"One of the more alarming things for Iran in Iraq right now is the huge sense of public dissatisfaction towards Iran," said political scientist Marsin Alshamary. "That's one of the things Iran wasn't expecting and something it has to grapple with," said the Harvard Kennedy School researcher. At the height of unprecedented protests in Nov 2019, furious demonstrators attacked and torched Iran's consulate in the southern city of Najaf, shouting "Get out of Iraq!"

When many protesters were killed by gunmen, activists accused pro-Iranian factions that play a major role in Iraq and which the United States blames for attacks on its interests there. The paramilitary network known as Hashed al-Shaabi, or Popular Mobilization Forces - formed in 2014 to defeat the Islamic State group - includes many pro-Iranian Shiite groups. It has since been integrated into Iraq's state security apparatus. In Iraq's parliament too, political parties with deep ties to the Islamic republic have formed powerful blocs with major influence in past governments.

Historically, relations have been volatile between



NAJAF: In this file photo taken on Nov 28, 2019, Iraqi demonstrators gather as flames start consuming Iran's consulate in this southern Shiite holy city. —AFP

Iraq and its larger neighbor to the east. After Iran's 1979 Islamic revolution, Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein attacked over a border dispute, setting off their brutal 1980-1988 war. However, since the 2003 US-led invasion toppled Saddam - sparking years of insurgency - Iran has gained great influence in Iraq.

Since then, Shiite Muslim pilgrims from Iran have been able to once more flock to Iraq's holy cities of Najaf and Karbala. Iran has also become one of Iraq's largest trading partners, a major boost for the Islamic republic, which has been battered by sanc-

like the United States have developed systems designed to defend against cruise and ballistic missiles, the ability to track and take down a hypersonic missile remains a question. Hypersonic missiles can be used to deliver conventional warheads, more rapidly and precisely than other missiles. But their capacity to deliver nuclear weapons could add to a country's threat, increasing the danger of a nuclear conflict.

Is hypersonic threat here now?

Russia, China, the United States and now North Korea have all test-launched hypersonic missiles. France, Germany, Australia, India and Japan are working on hypersonics, and Iran, Israel and South Korea have conducted basic research on the technology, according to a recent report by the US Congressional Research Service (CRS). Russia is the most advanced. Moscow announced Monday that it had fired two Zircon hypersonic missiles from the Severodvinsk nuclear submarine. The first, while the sub was on the surface, successfully struck a test target in the Barents Sea. The second was launched while the vessel was submerged 40 meters (131 feet) below the surface.

China is also aggressively developing the technology, seeing it as crucial to defend against US gains in hypersonic and other technologies, according to the CRS report. Both China and Russia have "likely fielded an operational capability" with hypersonic glide vehi-

cles, said the report. The US Defense Department has an aggressive development program, planning up to 40 tests over the next five years, according to a government report.

The Pentagon tested a scramjet-powered hypersonic last week, calling it "a successful demonstration of the capabilities that will make hypersonic cruise missiles a highly effective tool for our warfighters." North Korea's test announcement suggested they had much further to go, that the test focused on "maneuverability" and "flight characteristics." "Based on an assessment of its characteristics such as speed, it is at an initial phase of development and will take a considerable time to be deployed," the South Korean and US militaries said in a statement.

Nuclear game-changers

Experts say hypersonics do not necessarily upend the global nuclear balance, but instead add a potent new delivery method to the traditional triad of bombers, ground-launched ICBMs, and submarine-launched ballistic missiles. A central risk is not knowing whether an adversary's hypersonic missile has a conventional or nuclear warhead. And, underscoring the attractiveness of hypersonics, the CRS report says that the US missile defense system is inadequate to detect, track and respond in time to hypersonics. — AFP

Hypersonic missiles: Alarming must-have in military tech

WASHINGTON: North Korea's test of a hypersonic missile last week sparked new concerns about the race to acquire the alarming technology that is hard to defend against and could unsettle the global nuclear balance. Russia, which said Monday it had test-launched a hypersonic missile from a submerged submarine for the first time, leads the race, followed by China and the United States, and at least five other countries are working on the technology.

Why do countries want hypersonics?

Hypersonic missiles, like traditional ballistic missiles which can deliver nuclear weapons, can fly more than five times the speed of sound. But ballistic missiles fly high into space in an arc to reach their target, while a hypersonic flies on a trajectory low in the atmosphere, potentially reaching a target more quickly.

Crucially, a hypersonic missile is maneuverable (like the much slower, often subsonic cruise missile), making it harder to track and defend against. While countries

Scandal-hit NSO backs international spyware rules

PARIS: The Zionist company at the heart of the Pegasus surveillance scandal yesterday said it would support international regulation to prevent repressive governments from abusing powerful spyware like its own. In a letter to the United Nations, seen by AFP, the NSO Group expressed "strong support for the creation of an international legal framework" to govern technology that allows for highly invasive snooping on people's mobile phones.

NSO was engulfed in controversy in July over reports that tens of thousands of human rights activists, journalists, politicians and business executives worldwide were listed as potential targets of its Pegasus software. Smartphones infected with Pegasus are essentially turned into pocket spying devices, allowing the user to read the target's messages, look through their photos, track their location and even turn on their camera without them knowing.

NSO said in the letter that it took the allegations made by international media outlets "extremely seriously" and that it had launched an immediate investigation after the scandal blew up in July. "Any accusation that Pegasus has been misused by a State or State agency to target any journalist, human rights defender or political leader in violation of their human rights is naturally very concerning," the company's chairman Asher Levy wrote.

NSO has faced a torrent of criticism over the use of its software, but it insists Pegasus is intended to help governments fight crime and terrorism - and that it has been used many times to do so. "How can governments catch paedophiles and prevent terrorist attacks without these kinds of tools? There is no way," a source close to the company told AFP. The source said the company vets potential clients over ethical concerns, and had turned down business worth "hundreds of millions of dollars" from 55 countries. NSO has also "previously terminated customer relationships as a result of our human rights investigations," Levy wrote in the letter.

Off-the-shelf NSA

A second source close to the company acknowledged, however, that NSO has a limited ability to ensure that its software is not used for nefarious purposes by the governments that have bought it. "Sitting over the shoulder of a customer and seeing who they're targeting is something that we cannot do," the source said. The company's letter to the UN, dated September 30, came in response to a call in August from human rights experts at the world body for a moratorium on such digital surveillance technology until regulation is put in place.

NSO suggested the UN would be well-placed to lead the process of setting up international rules to better regulate the off-the-shelf surveillance sector, which has boomed in recent years. The company would be "a constructive participant if given the opportunity", the letter said. Critics say the widespread availability of software like Pegasus now allows even cash-strapped authoritarian governments to effectively purchase their own answer to the United States' National Security Agency, with highly invasive surveillance powers.

While companies offering such technology have sprung up around the world, several have been founded in Zionist entity, drawing recruits from the military intelligence elite. NSO suggested in its letter that companies in the sector should be forced to have human rights compliance systems in place. The UN could offer guidance on "which states to consider as not having an acceptable track record of respecting international human rights", it added.

NSO continues to reject the media reports that rocked governments around the world in July, saying they were plagued by "serious shortcomings and material inaccuracies". "The number of purported targets - or possible targets - is entirely implausible based on the number of licenses actually granted by NSO," it said in the letter. — AFP

Business

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2021

US trade gap yawns wider as imports outpace exports

Yellen warns US debt default could trigger recession

WASHINGTON: The US trade deficit rose in August with imports overwhelming exports as the US economy bounces back from last year's pandemic shock, government data said yesterday. The Commerce Department reported the trade deficit climbed to \$73.3 billion from the upwardly revised \$70.3 billion the month prior, more than analysts had expected and 4.2 percent higher than in July.

Both exports and imports increased, but fewer car and airplane sales held back the former, while consumer demand fueled the rise in the latter, according to the data. The overall deficit was a new record high and \$31.7 billion larger than before the pandemic, said Mahir Rasheed of Oxford Economics, who predicted it would widen "slightly further" by the end of the year as vaccine inequality and supply snarls global growth.

"Moderating domestic demand will continue to slow import volumes over the coming months, while a steady pick up in foreign consumption will drive stronger exports" in the fourth quarter, he added.

Overall, imports rose \$4 billion to \$287 billion from July, while exports climbed to \$213.7 billion, an increase of \$1 billion. Imports of both goods and service increased, with consumer goods rising \$3 billion and industrial supplies and materials rising \$1.8 billion.

Automobiles fell \$1.5 billion amid an ongoing

shortage of semiconductors that has hurt assembly lines worldwide. Among exports, goods increased a total of \$1.1 billion, with industrial supplies and materials rising \$3.5 billion. However, that could not overcome a \$1 billion drop in automobiles and \$0.8 billion fall in capital goods, which includes aircraft, among other shortfalls. Services exports saw a slight decrease.

US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen warned yesterday that a US debt default could trigger another recession, as an October 18 deadline approaches. "I totally expect it would cause a recession," Yellen said on CNBC, referring to what would be an unprecedented US default as lawmakers fight over raising the debt ceiling.

Yellen has warned previously that after October 18, the United States will not have the funds to meet its obligations to creditors if Congress does not relax the legal debt ceiling. Congress has done this dozens of times over the decades since setting borrowing limits, and the votes are usually bipartisan and drama-free.

This year, reflecting the extraordinary acrimony in Washington, Republicans are refusing to vote for lifting the ceiling and vow even to block Democrats from passing a simple vote by themselves along party lines. Instead, Senate Republicans are attempting to force Democrats



WASHINGTON: US trade deficit climbed to \$73.3 billion from the upwardly revised \$70.3 billion the month prior, more than analysts had expected and 4.2 percent higher than in July.

to use a complex maneuver called reconciliation to take sole responsibility for the debt hike. Democrats so far are refusing, accusing the Republicans of taking the nation's financial stand-

ing hostage. President Joe Biden on Monday called Republican opponents "reckless and dangerous" for refusing to join Democrats in raising the debt limit. — AFP

Dry year leaves Syria wheat farmers facing crop failure

TAL SHAEER, Syria: After Syrian farmer Abdelbaqi Souleiman lost his last wheat crop to a wildfire, he had hoped for a better harvest this summer. But this spring there was hardly any rain. "Last year the field I planted was burnt to the ground," said the 48-year-old. "This year there wasn't enough rain, and we didn't harvest any wheat."

As man-made climate change increases the likelihood of drought and wildfires worldwide, Syria has also been hit hard by low rainfall this year, especially in its breadbasket Hasakeh province.

In the Kurdish-run northeastern region, dismal wheat harvests have raised alarm about food security in a war-torn country where 60 percent of people already struggle to buy food. In Hasakeh, humanitarian agencies estimate crop production to have dropped by more than 95 percent compared to last year in large parts of the province.

Souleiman said the lack of downpour, coupled with the high price of fuel for irrigation, seeds and fertilizer,



QAMISHLI, Syria: A young Syrian shepherd watches as his flock grazes in a harvested wheat field in the countryside of the northeastern city of Qamishli. —AFP

had made growing the rain-fed cereal a near mission impossible. "At this rate, we'll have to stop growing wheat," he said in the village of Tal Shaeer. "Farmers are going to have to start planting herbs like coriander and cumin because it's cheaper and they sell for more."

'Selling our women's gold'

Outside the town of Qahtaniyah in the same province, Hajji Mohammed, 71, said he and his neighbors had also fallen on rough times. "Farming has become a loss-making business," said the agricultural worker of 45 years in the village of Kardeem Haleema. "If there's no rain

this year, most people will move away." After years of losses, the family had next to no resources left with which to launch into another season.

"We're trying to sell our women's gold or furnishings so we can buy the seeds," he said. Before the war erupted in 2011, Syria produced up to 4 million tons of wheat a year—enough to feed its entire population, but harvests have since plunged to record lows, increasing dependence on imports.

The agriculture minister in Damascus said last month the country produced 900,000 tons of the grain this year, less than half of the two million tons needed. Salman Barodo, co-

president of the economy and agriculture commission with the Kurdish authorities, said this year's harvest had fallen far short of demand for the region's bakeries. "In previous years, we'd reap more than 600,000 tons of wheat," he said. It was enough for flour, seeds for the following season, and a little left over in reserve. "But this year it was just 184,000 to 185,000."

Harvest 'very low'

The poor harvest comes as the whole of northeast Syria is already facing a humanitarian disaster this year, aid agencies have warned, as low rainfall has also drastically depleted water levels along the Euphrates river. This has threatened electricity production and drinking water supplies, and complicated access to the river for irrigation.

In the neighboring province of Raqa, 42-year-old wheat farmer Ahmed Al-Humaidi said he had briefly considered switching to irrigation to save his crop. "We thought of drawing water from the Euphrates... but we were not able to because of the high cost" of equipment and fuel, he said in the village of Salhabiyah. Mike Robson, the representative of the Food and Agriculture Organization in Syria, said the rainy season ended unusually early in March this year. High temperatures the following month then prevented the grains from filling out properly. — AFP

Nord Stream 2 operator begins filling pipeline

MOSCOW: The operator of the controversial Nord Stream 2 pipeline from Russia to Germany-criticized by some Western countries as a geopolitical weapon-said on Monday it had begun filling the pipeline with gas. The latest step pushing the Baltic Sea pipeline to completion comes as Europe faces an energy crisis with natural gas reserves at a low level and energy prices surging.

"The gas-in procedure for the first string of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline has started," Nord Stream 2 AG said in a statement. "This string will be gradually filled to build the required inventory and pressure as a prerequisite for the later technical tests," said the Switzerland-based company, which is owned by a subsidiary of Russian gas giant Gazprom.

It said it would publish more information about "further technical steps in due time".

Nord Stream 2 has for years divided European capitals and raised tensions between the bloc and Washington. The pipeline diverts supplies from an existing route through Ukraine and is expected to deprive Europe's ally of an estimated one billion euros (\$1.2 billion) annually in transit fees from Russia. Ukraine-in conflict with Russia since Moscow's 2014 annexation of Crimea-has warned Europe that Nord Stream 2 could be used by Moscow to exert pressure.

The United States has reluctantly signed off on the project, but says it will sanction Moscow if the pipeline is used as a weapon.

'Geopolitical project'

"We continue to oppose this pipeline," US State Department spokesman Ned Price said on Monday. "We continue to believe it is a geopolitical project of the Russian Federation and we will continue to apply the law consistent with our periodic reviews which, of course, remain ongoing."

When Gazprom announced last month that construction was complete, Kiev vowed to continue lobbying against the project "even after the gas is turned on". Gas prices in Europe around the same time were skyrocketing in anticipation of higher winter demand and the International Energy Agency urged Russia open the taps. Moscow has said that it is waiting for Nord Stream 2 to come online before delivering more gas, but said the pipeline would help combat surging gas prices in Europe.

Running from Russia's Baltic coast to northeastern Germany, the underwater, 1,200-kilometre (745-mile) pipeline follows the same route as Nord Stream 1, which was completed over a decade ago. Like its twin, Nord Stream 2 will be able to pipe 55 billion cubic metres of gas per year to Europe, increasing the continent's access to relatively cheap natural gas at a time of falling domestic production. Germany, Europe's top economy, imports around 40 percent of its gas from Russia, and Berlin believes the pipeline has a role to play in the country's transition away from coal and nuclear energy. — AFP

Severe droughts dry up dreams of Turkish farmers

AKKUZULU, Turkey: Turkish farmer Hava Keles stares inconsolably at withered vines of rotting tomatoes in a field that has been devastated by a series of droughts blamed on climate change.

"My tomatoes, my beans, my peppers are ruined. My watermelons didn't even grow. The cucumbers I planted have shrivelled up on the branches," lamented Keles, 58, standing in an arid Anatolian plot in Akkuzulu, north of Ankara. Keles is among thousands of farmers across Turkey whose livelihoods have been ravaged as little rain has fallen to nourish their crops for the past two years.

Some experts accuse President Recep Tayyip Erdogan-whose popularity has relied on prosperity driven by fast urban development-of failing to do enough to address pressing environmental issues in the country. But Erdogan has promised Turkey would ratify the 2015 Paris Agreement in October before a pivotal UN climate summit next month in Glasgow. Turkey signed the deal in 2016.

Environmental issues had never topped the political agenda in Turkey, but everything changed after a summer of extreme weather events, including forest fires on the Mediterranean coast and devastating floods in the north. Action cannot come soon enough for indebted farmers like Keles in a country where droughts have spread to more than of the territory. "My husband says leave the garden. But I can't. I've worked too hard for this. What can I do with it now?" she asks, despite having debts worth thousands of dollars.

This summer, farmers in her neighborhood were unable to dig deep enough to find groundwater, so



ANKARA, Turkey: A farmer drives away after filling a tank with water to irrigate his fields in the Akkuzulu neighborhood in Cubuk district, northern Ankara. —AFP

they had to fetch it in large tanks pulled by tractors.

'Serious events coming'

Agriculture is a major sector of the Turkish economy, accounting for around six percent of GDP and employing 18 percent of the workforce. Turkey is self-sufficient in food production and is the world's seventh largest agricultural producer, exporting everything from hazelnuts to tea, olives to figs.

But the country's import of wheat has already risen exponentially in nearly two decades from \$150 million to \$2.3 billion in 2019, according to the agriculture ministry. Such figures add to fears Turkey will move from producer to becoming a country reliant on the outside to meet its food needs. "Turkey has a lot to adapt to, especially in terms of agriculture because serious drought events are coming. What we have seen is nothing," warned Levent Kumaz, director of Bogazici University's center for climate change and policy studies in Istanbul. — AFP

Oil strikes new peaks, global equities rebound

LONDON: World oil prices surged yesterday to new multi-year peaks, extending a bullish run one day after OPEC+ refrained from boosting output any further. The news handed a boost to share prices of energy firms while European and US stock markets rebounded from losses a day earlier.

But Asia equities fell on concerns that soaring energy prices would further fuel inflation. European benchmark London Brent North Sea oil jumped to a new three-year peak at \$82.72 per barrel. New York crude zoomed to a fresh seven-year pinnacle at \$78.88.

OPEC and other major producers opted Monday against increasing output by more than previously agreed — despite tightening supplies and rising demand. The OPEC+ grouping decided to stick with their planned increase next month in oil production of 400,000 barrels.

"OPEC+ gave oil bulls a red rag to bid up futures contracts as it stuck to the planned increase," said Markets.com analyst Neil Wilson. "It's not that demand is suddenly forecast to improve — it's more that OPEC+ is keeping such a tight grip on supply." Runaway oil prices fuel higher inflation but boost the profits and revenues of energy giants. In London, BP shares rose 0.6 percent to 346.45 pence and Royal Dutch Shell's 'B' shares jumped 1.3 percent to £16.93. — AFP

Business

Gulf Bank launches podcast 'Let's Talk Business' to highlight startup successes

Program series to feature little-known origin stories behind favorite local brands

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank has announced the launch of new episodes "Let's Talk Business," a program series consisting of interviews with local entrepreneurs. The initiative is part of the Bank's overarching strategy of fostering economic and community sustainability in Kuwait.

The new episodes, launching in the form of a podcast, features interviews highlighting the stories behind the founding and expansion of some of the most popular local-born businesses. The podcast aims to foster a culture of entrepreneurship by highlighting the largely hidden aspects behind the success of a business, including the challenges faced by modern business owners, ways to manage a business, ways to diversify and expand a business, financing a business, and business acquisitions and exits.

The entrepreneurs are interviewed by Tareq Al-Saleh, Deputy General Manager of the Economic Research Unit at Gulf Bank, who presents each story in a simple language, targeting young entrepreneurs striving to start businesses of their own. Commenting on the new podcast, Al-Saleh said, "At Gulf Bank, we are proud to serve numerous small- and medium-sized enterprises (SME) on an ongoing basis, providing them with a vari-



ety of services. Having worked closely with a number of local SMEs, we have also been fortunate to learn about some of the unique and exciting stories of the founders and companies behind some of the distinguished brands today, whose original stories and challenges might come as a surprise to the general public. Our new 'Let's Talk Business' podcast highlights some of the hidden and not traditionally known aspects behind some of our local entrepreneurs, and discusses how the founders reached the level they are at today. During the course of recording this podcast, I have been very fortunate to meet with an incredible group of inspiring entrepreneurs in

Kuwait, and I look forward to meeting more in the future."

Lujain Al-Qenaei, the Assistant Manager for Corporate Communications at Gulf Bank, also commented: "As part of Gulf Bank's ongoing commitment to sustainability, we are keen to spread a culture of entrepreneurship and support local youth projects, whether it's by providing entrepreneurs with a wide array of banking services, or enabling founders to highlight their success stories and discuss the challenges they managed to overcome. As part of the new podcast, we also aim to present a new standard of entrepreneurial role models who have achieved success in a variety of sectors, and are a source of inspiration and encouragement for entrepreneurs who are looking to start their own businesses. Now more than ever, economic sustainability is a requirement demanded by today's business landscape, with more youth choosing the path of self-employment and financial freedom. In turn, these new trends are also contributing to the national economy, thanks in part to the jobs and diversity that entrepreneurship introduces to the market."

"Let's Talk Business" is Gulf Bank's newest podcast,

created in collaboration with Belmokhba, a local creative content creation and production house. The first episode of the program will air on Thursday, October 7 at 9:00 pm on Gulf Bank's digital and social media channels (Instagram and YouTube), with new episodes airing every week. Gulf Bank's vision is to be the leading Kuwaiti Bank of the Future. The Bank is constantly engaging and empowering its employees as part of an inclusive and diversified workplace in recognition of every employee's role in delivering customer excellence and serving the community at large. With its extensive network of branches and innovative digital services, Gulf Bank is able to give its customers the choice of how and where to conduct their banking transactions, all while ensuring a simple and seamless banking experience.

Gulf Bank is committed to maintaining a robust sustainability program at the community, economic, and environmental levels through sustainability initiatives that are strategically selected to benefit both the country and the Bank. Gulf Bank supports Kuwait Vision 2035 "New Kuwait" and works with the different relevant parties to achieve it.



WOLFSBURG: A worker wears a protective mask at the Volkswagen assembly line after VW re-starts Europe's largest car factory after coronavirus shutdown in Wolfsburg, Germany. — AFP

Chip crisis crimps German, UK car sales but electric up

FRANKFURT: New car sales in Germany and Britain sank in September as a global chip shortage bedevils the auto sector, but electric demand accelerated in both countries, data showed yesterday.

After a strong recovery at the beginning of the year, a worldwide shortage in semiconductors—key components in both electric and conventional vehicles—has hamstrung automakers. In Germany—Europe's top economy — 196,972 new cars were registered in September, 26 percent fewer than in the same month last year, according to the KBA federal transport authority.

The sector was set to "stagnate or even go backwards" this year despite the "low, coronavirus-hit" sales figures for 2020, the president of the VDIK car importers' Federation Reinhard Zirpel said. Since the beginning of the year, 2,017,561 cars have been sold in Germany, lagging behind the figure for the same period last year by 1.2 percent.

Major German parts manufacturer Continental said it expected the semiconductor shortage to continue into 2022. "Many market observers assume that only beginning in 2023, when capacity at chipmakers has increased, will there be a clear improvement in the sit-

uation," Continental CEO Nikolai Setzer told German news agency DPA.

This week, carmaker Opel closed its plant in the eastern city of Eisenach until the start of 2022 due largely to the shortfall in chips. Production at the central Volkswagen plant in Wolfsburg has also been halted for almost two weeks as Germany's biggest carmaker adjusts to limits in supply. In contrast to the general trend, electric vehicles saw significant growth, with 58.8 percent more sold in September than in the same month last year. In the UK, new registrations for all cars dived almost 35 percent last month on a yearly basis to 215,312 vehicles, the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders said in a statement. That was the lowest September level since 1998, and comes after sales were already hit hard last year by pandemic lockdowns.

"This is a desperately disappointing September and further evidence of the ongoing impact of the Covid pandemic on the sector," noted SMMT Chief Executive Mike Hawes. "Despite strong demand for new vehicles over the summer, three successive months have been hit by stalled supply due to reduced semiconductor availability, especially from Asia."

But like in Germany, new electric vehicle registrations soared, rising almost 50 percent to hit 32,721.

Analysts expect Britain's electric car demand to surge further in the coming months in the face of recent shortages of motor fuel. "Recent motor fuel shortages will give people who are considering trading up to a new vehicle more reason to consider an electric vehicle," Pantheon Macro economist Samuel Tombs said.—AFP

Chinese developer Fantasia fails to make debt payments

BEIJING: Another Chinese homebuilder has hit financial trouble after missing payments on debt obligations, adding to worries over the country's property sector as embattled giant China Evergrande teeters on the brink of collapse. Fears of contagion through the Chinese economy have grown as Evergrande, the most indebted of the country's private homebuilders, struggles with more than \$300 billion in liabilities and heads towards a massive restructuring.

Fantasia Holdings failed to repay a \$205.7 million note Monday, the Shenzhen-based company said in a statement. This came as property management firm Country Garden Services Holdings said that a unit of Fantasia had missed repayment on a 700 million yuan (\$108 million) loan, saying it was likely the company would default.

The news also comes as investors await news from Evergrande after it suspended trading of its shares Monday pending an announcement on a "major transaction", with reports saying Hong Kong real estate firm Hopson Development Holdings planned to buy a 51 percent stake in its property services arm. While Fantasia is a smaller player in the market than Evergrande, its struggles highlight investor concerns over companies' financial disclosures.

Yesterday, S&P Global Ratings lowered its rating of Fantasia to "SD" or "selective default", saying this highlighted its strained liquidity. Just a day before, Fitch Ratings downgraded Fantasia to "CCC-", a move that points to default as a possibility.



The ratings agency added in a statement that although media reports said Fantasia missed an earlier payment to bondholders, the bond "does not appear to have been disclosed in the company's financial reports". "We believe the existence of these bonds means that the company's liquidity situation could be tighter than we previously expected."

"Furthermore, this incident casts doubt on the transparency of the company's financial disclosures," Fitch added. Separately, S&P downgraded another Chinese property firm—Sinic Holdings—saying its "debt-servicing ability has almost been depleted".

The company has been unable to service interest repayments, which could result in "accelerating repayments on Sinic's other debt obligations", S&P said on Monday. Fitch downgraded Sinic from "CCC" to "C" yesterday, reflecting its view that "a default-like

Fed asks watchdog to review officials' trading

WASHINGTON: The Federal Reserve has asked its watchdog to investigate the trading activities of senior officials, the US central bank said Monday, after two resigned following criticism of their stock market activities. "As part of our comprehensive review, we began discussions last week with the Office of Inspector General for the Federal Reserve Board to initiate an independent review of whether trading activity by certain senior officials was in compliance with both the relevant ethics rules and the law," a Fed spokesperson said. "We welcome this review and will accept and take appropriate actions based on its findings."

Last week, Dallas Fed bank Robert Kaplan announced he would leave his post on October 8, while Eric Rosengren, who leads the Boston Fed, moved his already-scheduled retirement up by several months to September 30. The two officials engaged in large stock trades in 2020, at a time when the Federal Reserve was aggressively acting to support the US economy amid the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to financial disclosures first reported by The Wall Street Journal.

Kaplan noted the trading criticisms in his departure, while Rosengren cited pre-existing health issues. Fed chair Jerome Powell stressed that the officials had not violated any existing rules, he nonetheless announced plans to review the ethics rules regarding investing. Last Friday, Bloomberg reported Fed Vice Chair Richard Clarida moved between \$1 million and \$5 million into a stock fund from a bond fund in February 2020, a day before Powell announced the central bank could act as the COVID-19 pandemic worsened.

Weeks later, the Fed slashed its benchmark lending rate to zero and pumped trillions of dollars of liquidity into the financial system to keep it functioning as the pandemic caused a sharp downturn. A central bank spokesperson told AFP the trades are "a preplanned rebalancing of his accounts" made prior to the Fed's deliberations over their reaction to COVID-19, and the funds were chosen with the approval of the bank's bank ethics officials.—AFP

Zero net emissions by 2050: A huge challenge for airline industry

BOSTON: How can passengers take 10 billion flights a year without contributing to global warming? The question of "greening" the international aviation sector by 2050 constitutes a colossal task whose stakes—and sheer numbers—can make the head spin, according to the airlines themselves.

At its general assembly in Boston Monday, the International Air Transport Association (IATA) said it is now aiming for "net zero carbon emissions" by the middle of the century, a bold but necessary goal in the face of global warming, according to its CEO Willie Walsh. But by signing up to the goals of the Paris climate accord, and those of the European Union, IATA, which represents the airlines, does not envisage that a massive reduction in emissions will also involve a massive reduction in its operations. Quite the opposite. "For us the main target is to continue growing, because it's not the traffic that is the enemy, it's the emissions," said Sebastian Mikosz, IATA vice president in charge of environmental affairs and sustainable development.



Even though air transport has suffered a huge downturn due to the Covid-19 pandemic, with a drop from 4.5 billion travelers in 2019 to 1.8 billion in 2020, IATA estimates that by 2050 more than 10 billion trips per year will be made by plane. As it stands, the aviation sector produces 900 million tons of CO2 per year, according to IATA. By 2050, if nothing is done to reduce the industry's carbon footprint, that will rise to 1.8 billion tons.

That would mean that over 30 years, 21.2 billion tons of CO2 would be released into the atmosphere. Reducing this level to gradually achieve net zero emissions in 2050 poses an enormous technological challenge that the IATA estimates will cost companies around \$1.55 trillion between 2020 and 2050.

10,000% increase in production

IATA says that the main solution lies in the use of sustainable aviation fuels (SAF), which would allow the industry to get 65 percent of the way toward its goal. These fuels—made from biomass, waste oils and could even be made from carbon capture in the future—have the advantage that they can be used directly in existing aircraft, which are designed to run on 50-percent blends of kerosene. And such fuel sources can reduce CO2 emissions by 80 percent compared to kerosene over their entire life cycle, according to IATA. Airbus and Boeing have pledged that their fleets will be able to fly 100 percent on SAF by 2030, but SAF accounts for less than 0.1 percent of aviation fuel currently used.

Encouraged by governments, the infrastructure to produce SAFs is being set up in the United States and Europe, but is still embryonic—and the cheapest fuel that comes out costs four times more than kerosene, a fossil fuel. "The problem is the capacity and the supply," said Mikosz, who said the goal was "basically to grow to 450 billion liters of SAF compared to 100 million liters."

"We need to multiply our supply by 10,000 percent," he said. Still, IATA believes that the technological advances promised by the aerospace industry, in particular new electric or hydrogen planes such as those that Airbus is preparing for 2035, are not yet a sure enough bet for the sector to rely on in order to "decarbonize" beyond 13 percent by 2050.

"If those technologies do not deliver what we need by 2050... we can compensate it through SAF," said Mikosz. The European aviation sector, in publishing its own roadmap towards carbon neutrality for 2050 last February, said it was counting on technological advances to cut 37 percent of its emissions by 2050 and on SAF to cut 34 percent.—AFP

Business

Final call for entries to Lexus Design Award 2022 as deadline approaches

Participants have until 10 October 2021 to submit their creative ideas

KUWAIT: The submission period for entries to the prestigious Lexus Design Award 2022, which is being held this year under the theme 'Design for a Better Tomorrow,' is drawing to a close, with aspiring creators having only a few days left to the 10 October deadline to submit their ideas for consideration. Now in its tenth year, the Lexus Design Award is a global platform to support and nurture the next generation of creators from around the world, offering them a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

Lexus has announced its full lineup of judges and mentors for the Lexus Design Award 2022. The judging panel will announce the six finalists from thousands of entries in early 2022. Their decision will be based on three key principles of the Lexus brand: Anticipate, Innovate, and Captivate, with an emphasis on design that leads to a better tomorrow. This year, Lexus welcomes architect Anupama Kundoo and designer Bruce Mau to the panel of judges, who will join the multi-term contributing judges Paola Antonelli, Senior Curator for the Department of Architecture and Design at MoMA in New York, and Simon Humphries, who heads Lexus' Global Design.

The six chosen finalists will go on to participate in a workshop with world-class design professionals acting as mentors. Each will enjoy a priceless experience as the mentors provide direct, interactive guidance in developing prototypes that bring their ideas to life. For the 2022 edition, Beijing-based architect Yosuke Hayano and France and Portugal-based designer Sam Baron will join designer Joe Doucet, now in his third year as a trusted mentor, and designer Sabine Marcelis, a dedicated mentor from the previous year.

The mentorship program offers an individual production budget of up to JPY 3 million (over \$25,000), allowing participants to turn their concepts into functional prototypes. A single winner will be selected after finalists present their prototypes and ideas to the judging panel at the event under the eyes of global media and guests.

"The Lexus Design Award embodies our belief in the power of innovation to unlock a better future for all," commented Kei Fujita, Chief Representative, Middle East and Central Asia Representative Office, Toyota Motor Corporation. "Now celebrating ten years, this unique platform empowers promising talents by offering expert guidance and the opportunity to bring their visions to life. Supporting the next generation is an essential component of our drive to create Amazing Experiences and push the



- Six finalists will receive around \$25,000 each to cover prototype production costs
- Grand Prix winner will be selected by the esteemed panel of judges in the spring of 2022

boundaries of what can be achieved through brave design, and I am looking forward to seeing the ideas presented by this year's finalists. I would also like to thank everyone involved in this inspiring competition, including all of the contestants around the world, for their outstanding contributions."

How the design embodies the three principles of the Lexus brand:

- Anticipate: Does the concept and design anticipate global challenges facing future society?
- Innovate: Does the design demonstrate new thinking and originality in its proposal and execution?
- Captivate: Is the design intriguing and compelling in concept and execution?

Judges Paola Antonelli, Senior Curator for the

Department of Architecture and Design at MoMA, NY.

- Anupama Kundoo, Architect/Founder of Anupama Kundoo Architects
- Bruce Mau, Co-Founder & CEO, Massive Change Network
- Simon Humphries, Head of Toyota & Lexus Global Design

Mentors

- Sam Baron, Designer/Creative Director, SAM BARON & Co
- Joe Doucet, Founder, Joe Doucet x Partners
- Yosuke Hayano, Principal Partner, MAD Architects
- Sabine Marcelis, Designer/Founder, Studio Sabine Marcelis

Award categories One Grand Prix winner (selected from



the six finalists)

- Six finalists

Prizes/benefits

- Six finalists to be invited to mentorship - a series of sessions with mentors from diverse fields who guide finalists in developing ideas into prototypes.
- Six finalists will have global media exposure to help drive career advancement.
- Six finalists to receive up to 3 million JPY (over \$25K) each for prototype production costs.
- Six finalists will have an opportunity to expand their professional horizons by engaging the four judges in dialogue, one-on-one.

Huawei MateBook 13|14: It boasts 2K eye-comfort, Super Device features

KUWAIT: Selecting your next laptop depends on your needs and workload. Are you looking for a big-screen laptop or do you prefer a small and light one? Do you opt for one with regular features? Or, do you go with one that comes packed with loads of innovative smart features? Huawei recently launched its latest Mid-Range Laptops in two iterations - the Huawei MateBook 13 and the Huawei MateBook 14

and we got our hands on the latter! It comes with a 14-inch 2K eye-comfort FullView display, 11th Generation Intel Core processor, Super Device features, large RAM and sizeable internal storage. In addition to a large battery with SuperCharge, and Shark-fin cooling fan tech. We got our hands on it and here is what blew our minds! The Huawei MateBook 13 | 14 will be there for the taking on Huawei's official website and across select retailers in Kuwait, priced at KD 349,900.

The Huawei MateBook 13 | 14

The new Huawei MateBook 14 breaks through with a 2K eye-comfort FullView display. The display ratio to body stands at a staggering 90% for a further maximized and immersive viewing experience. Whether it's work or play, nothing can get in the way of this stunning display. It also comes with a pixel density of 185 pixels per inch (ppi), as well as support for 100 percent of the sRGB color space. The 14-inch 3:2 FullView display also comes with a 1500:1 contrast ratio plus a peak brightness of 300 nits, perfect for viewing and editing high-resolution images and videos. The screen is multitouch-enabled with gesture support, such as Fingers Gesture Screenshot, which lets you quickly take a screenshot by swiping downwards on the screen with three fingers, as easy as it is on your smartphone.

Powerful and reliable

Your new laptop should be able to process all your tasks, whatsoever they may be, efficiently. Thankfully, with the Huawei MateBook 14 you get an 11th Gen Intel Core Processor.

Super device features

The new Huawei MateBook 14 Leverages the distributed capabilities of the Super Device to boost productivity and creativity. You can wirelessly project the 12.6-inch Huawei MatePad pro to the Huawei MateBook 14 to enjoy the new features of the Tablet-PC Multi-screen Collaboration that come with three modes: Mirror, Extend and Collaborate. Based on Huawei's distributed technologies, Multi-screen Collaboration features help bridge the gap between Windows and Android operating systems at the ground level, enabling seamless cross-device collaboration, file sharing and multi-screen control. Under Multi-screen Collaboration, the recently launched Huawei nova 8 can be connected with the Huawei MateBook 14 to form a powerful Super Device. Once connected, the laptop can access mobile files, and open up to three folders while the smartphone can function as the PC's thumb device, making cross-device file management easier than ever. Moreover, users can connect the laptop with the Huawei MateView via cable to have an extra screen providing users with an immersive viewing space while also wirelessly projecting the screen of the 12.6-inch Huawei MatePad Pro onto the Huawei MateBook 14. The benefits of having this trio set-up is the easy swapping of wireless and wired connections which lets you easily switch between work mode, and personal mode.

solutions by stc , Datumcon join forces to bring 'Internet of eyes' to Kuwait

KUWAIT: solutions by stc, the specialized business arm of Kuwait Telecommunications Company - stc, yesterday announced its new partnership with Datumcon, a Gulf-based artificial intelligence (AI) and data science company, to bring the benefits of AI-enabled video analytics to businesses in Kuwait.

The two companies are joining forces to offer INSIGHT AI, Datumcon's proprietary computer vision software, to enterprise and SME customers in Kuwait. The intelligent AI-enabled video analytics solution securely processes video streams and images in real-time to perform intricate, outcome-driven computer vision tasks.

A subfield of artificial intelligence, computer vision is among the most exciting and impactful areas of applied AI. It enables systems and computers to 'understand' a scene and derive meaningful information from digital images, videos, and other visual inputs. Leveraging machine learn-



Meshari Al-Hamad

ing and AI, computer vision is then able to take actions or make recommendations based on that information.

Meshari Al-Hamad, General Manager of Sales & Account Management at solutions by stc, said, "The remarkable growth in camera use by businesses has created tremendous opportunities in the capture, analysis, and interpretation of the large volumes of visual data being generated daily. Our close collaboration with Datumcon now enables us to offer a state-of-the-art video analytics service that delivers tangible results and real, demonstrable impact for businesses."

Industry reports estimate that close to a billion surveillance cameras will be installed worldwide by 2021 and expect exponential growth in deployments for the foreseeable future. The sheer amount of video footage generated by these cameras is mind-boggling and raises the question of how it all can be analyzed. The applications of video analytics are extensive and diverse, but the reality is that the vast majority of visual data available in any organization goes unused. This is where AI-powered analytics and software come in, offering compelling and cost-effective solutions.

Similar to the Internet of Things (IoT), the 'Internet of Eyes' is a network of cameras and visual sensors connected via the internet that enable the secure exchange and collection of visual data on a scale unimaginable before. Many experts believe this will likely be larger - in both scale and impact - than the IoT. As costs decline and significant advances in image quality and AI are achieved, the concept is poised to become truly mainstream with significant implications on all business sectors.

Al-Hamad added, "Computer vision applications are poised to make a major impact on businesses across industries. solutions by stc is proud to be the first and only ICT

provider to launch this kind of service in the Kuwaiti market, further expanding our growing portfolio of offerings to help businesses thrive in the digital era."

The newly formed collaboration aims to accelerate the 'Internet of Eyes' adoption in Kuwait by broadening the appeal of the fast-growing advanced technology. It also builds on solution by stc's strategy to provide its customers with the latest and most secure innovations to support their digital transformation. INSIGHT AI combines different types of deep learning architectures that allow computer vision tools to detect patterns in videos and images more effectively over time. This use of AI makes it possible for machines to categorize, process, and understand visual data at an unprecedented scale and speed, transforming the physical world into actionable data. The service provides visibility and insights into the condition of a business and helps improve profitability, while providing a competitive edge in effectively adapting to today's fast-changing market dynamics.

Radwan Al-Jumaa, Managing Partner at Datumcon, said, "We are excited to work closely with solutions by stc to generate new value and drive substantial outcomes for enterprises of all sizes across multiple sectors in Kuwait. INSIGHT AI is a powerful platform that enables businesses and solutions providers to create and deliver highly customizable video analytics that are able to address unique needs across a wide spectrum of business environments."

Powered by AI, the advanced video analytics solution offers clear advantages to organizations that extend well beyond substantially improving levels of security. It also empowers enterprises by making it possible to make smarter business decisions, amplify productivity, reduce errors, elevate the customer experience, and significantly improve operational and marketing efficiency.

Thai Mart Kuwait to bring Thailand closer to Kuwait



KUWAIT: On 29 September 2021, Rooge Thammongkol, Ambassador of Thailand to Kuwait and thirty of Thai businessmen in Kuwait held the second online meeting with Akavut Tangsilakusonwong, CEO of Thai Mart Bahrain and Thai Souq Dubai, to discuss

about the setup of "Thai Mart Kuwait" or "Thai Souq Kuwait" that will cater varieties of Thai supermarket products such as foods, fruits, frozen foods, spa products, handicraft etc and services to customers in Kuwait.

Thai Mart Kuwait will be a depot and



distribution center of Thai products in Kuwait, linking to Thai Mart Bahrain and Thai Souq Dubai by land transportation and air cargo, which will support all kinds of Thai products in potential markets in Kuwait and other GCC countries. More

discussions on the details of Thai Mart Kuwait as well as the local partners of the project will be conducted pending on the visit to Kuwait of the CEO of Thai Mart Bahrain and Thai Souq Dubai in December this year.

Indian businessman appointed to WTFL Advisory Board

LUCERNE, Switzerland: The World Tourism Forum Lucerne has appointed Adeb Adeb, Managing Director of Abu Dhabi based Twenty14 Holdings, to its Global Advisory Board. For over ten years, World Tourism Forum Lucerne (WTFL) has been bringing together industry experts, CEOs, investors and start-ups, establishing itself as a prestigious global platform for exchange. By fostering cross-generational collaboration, new ideas and solutions emerge to benefit tourism today and in the future. Adeb, who owns a slew of iconic properties across the world including the Great Scotland Yard in London, Waldorf Astoria-

the Caledonian in Edinburgh, Pullman Downtown Dubai and Port Muziris in Kochi among others, joins a select group of the industry's top stakeholders and decision makers who will collaborate on solving for future challenges in the travel and tourism industry.

The Advisory Board is an international body of renowned experts responsible for assuring the quality of World Tourism Forum Lucerne. It determines the themes for the Forums and decides on the general content by including current global topics and addressing cultural differences. Some of its prominent members include, Franziska Bitzi Staub, Head of Department of Finance, City of Lucerne, Puneet Chhatwal, Managing Director & CEO, The Indian Hotels Company Limited, Geoffrey Lipman, President, ICTP (International Council of Tourism Partners), Co-Founder, SUN and Isabel Hill, Director National Travel and Tourism Office, US Department of Commerce Office, among others.

On 15 and 16 November 2021, WTFL is hosting an "Innovation Festival" in Andermatt in which Adeb

Ahmed, Managing Director of Abu Dhabi based Twenty14 Holdings will also take the stage at the event. At the hybrid conference, well-known personalities, such as Klaus Schwab (founder of the World Economic Forum), Laura Meyer (CEO Hotelplan), Peter Fankhauser (CEO PETRAF Ltd and former CEO Thomas Cook Group), Shannon Ghuian (Chief Sustainability Officer at TTC), Niall Ferguson (Historian and Author) and Alex Lampert (CEO GuestReady) will discuss the tourism industry's current challenges and demonstrate how these can be tackled with forward-thinking solutions.



Adeb Adeb



An autorickshaw drives past a billboard advertisement of the latest James Bond movie "No Time to Die" in Bangalore on Sept 30, 2021. — AFP



A London red bus is seen with a poster of the latest James Bond film "No Time to Die" in London on Monday. - AFP photos

NEW BOND FILM SMASHES FRANCHISE TAKINGS RECORD

The new James Bond film, "No Time to Die", broke the franchise record for opening-weekend takings, Universal Pictures said yesterday, with Daniel Craig's last outing as the eponymous hero netting £25 million (\$34 million). The movie opened in Britain and Ireland on Thursday, and achieved

Bond's best-ever three-day domestic opening in its 60-year history. It is already Britain's biggest film release since the pandemic hit in early 2020, despite only being open for four days, sparking optimism of a revival for the beleaguered industry. It has so far opened in 54 countries, including

Germany, Spain, Brazil and Japan, grossing \$121 million, said Universal, making it the first Hollywood release to break \$100 million without counting China among its opening markets. The movie, which also stars Rami Malek, Lashana Lynch and Ana de Armas, launches in the United States on Friday.

Fans in Britain flocked to cinemas across the country over the weekend to catch the latest 007 adventure, 18 months later than planned, but to a host of positive reviews. "It's better than good. It's magnificent," The Times newspaper's film critic Kevin Maher gushed, giving it a maximum five stars. "Craig is a towering

charismatic presence from opening frame to closing shot, and he bows out in terrific, soulful, style." However, the praise from critics was not universal and others disagreed about its length of two hours and 43 minutes. — AFP

Russian crew docks at ISS to film first movie in space

Russian actress and director yesterday arrived at the International Space Station (ISS) in a bid to best the United States and film the first movie in orbit. The Russian crew is set to beat a Hollywood project that was announced last year by "Mission Impossible" star Tom Cruise together with NASA and Elon Musk's SpaceX. Actress Yulia Peresild,

and film director Klim Shipenko, 38, took off from the Russia-leased Baikonur Cosmodrome in ex-Soviet Kazakhstan as scheduled. But they belatedly docked at the ISS at 1222 GMT after veteran cosmonaut Anton Shkaplerov switched to manual control. "Welcome to the ISS!" Russia's space agency Roscosmos said

on Twitter. The crew travelled in a Soyuz MS-19 spaceship for a 12-day mission at the ISS to film scenes for "The Challenge". The movie's plot, which has been mostly kept under wraps along with its budget, was revealed by Roscosmos to centre around a female surgeon who is dispatched to the ISS to save a cosmonaut. Shkaplerov and two other Russian cosmonauts aboard the ISS are said to have cameo roles in the film. The ISS crew, which also includes a French, a Japanese and three NASA astronauts, will welcome the newcomers when the hatch opens at around 1410 GMT.

'It was difficult'
"It was difficult psychologically, physically and emotionally... but I think when we reach our goal all the challenges won't seem so bad," Peresild - who was selected out of 3,000 applicants for the role - said at a pre-flight press conference on Monday. True to a pre-flight tradition religiously observed by cosmonauts, the crew said that on Sunday they watched the classic Soviet film "The White Sun of the Desert".

Shipenko and Peresild are expected to return to Earth on October 17 in a capsule with cosmonaut Oleg Novitsky, who has been on the ISS for the past six months. "Space is where we became pioneers, where despite everything we maintain a fairly confident position," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters yesterday. If successful, the mission will add to a long list of firsts for Russia's space industry. The Soviets launched the first satellite Sputnik, and sent the first animal, a dog named Laika, the first man, Yuri Gagarin, and the first woman, Valentina Tereshkova, into orbit.

But compared with the Soviet era, modern Russia has struggled to innovate and its space industry is fighting to secure state funding with the Kremlin prioritizing military spending. Its space agency is still reliant on Soviet-designed technology and has faced a number of setbacks, including corruption scandals and botched launches. Russia is also falling behind in the global space race, facing tough competition from the United States and China, with Beijing showing growing ambitions in the industry.

Russians 'lost interest'
Roscosmos was also dealt a blow after SpaceX last year successfully delivered astronauts to the ISS, costing Russia its monopoly for journeys to the



Cosmonaut Anton Shkaplerov (bottom), actress Yulia Peresild (center) and film director Klim Shipenko (top) react during boarding Russia's Soyuz MS-19 spacecraft before blasting off to the ISS from the launch pad at the Russian-leased Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan.

orbital station. For political analyst Konstantin Kalachev, the space film is a matter of PR and a way to "distract" Russians from the "problems" that Roscosmos is facing.

"This is supposed to inspire Russians, show how cool we are, but I think Russians have completely lost interest in the space industry," Kalachev told AFP. In a bid to spruce up its image and diversify its revenue, Russia's space program revealed this year that it will be reviving its tourism program to ferry fee-paying adventurers to the ISS. After a decade-long pause, Russia will send two Japanese tourists - including billionaire Yusaku Maezawa - to the ISS in

December, capping a year that has been a milestone for amateur space travel.

Last month, SpaceX completed the first all-civilian mission to space that took four untrained astronauts on a three-day loop around the Earth's orbit. The trip followed billionaire Richard Branson's several minutes in weightlessness in July, with Amazon founder Jeff Bezos completing a similar mission days later. Later this month, 90-year-old actor William Shatner, known for his portrayal of Captain Kirk in the Star Trek series, will fly to space on a mission with Bezos's Blue Origin. — AFP

Minister moots musical toots for noisy Indian roads

India's transport minister is mulling a law that would seek to replace the country's constant car-horn cacophony with the sound of music. "I am studying this and soon planning to make a law that the horns of all vehicles should be in Indian musical instruments so that it is pleasant to hear," Nitin Gadkari told local media on Monday. The horns could blast sounds made by the flute, tabla, violin, mouth organ or harmonium, he added.

Gadkari also said he wanted to replace the "irritating" sirens used by ambulances and police vehicles with soothing tunes. India is home to some of the noisiest cities in the world, as rickshaws, buses, taxis, weaving motorbikes and private cars fight for space on the traffic-clogged roads.

The horn is deemed almost as important as the gas pedal - and more so than wing mirrors - and is used by drivers more to alert other road-users to their presence rather than to rebuke. India's colorful trucks often have messages painted on their backs aimed at overtaking drivers such as "Horn OK Please" or "Blow Horn". The World Health Organization says noise pollution can cause hearing loss, cardiovascular problems, cognitive impairment, stress and depression. — AFP

African cinema could create 20 million jobs

Africa's film industry is thriving and could create many millions of extra jobs if its potential was fully exploited, the United Nations said yesterday. In a report, the UN cultural organization UNESCO said that an estimated five million people currently work in Africa's film industry, which contributes \$5 billion to the continent's GDP.

Nigeria's film industry is the continent's biggest, churning out 2,500 movies per year. Despite the numbers, UNESCO said the industry has much potential that remains largely untapped. Affordable digital film equipment and new online distribution platforms have given new opportunities to content creators, but the report said that Africa has fewer screens per capita than any other continent.

Piracy is another big issue, with the report estimating "that piracy waylays 50 percent to over 75 percent of the film and audiovisual industries' revenue". Only 19 African countries out of 54 offer any financial support to filmmakers, the report also found. If all these challenges were fully addressed, the sector could create over 20 million jobs and contribute \$20 billion to the continent's combined GDP, UNESCO said. The report also identified a lack of freedom of expression as hindering the film industry's progress, with professionals in 47 countries reporting limitations on the issues that they are able to handle in their creative work. In a statement, UNESCO Director General Audrey Azoulay called for a strengthening of international cooperation "to enable all countries, in particular developing countries, to develop cultural and creative industries that are viable and competitive both nationally and internationally". —AFP



37, and film director Klim Shipenko, 38, took off from the Russia-leased Baikonur Cosmodrome in ex-Soviet Kazakhstan as scheduled. But they belatedly docked at the ISS at 1222 GMT after veteran cosmonaut Anton Shkaplerov switched to manual control. "Welcome to the ISS!" Russia's space agency Roscosmos said

HBO Max unveils Europe rollout

HBO Max-home to cultural touchstones from Batman and Harry Potter to The Sopranos and Friends-detailed the rollout of its streaming service across Europe yesterday. The

company used the event to offer a teaser of Game of Thrones prequel, "House of the Dragon", which is due next year. It also announced that the follow-up to "Sex and the City", which is titled "And Just Like That", will air from December. As the streaming service for WarnerMedia, HBO Max will also get new Warner Bros movies 45 days after their release in cinemas, the company said. That is potentially controversial since filmmakers have sometimes reacted angrily to the increasing shift towards home viewing for new blockbusters.

"Dune" director Denis Villeneuve has vilified Warner for choosing to release his film simultaneously in theatres and

on HBO Max in the US this month, saying it showed "no love for cinema, nor for the audience". Scarlett Johansson is suing Disney for doing the same thing with her blockbuster "Black Widow" this summer, saying it cut into her profits. HBO Max launched in the US last year and has expanded across Latin America and the Caribbean. It will launch in Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland, Spain and Andorra on October 26. It will then expand to 27 European territories in 2022.

That will not include several key markets, including Britain, France, Germany and Italy, where HBO and Warner have distribution deals with local providers that

have a few more years to run. But the company said it plans to expand globally to reach 190 territories by 2026. WarnerMedia owns the rights to a vast back-catalogue of films, including classics such as "Singing in the Rain" and "The Shining" through to blockbusters such as "The Matrix" and "Justice League". It also has some huge TV titles, including "Friends", "The Big Bang Theory" and "Two and a Half Men", which have proved perennial favorites on streaming platforms. — AFP

Lifestyle | Features



Fashion designer Virginie Viard acknowledges the audience at the end of Chanel show as part of Paris Fashion Week in Paris yesterday. — AFP photos



(From left) Danish actor Nikolaj Coster-Waldau, French model Cindy Bruna, Australian actress Katherine Langford, US-Cuban singer-songwriter Camilla Cabello, Indian actress Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, British actress Helen Mirren, US actress Aja Naomi King, US actress Amber Heard, South Korean-US model Soo Joo Park, French singer Yseult, a model, Indian model Nidhi Sunil, French actress Leila Behkti, Ethiopian model Liya Kebede and German model Luma Grothe pose during the L'Oréal shows held on the sidelines of the Paris Fashion Week at the Trocadero in Paris on Oct 3, 2021.



A model presents a creation for Givenchy.



A model presents a creation for Lanvin.

Paris Fashion Week wrapped up yesterday after nine days of innovative experiments that showed how the industry is embracing technology and new approaches for a post-pandemic future. While many fashion houses stuck to online presentations, the biggest names such as Dior, Balenciaga and Stella McCartney - even Yves Saint Laurent, which had been first to quit live shows when the pandemic hit - got back to the catwalk. But new twists often reflected the lessons learned during lockdowns, and increasing environmental concerns.

What is real?

Among the most inventive runway shows in years came from Balenciaga, who fooled their own guests into becoming part of the spectacle. Arriving via a red carpet, they were unaware that the official models were walking among them until a big screen relayed their entrance and highlighted which outfits were part of the show. The line between guest and model disappeared as it emerged that some of the celebrities had been on secret modelling duty, including racing driver Lewis Hamilton and actress Isabelle Huppert. The New York Times called it a "knife-sharp belly laugh of an experiment on... our digital lives, where posing has become the norm (and voyeurism is a constant.)"

Immersive shows

One advantage of pandemic-era



Mercedes' British Formula 1 driver Lewis Hamilton presents a creation for Balenciaga.

Post-pandemic experimentation at Paris Fashion Week

online presentations is that they have given viewers time to really appreciate the clothes. Dior embraced that idea, using an elaborate gameshow-style rotating stage which allowed the models and their outfits to be seen from multiple angles. Christian Louboutin, creator of the famous red-soled pumps, offered a fully immersive experience, plunging the audience into digital landscapes before presenting the shoes on podiums, jazzed up with digital effects, while dancers put them through their paces.

Face-to-face

Young French star Marine Serre, who has put on spectacular shows in the past,

opted to stick with an online presentation this time. But she also screened the film for several hundred guests at a special evening in Paris "to give it some warmth and appreciation," she said. The clothes were on display to see and touch, while Serre herself was on hand to discuss directly with guests. British veteran Paul Smith also took an intimate approach, inviting guests to his headquarters. He offered commentary on each outfit, saying: "I think the way we've done it today is correct for the house. It's nice to have a one-to-one."

Ethical concerns

Though the fashion industry is often

accused of empty posturing on the environment, some designers insist they are determined to really make a difference. Stella McCartney displayed the first-ever bag made from "Mylo" mushroom leather. It was part of a collection that went heavy on natural vibes, with even the music being inspired by fungi. Gabriella Hearst also highlighted her green credentials, saying 58 percent of her designs for Chloe were from low-impact materials. And Dutch label Botter used recovered plastic waste from the sea for its aquatic-inspired collection. — AFP

100 musicians flee Afghanistan, fearing Taliban crackdown

More than 100 music students and teachers have fled Afghanistan in a nail-biting flight from Kabul following the Taliban's takeover of the country, their institute's founder and principal said. Fearing a crackdown on music by the country's new leaders, a total 101 members of Afghanistan's top musical institute landed in Doha on Sunday evening, Ahmad Sarmast said. The group, about half of them women and girls, plan to fly to Portugal with the support of the government there, said Sarmast, founder of the Afghanistan National Institute of Music, who now lives in Melbourne.



Handout photo taken on Oct 3, 2021 and received yesterday shows some of the more than 100 music students and teachers on a flight from Kabul to Doha.

But the success of the operation was in doubt until the last moment, he said. With help from the Qatari embassy in Kabul, the musicians had been ferried in small groups to the city's airport, Sarmast said. In a first hurdle, Taliban militants manning Kabul airport questioned their visas. But Qatari embassy officials managed to resolve the problem. Then the girls and women were told that they could not leave

the country with their temporary "service passports", which are usually issued to officials.

'Time of many tears'

"My understanding is that it was not so much of the type of the passports but that the girls were fleeing the country," Sarmast said. Once again, Qatari officials managed to negotiate their passage. When the flight finally took off hours later with the musicians, including many from the all-female Zohra orchestra, Sarmast said he was overcome with emotion. "It was a time of many tears. I was crying endlessly. My family were crying together with me. That was the happiest moment in my entire life," he said.

The institute's founder said he had lived many memorable moments with his students, who won standing ovations on international concert tours. "But the feeling and the happiness when I heard that their plane took off the ground is very hard to describe." The flight was the result of long planning since the Taliban takeover, Sarmast said. "From the moment the Taliban took power in Kabul the discrimination against music and musicians began. The people of Afghanistan were silenced once again," he said.

The Taliban, who banned music outright during their brutal and oppressive rule from 1996 to 2001, swept back into power on August 15. They have promised a more moderate brand of rule this time - though they have made clear that they will run Afghanistan within the restrictive limits of their interpretation of sharia law. The movement's position on music is inconsistent and no clear order has yet been issued. At a Taliban rally outside Kabul this weekend, for example, religious music was played ahead of speeches by ministers and senior Taliban figures.

Told to stay at home

According to Sarmast, the Taliban have told the musical institute's members to stay at home until further notice. Nearly two months later, they have not been given any further information. The escape from Kabul was just the first phase, Sarmast said, vowing to work until all 184 remaining faculty and students, past and present, were evacuated and "reunited with the rest of the school". During a visit by AFP to the college in Kabul last month, there was no sound of music. Instead, Taliban soldiers chatted and armed guards cradled Kalashnikovs in the courtyard, shaded by trees with swirling treble clefs spray-painted on to their trunks. —AFP

'The Rescue' unearths rare footage of Thai cave saga

After their Oscar-winning movie "Free Solo," about a daredevil rock climber, Elizabeth Chai Vasarhelyi and Jimmy Chin found an even more remarkable true story for their next film: the rescue of a boys' soccer team from a Thai cave in 2018. The husband-and-wife team had watched transfixed with the rest of the world as amateur divers, Navy SEALs and hundreds of volunteers pulled off a seemingly impossible rescue through miles of dark, perilous, flooded caves.

Once the 12 boys and their coach had been plucked miraculously from their subterranean prison, the documentary makers teamed with National Geographic to tell the inside story in "The Rescue," out in theaters October 8. "It moved us as humans, as Asian parents and as storytellers. I think that this really is one of the great stories of the last 10 years," Vasarhelyi told AFP.

The directors sifted through 87 hours of never-before-seen footage-obtained from the Thai Navy SEALs after two years' of negotiations during which military chiefs "said no in every possible form of 'no,'" Chin recalled. "For me it wasn't fair-if it existed the world needed to see it," said Vasarhelyi. The behind-the-scenes footage shows the euphoric moment two British divers returned to the cave's entrance with news they had located the children, and the precarious pulley con-



In this file photo taken on July 18, 2018, 12 boys and their football coach Ekkapol Chantawong (left), dramatically rescued from deep inside a Thai cave after being trapped for more than a fortnight, wave as they arrive for a press conference in Chiang Rai following their discharge from hospital.

traption used to transfer them on stretchers out of the final cavern.

But the film focuses mainly on the personalities and back stories of the rescue's unlikely heroes. The rag-tag group of middle-aged hobbyists' unique skillsets and homemade equipment enabled them to reach sections of the cave that military divers could not begin to fathom. "Here are these weekend warriors-one's a retired fireman, one's a meteorologist, an IT consultant, an electrician," said Vasarhelyi.

"They're kind of misfits, they feel awkward, they have found purpose in this very strange subculture of cave diving on the weekends, which has allowed them to become the best in the world." The divers not only appear in interviews, but re-enacted key moments of the rescue on camera for the movie. "This is the first film that we've made that we weren't present for the principal action," Vasarhelyi. "The only way to really understand the gravity of tying a kid's arms together behind their back and putting their head underwater is when you see it."

'Risk everything'

The interviews reveal hair-raising details about the rescue, for which the children were injected with a cocktail of drugs to sedate them. One diver bringing out a child became disoriented and ended up swimming backwards to the previous cave-following an electrical cable-after losing his dive rope.

Another accidentally stabbed himself with a ketamine syringe while underwater with a child who was recovering consciousness. Thankfully, it was empty at the time. For Vasarhelyi, one of the rescue's most compelling features was the personal risk shouldered by the amateur divers, who were warned by embassies they could land in Thai jail if any of the children died, and given extraction plans in case it failed.

"If you're the only person in the world who can save these kids, are you going to risk everything to try to do it? And can we be our best selves? And what is the consequence of that?" she said. "I think that even going to Thai prison would probably pale to what it would have been like to live with yourself, knowing that you participated in the death of 13 people," she added. "And I don't think we can really ever overstate-they really considered that saving one child would be a success."

Notably absent from the film is Elon Musk, who infamously traveled to Thailand with a prototype mini-submarine which was rejected as unusable by the divers-triggering a bizarre spat. "This is such a rich story, and that particular incident really had no impact on the rescue itself," said Vasarhelyi. "It felt like a diversion-it just took away from the principal action. So we thought as it wasn't a big deal to the rescue itself, it shouldn't be a big deal in our film." — AFP



Filmmakers Chai Vasarhelyi and Jimmy Chin pose during the press day for their new documentary "The Rescue" in Beverly Hills, California, on Sept 20, 2021. — AFP photos

Lifestyle | Features



Water vegetation is seen under the water in Everglades wetlands in Everglades National Park, Florida on Sept 30, 2021. — AFP photos



A bird perches on a tree in Everglades National Park.

Global warming kills 14% of world's corals in a decade

Dynamite fishing and pollution—but mostly global warming—wiped out 14 percent of the world's coral reefs from 2009 to 2018, leaving graveyards of bleached skeletons where vibrant ecosystems once thrived, according to the largest ever survey of coral health. Hardest hit were corals in South Asia and the Pacific, around the Arabian Peninsula, and off the coast of Australia, more than 300 scientists in the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network reported.

"Climate change is the biggest threat to the world's reefs," co-author Paul Hardisty, CEO of the Australian Institute of Marine Science, said in a statement. Oceans absorb more than 90 percent of the excess heat from greenhouse gas emissions, shielding land surfaces but generating huge, long-lasting marine heatwaves that are pushing many species of corals past their limits of tolerance. A single so-called bleaching event in 1998 caused by warming waters wiped out eight percent of all corals.

Coral reefs cover only a tiny fraction - 0.2 percent-of the ocean floor, but they are home to at least a quarter of all marine animals and plants. Besides anchoring marine ecosystems, they also provide protein, jobs and protection from storms and shoreline erosion for hundreds of millions of people worldwide. The value of goods and services from coral reefs is about \$2.7 trillion per year, including \$36 billion in tourism, the report said. Loss of coral from 2009 to 2018 varied by region, ranging from five percent in East Asia to 95 percent in the eastern tropical Pacific.

The 'Coral Triangle'

"Since 2009 we have lost more coral worldwide than all the living coral in Australia," noted UNEP executive director Inger Anderson. "We can reverse the losses, but we have to act now." The UN's climate science advisory panel, the IPCC, projects with "high confidence" that global warming of 1.5 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels will see 70 to 90 percent of all corals disappear. In a 2C world, less than one percent of global corals would survive. Earth's average surface temperature has already increased by 1.1C above that benchmark.

The report, titled "Status of Coral Reefs of the World: 2020", found reasons for cautious optimism. "Some reefs have shown a remarkable ability to bounce back, which offers some hope for the future recovery of degraded reefs," Hardisty said. East and Southeast Asia's "Coral Triangle"-which contains nearly 30 percent of the world's coral reefs-were hit less hard by warming waters over the last decade, and in some cases showed recovery. This resilience could be due to species unique to the region, potentially offering strategies for boosting coral growth elsewhere, the authors said.

Based on nearly two million data points from 12,000 sites spanning 73 countries and 40 years, the report is the sixth such global survey and the first since 2008. To measure change over time, the researchers contrasted areas covered by healthy live hard coral with areas taken over by algae, a sign of coral distress. The report was undertaken with support from UNEP and the International Coral Reef Initiative, a partnership of governments and research organizations focused on preserving corals reefs and related ecosystems. — AFP

CLIMATE CHANGE THREATENS EVERGLADES, FLORIDA'S GEM

Umberto Gimenez loves alligators. He gives them nicknames such as "Smile" and "Momma Gator" and laughs when he thinks of their antics. Gimenez, an airboat captain, has found his paradise in Florida's Everglades National Park, a natural gem in the southeastern US state at risk from climate change. "It's an amazing place and there's only one in the world," he says. The largest wetland in the United States is under threat, and has become a battleground for one of the most sweeping ecological conservation efforts on Earth.

Gimenez hopes the efforts will help preserve the park. But time is running short, and global warming is sabotaging a subtropical wilderness that is home to more than 2,000 species of animals and plants. The primary threat comes from the sea. The Everglades, like all of south Florida, is almost flat, which makes the ecosystem extremely vulnerable to rising sea levels, one of the biggest consequences of temperature increases.

The passage of salt water into the freshwater wetlands can have disastrous effects. The region stores and filters the water that nine million of Florida's population of nearly 21 million depends on. Once salt penetrates subterranean aquifers, they can be ruined. In addition, salt water risks destroying the habitat for much of the rare fauna and flora in the area. Intensifying droughts and reduced rainfall, other consequences of climate change, are also causes for concern.

"As a massive peatland that builds up organic soils over time, this ecosystem has sequestered huge amounts of carbon that are locked in the soils that contribute to the formation of habitats," explains Steve Davis, chief science officer at the Everglades Foundation, a non-governmental organization. A lack of fresh water not only ends carbon sequestration, it also causes the release into the air of what was stored in the soil. A double climate disaster.

Multi-billion-dollar project

Gimenez puts on sunglasses, ties a bandanna around his head, and jumps barefoot into his airboat along with Davis.

The boat starts up and speeds through a carpet of green with the water hidden below the vegetation. It feels like floating on grass. For thousands of years, water accumulated north of the Everglades in the rainy season, shaping the landscape by moving very slowly as it followed the slight slope of the terrain. In the last century, however, the natural flow was diverted to allow for urban and agricultural growth in south Florida.

In doing so, it altered the ecosystem of

and pumps. They also designed artificial marshes to filter the water and rid it of nutrients that damage the wetland. At the same time, sections of road that blocked water flow to the park were raised. "Everglades restoration is the model for other ecosystem restoration efforts whether it's wetlands like the Pantanal (in South America) or estuaries like the Chesapeake Bay," Davis says. "We have the same kind of issues here," he adds. "It's about ensuring the

been fully completed. The delays are mainly due to a lack of federal funding. According to the Everglades Foundation, between \$4 billion and \$5 billion have been spent so far on the restoration project, with Florida contributing 70 percent and Washington just 30 percent.

The urgency caused by climate change could, however, give a boost to the conservation plan. President Joe Biden included \$350 million for the Everglades in his fiscal 2022 budget,



An airboat is seen hovering over Everglades wetland.

the 1.5-million-acre (607,000-hectare) wetlands, weakening it in the face of climate change. In 2000, Congress approved a project, funded equally by Florida and the federal government, to protect the area, which was declared a biosphere reserve by UNESCO in 1976. Its initial cost was \$7.8 billion. The goal was "to store water, to clean it and to flow that water in the most natural way back to the national park," according to Davis.

To achieve this, scientists devised a complex system of canals, dikes, dams,

proper quantity of clean water moving through the ecosystem."

Delays

The effects of rehabilitation are already noticeable. Davis gets off the boat, dips his hands into the clear water and scoops up a dark glob from the bottom. It is periphyton, a mixture of algae, bacteria and microbes, the presence of which indicates healthy water quality. Despite making some progress, only one of the 68 major projects in the original 2000 plan has

\$100 million more than in 2021. In April, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis signed an agreement with the US Army Corps of Engineers for the construction of a reservoir west of Palm Beach which will cost \$3.4 billion. The size of the island of Manhattan, it "will store a lot of water that will go south, rehydrate these wetlands, recharge the aquifer and push back against sea level rise," Davis says. — AFP



An alligator basks on grass near a canal in Everglades National Park.



Tourist airboat captain Umberto Lazaro Gimenez walks in wetlands near an alligator.

Science seeks ancient plants to save foods

From a bowl of rice to a cup of coffee, experts say the foods we take for granted could become much scarcer unless we can make them resistant to climate change. For more than 10,000 years humans have been using selective breeding to adapt fruits and vegetables to specific growing conditions that today are changing at an alarming rate. And the same breeding that has made crops profitable has also made them vulnerable to rising temperatures, drought, heavy rains,

new blights or plagues of insects. "When you select 'for the best' traits (like higher yields), you lose certain types of genes," Benjamin Kilian, project lead for the Crop Wild Relatives Project at Crop Trust, told AFP. "We lost genetic diversity during domestication history... therefore the potential of the elite crops to further adapt to the future - to climate change and other challenges - is limited." The answer, scientists say, may be to reintroduce that genetic diversity by going back to domesticated crops' wild ancestors.

Disappearing farmlands

According to a study published in May, global warming risks shifting nearly a third of agricultural production outside its ideal climate for cultivation. The International Potato Center predicts a 32-percent drop in harvests of potatoes and sweet potatoes by 2060 due to climate change, while some estimates say coffee growers will

lose half of adapted lands before 2050.

Rice, the world's most important staple food crop, contributes massively to global warming by releasing methane as it is cultivated. It is also threatened by rising seas that could put too much salt into the water that floods rice paddies. Older forms of these crops might have had resistance to salt water or high temperatures coded into their genes - and to get them back, experts are looking for their ancestors in the wild.

"We're going to need to use as much biodiversity as we can... because it reduces risks, it provides options," says agriculture expert Marleni Ramirez of Biodiversity International. One potential resource is gene banks, like the Kew Millennium Seed Bank which has nearly 40,000 species of wild plants. "But not all wild relatives are in the gene banks," says Kilian. Instead, he says it's up to expert botanists to take undertake a time-con-

suming search throughout the wild, whose success can sometimes rely on luck.

Race against time

Between 2013 and 2018 the Global Crop Diversity Trust gathered more than 4,600 samples from 371 wild cousins of 28 priority crops including wheat, rice, sweet potatoes, bananas and apples. Botanist Aaron Davis works at the Kew Royal Botanic Gardens that partners with Crop Trust. With his colleagues, he discovered a wild species of coffee in Sierra Leone that is more resistant to climate change than the widely harvested arabica.

And he says they found it just in time. "If we had gone to Sierra Leone in 10 years, it would probably have been extinct," says Davis. "Of 124 coffee species, 60 percent are threatened with extinction, including the ones we might use for breeding new resilient coffees." In a survey of four Central American coun-

tries, one in four plants analyzed was threatened with extinction, including 70 wild species connected to major cultivated crops like corn and squash.

And the race isn't over once they've been harvested. Wild plants may not be adapted to large-scale agriculture and creating new varieties can take years or even decades - perhaps too long to provide an answer to an impending food crisis. Instead, experts say, we may have to find a way to live without certain staples. According to the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization, while the planet is home to some 50,000 edible plants, just three of them - rice, maize and wheat - provide 60 percent of the world's food energy intake. Their disappearance could leave billions wondering what to eat and millions of farmers looking for a new way to survive. — AFP

Sports

French goalie claims her place among men on the ice

Montpellier native hopes to help women's team reach Olympics

PARIS: Charlotte Cagigos is aiming high, hoping to help the French women's ice hockey team reach the Olympics. For now that means learning a new game as the only female goaltender training with a professional French squad.

Having laced up her first skates at the age of three, the native of sunny Mediterranean city Montpellier — not exactly an ice hockey bastion — knows full well what's riding on her efforts, months away from Beijing 2022. "It's good for girls to see that you need to fight hard, and that hockey isn't just a sport for boys," said Cagigos, a 21-year-old now playing for the Caen Drakkars in the city of Caen in Normandy, northern France.

As the staccato of blades echoes off the ice, she stands guard in front of her goal during practice, taking hits from teammates who initially held back on their shots. "At first when you see a woman in the goal you say, 'We won't strike so hard, we'll be careful,'" said her teammate Emmanuel Alvarez. "But it's exactly the opposite — we want to score and we hit the same as with any goalie."

Cagigos sought a club after graduating from high school, but few have women's teams, and those that do often fill them with players of varying skills. So the French ice hockey federation allows women under 18 to skate on men's teams. For female goalies, there's no age limit, since the post is considered less exposed to the contacts that can be brutal elsewhere on the ice. But Cagigos is one of just a handful who have played high-level hockey with men since the 1980s.

'Solid work ethic'

Cagigos joined the Drakkars at 17 and now trains with its semi-pro Division 1 squad, just below the Magnus champions league, though so far she hasn't yet made its game roster. For regular season matches, which began Saturday, she is still on the U20 junior side or a reserve in Division 3.

But since playing her first — friendly — pro game in January, Cagigos has captured national attention, and she has even been profiled by Canadian television. She's not yet fully a pro, getting

“ She brings competitive spirit, solid work ethic ”

paid bonuses only for matches played, but the club's sponsors help cover the cost of the thousands of euros' worth of gloves, pads and helmet.

Between practices, she is also now studying for a master's degree in education, aiming to become a teacher. "She brings a competitive spirit and a solid work ethic. And above all she fights hard every day in front of her cage," says Drakkar coach Luc Chauvel.



CAEN: French goaltender Charlotte Cagigos, 21-year-old, gets ready before participating on a rink in a training session in Caen, northwestern France, on September 28, 2021. — AFP

She fits in so well "there are times I forget there's a young lady with us," he adds — which also means he has to remember to plan on a separate locker room for Cagigos to suit up. "That's the only down-

side to playing with the boys: I miss the locker room camaraderie a little bit," she says. "It's a small inconvenience compared with everything that I'm now able to experience." — AFP

Chargers' Herbert throws three TDs to hand Raiders first loss

LOS ANGELES: Justin Herbert threw three touchdowns and running back Austin Ekeler rushed for 117 yards as the Los Angeles Chargers handed the Las Vegas Raiders their first loss of the NFL season with a 28-14 win on Monday.

Herbert set the NFL rookie record of 31 touchdown passes last season and he has now tossed seven in his last two games including the three over the Raiders in the battle of AFC West rivals who are showing signs of being serious playoff contenders.

Derek Carr, who came into the game as the league's leader in passing yards, threw two touchdowns for the Raiders, who dropped to 3-1 on the season, leaving the Arizona Cardinals as the only unbeaten team in the NFL.

Ekeler ran 11 yards for a touchdown in the fourth quarter and connected with Herbert on a 14-yard touchdown to give the Chargers a 21-0 lead with less than a minute to go in the first half. "We told everyone we got to believe in each other and we executed well and we played well," said Herbert. "We had a great plan all week."

The start of the game was delayed due to thunderstorms in the Los Angeles area. Even though they were playing at home at the new state-of-the-art SoFi Stadium, it must have felt like a road game for the Chargers as their fans were heavily outnumbered by Raider supporters. "It is just the way we want it," said Herbert, adding they fed off the energy of the crowd.

Herbert completed 25 of 38 passes for 222 yards and Ekeler had 145 scrimmage yards (117 rushing

Wallace only second black driver to win NASCAR Cup race

MIAMI: Bubba Wallace became only the second black driver to win a race in NASCAR's Cup series championship after speeding to victory in the rain-shortened YellaWood 500 at Talladega Superspeedway. Wallace, who last year led successful calls for displays of the Confederate flag to be barred at NASCAR events following the murder of George Floyd, led for five of the 117 laps in the race in Alabama.

When a second downpour forced a further suspension in racing, the race was stopped with 71 laps still to run, handing victory to Wallace and his 23XI Racing team, which is owned by NBA great Michael Jordan and Denny Hamlin.



INGLEWOOD: Running back Austin Ekeler #30 of the Los Angeles Chargers celebrates his touchdown against the Las Vegas Raiders during the fourth quarter at SoFi Stadium on Monday in Inglewood, California. — AFP

and 28 receiving) as the Chargers used an explosive first half to gain the upper hand early. Quarterback Carr connected on 21 of 34 passes for 196 yards but had an interception in the loss. Hunter Renfrow and Darren Waller caught touchdown passes for the Raiders, who were held scoreless in three of the four quarters.

"Your feelings are going to get hurt in this league sometimes and certainly ours are hurting

right now," said Raiders coach Jon Gruden. "They converted on critical plays and on fourth downs. They went all out tonight and they are going to go places this year. They are a force to be dealt with."

Monday's outcome resulted in a three-way tie for first place in the AFC West between the Chargers, Raiders, and Denver Broncos, who are all 3-1. The 2019 Super Bowl winning Kansas City Chiefs are at 2-2. — AFP

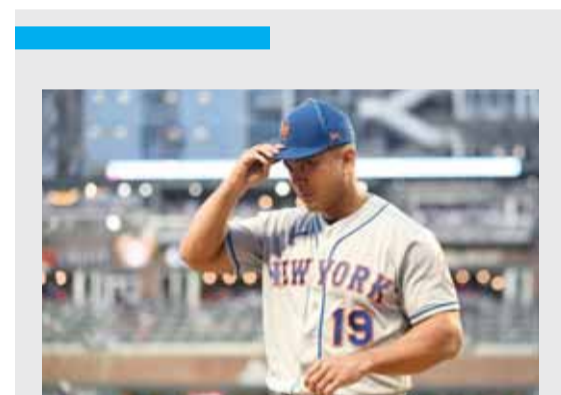
Wallace is the first Black driver to win in NASCAR's Cup series since Hall of Famer Wendell Scott sped to victory in a race in Jacksonville, Florida on December 1, 1963. The 27-year-old Wallace joined 23XI last year after leaving Richard Petty Motorsports.

Wallace regularly spoke out against racism following George Floyd's killing in Minneapolis, and in June last year called on NASCAR chiefs to ban the Confederate flag from racetracks used on the circuit. The flag has long been a staple at NASCAR tracks in the sport's southern US heartlands, but it remains a symbol of slavery and racism for many. NASCAR later banned displays of the flag at its races.

Wallace was involved in controversy in June last year after his team reported that a noose had been found hanging in the team garage at Talladega Superspeedway. A subsequent investigation by the FBI determined Wallace had not been the victim of a hate crime and that the noose was a pull-down rope on a garage door that had been there since 2019. — AFP



TALLADEGA: Bubba Wallace, driver of the #23 McDonald's Toyota, celebrates in the Ruoff Mortgage victory lane after winning the rain-shortened NASCAR Cup Series YellaWood 500 at Talladega Superspeedway on Monday in Talladega, Alabama. — AFP



ATLANTA: Luis Rojas #19 of the New York Mets prior to the game against the Atlanta Braves at Truist Park on Friday in Atlanta, Georgia. — AFP

Rojas out as Mets manager after playoff bid falls short

NEW YORK: The New York Mets ended Luis Rojas's reign as manager on Monday after the team's latest bid to return to the playoffs ended in disappointment. A statement from the Mets said the team had declined the option to retain Rojas for the 2022 season.

The team said the fate of remaining coaching staff would be decided in the "next several days". The statement said Rojas had been offered the chance to remain with the organization in a "yet to be determined capacity".

"The entire Mets organization is grateful for the dedication and devotion that Luis has exhibited over the last two seasons as manager," Mets president Sandy Alderson said. "He has shown a great commitment to the Mets over many years in multiple capacities. These decisions are never easy, but we feel a change is needed at this time."

The decision comes after the Mets finished third in the National League East with a record of 77-85. The team led the division in early August but imploded during a 6-18 run that effectively scuppered their bid to reach the playoffs.

"We live in a results-oriented business, and I am deeply disappointed for our staff and fans that we didn't reach our goals this season," Rojas said in a statement. The Mets have not reached the postseason since advancing to the wild card game in 2016, where they were beaten by the San Francisco Giants. — AFP

KSF honors Olympic shooters

By Abdellatif Sharara

KUWAIT: Under the patronage and presence of Honorary President of Asian Shooting Confederation (ASC) and Kuwait Shooting Federation (KSF) Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, Kuwait Shooting Federation held an honoring ceremony for shooters who participated in the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, during which shooter Abdullah Al-Rashidi added a new achievement for Kuwait shooting by winning the skeet bronze medal.

Sheikh Salman said the achievements made in Tokyo gives shooters the night to be honored after raising Kuwait's flag high at such a major event, especially during the pandemic it came with the presence of Coronavirus, yet Kuwait shooters were up to the responsibility they had on their shoulders.

Sheikh Salman thanked the political leadership as well as Information Minister and State Minister for Youth Affairs Abdelrahman Al-Mutairi, Director General of Public Authority for Sport Humoud Fulaiteh and other officials for their support. He also thanked the President of Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federation Duaij Al-Otaibi as well as the technical and administrative departments for their efforts that resulted in many achievements regionally and internationally, in addition to the Olympics.

Meanwhile, Al-Otaibi thanked the political leadership and PAS for their continued support, which reflected positively on all achievements and ensured the success of the entire organization. Otaibi appreciated the initiative of Sheikh Salman, who took the sport of shooting from a hobby to competing with well-established organizations around the world and bagging achievements at all levels.

He said Sheikh Salman resigned from his post at KSF in 2013 after becoming a minister, but remained close to shooting and supported the sport. Otaibi said the ambition for achievements will continue, adding that shooters who participated at the Tokyo Olympics succeeded in their mission and had very high scores. The results proved they are among the elite, despite the difficulties that preceded preparations for the event and the death



KUWAIT: Participants pose for a group photo during a ceremony organized by Kuwait Shooting Federation to honor shooters who took part in the Tokyo 2020 Olympics.

of the team coaches Peter Malik and Daniel Sioni. Otaibi concluded that Kuwaiti shooting is able to face chal-

lenges, and Kuwait shooters will be able to make more achievements, most importantly at the 2024 Paris Olympics.

Sports

Ferguson says Man United must pick 'best players' after Ronaldo benched

Ronaldo scored five times in first six games back with United

LONDON: Alex Ferguson has added to the growing pressure on Ole Gunnar Solskjaer by criticizing the Manchester United manager's decision to use Cristiano Ronaldo as a substitute against Everton. Solskjaer surprisingly left Ronaldo on the bench for the first 57 minutes of Saturday's damaging 1-1 draw at Old Trafford. United were leading 1-0 when the Portugal star was introduced, but Andros Townsend equalized to leave Solskjaer's misfiring team with only one win in their past four games in all competitions.

Ronaldo has been in fine form since rejoining United, scoring five times in his first six games, including the late winner against Villarreal three days before the Everton match. The 36-year-old looked frustrated, muttering to himself and shaking his head when he walked off the pitch at full-time on Saturday. Solskjaer was already under fire after United's recent struggles left them two points behind Premier League leaders Chelsea. Now his old boss Ferguson has inadvertently increased the scrutiny on the Norwegian.

In a conversation with former UFC champion Khabib Nurmagomedov in the directors' lounge at

Old Trafford, United legend Ferguson was filmed saying "you should always start with your best players". In the video, posted on Nurmagomedov's Instagram account on Sunday, Ferguson suggested Everton got a boost "when they saw Ronaldo wasn't playing".

Ferguson played a key role in Ronaldo's blockbuster return to United in August, making a phone call to his former player to convince him to snub an offer from Manchester City in favor of an emotional move to Old Trafford. The Ronaldo deal, combined with the high-profile signings of England forward Jadon Sancho and France defender Raphael Varane, have raised expectations of a United title challenge this term.

Speaking after the Everton game, Solskjaer defended his decision to rest Ronaldo. "Me and him, we understand more than the experts," he said. "It's about picking the right moments to play him, to not play him. He's not a young puppy anymore but he's as professional as ever and ready to come on and he came on with energy and attitude." Solskjaer, who played under Ferguson from 1996 to 2007, is still waiting to win his



MANCHESTER: Manchester United's manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer (top left) speaks to substitute striker Cristiano Ronaldo during their team's English Premier League football match against Everton at Old Trafford in Manchester, northwest England, on Saturday. —AFP

first trophy since taking over in December 2018. United finished second in the Premier League last season and lost the Europa League final against

Villarreal on penalties. They last won the Premier League in Ferguson's final season in charge in 2013 and have not won any silverware since 2017. —AFP



United two points behind leaders Chelsea

Ranieri takes ride on Watford's managerial carousel

LONDON: Claudio Ranieri is taking his turn on the Watford managerial carousel as the popular Italian embarks on a fourth spell in the Premier League. The former Chelsea and Leicester boss was hired by Watford on Monday following the sacking of Xisco Munoz.

If leading 5,000-1 outsiders Leicester to their astonishing Premier League title triumph in 2016 is unquestionably Ranieri's greatest feat, then surviving more than a season in the Vicarage Road hot-seat might come a close second.

The 69-year-old is Watford's 13th permanent manager during the reign of the Pozzo family, who took control in 2012. Munoz led Watford to promotion from the Championship last season and the Hornets were outside the relegation zone when he was ruthlessly axed on Sunday after just 10 months in charge.

The club, in 15th spot in the Premier League, cited the "negative trend" of performances this season, with Saturday's 1-0 defeat at Leeds leaving Watford without a win in their past three games in all competitions. Even if Ranieri can keep Watford in the English top-flight this term, it is impossible to know whether that would be enough to satisfy the capricious Pozzos.

Ranieri will at least be fortified by decades of experience and an innate ability to win over players and employers with his disarmingly eccentric personality. The new job is the 22nd appointment of an itinerant managerial career that started with Italian amateur side Vigor Lamezia in 1986.

Ranieri's wanderlust has taken him on a 35-year rollercoaster ride, featuring stops at some of Europe's grande dames in Chelsea, Juventus, Inter Milan and Atletico Madrid. He hoisted the Coppa Italia with Fiorentina and the Copa del Rey and the UEFA Super Cup at Valencia.

In four years at Chelsea, he earned the nickname of "Tinkerer" for a compulsive desire to reshuffle his starting line-up each week. At that time, foreign managers were still a relative novelty in England and Ranieri had to work hard to win over a skepti-

cal squad. By the time he left in 2004, he had established Chelsea in the Champions League, setting the stage for the success of the Roman Abramovich era.

Charm offensive

But it was 11 years before Ranieri returned to the Premier League and by then his appeal had worn off in some quarters. Being sacked by Greece after losing to the Faroe Islands was seen as conclusive proof that the Italian was past it.

Former England star Gary Lineker, a noted Leicester fan, greeted news of the Italian's 2015 appointment with a scathing tweet that read "Claudio Ranieri? Really?" But he immediately went on a charm offensive, rewarding his players with pizza and champagne after victories and entertaining the media with his whimsical press conferences.

Revealing that he used an "imaginary bell" in training to keep his players focused, Ranieri's "dilly dilly, dilly dong" description became the quirky catchphrase that defined Leicester's incredible title success. The brilliance of N'Golo Kante and Jamie Vardy also had plenty to do with Leicester's glory, but Ranieri was the architect of the transformation for a team that barely avoided relegation before he arrived.

Voted manager of the year by both the Premier League and the League Managers Association, Ranieri was also named a Grand Officer of the Order of Merit in Italy. But he had little time to bask in the acclaim as his fairytale turned sour.

Leicester struggled to adapt to their status as champions and by the time Ranieri was sacked the following February with talk of a player revolt, the Foxes were languishing just above the relegation zone.

Ranieri has never scaled the heights again, with his most recent spell in the Premier League perhaps serving as an indication of the issues he will face at Watford. Charged with keeping lowly Fulham in the top tier in the 2018/19 season, Ranieri won just three of his 17 matches and was dismissed before the west Londoners were eventually relegated.

Ranieri left Sampdoria at the end of last season and has been out of work since. But at an age when many of his contemporaries have eased into retirement, he could not resist one more shot at defying the odds with Watford. —AFP

Italy, Spain open Nations League Final Four

MILAN: Italy and Spain will again face off in a semi-final tonight when they take to the field at the San Siro for the Nations League Final Four opener, a replay of their epic Euro 2020 semi-final. Spain finished on the losing side back in July's European Championship semi-final as the Azzurri prevailed on penalties and went on to win the tournament, beginning an unforgettable summer of sport for Italy.

Roberto Mancini's Italy are on a world-record run of 37 matches without defeat and have a squad predictably stuffed full of players who took part in their run to glory in the Euro final over England at Wembley.

"We'll be facing a great Italy team: They deservedly beat England in the final of the Euro and they've kept their long unbeaten run going," said Spain coach Luis Enrique after announcing his squad on Thursday. "But like our psychologist says, defeat comes to every team. And that means that they're closer to losing, that time is getting nearer."

Mancini admitted that "Spain were the team we struggled against most during Euro 2020". "They are a good team with good players. It will be a good match," he told uefa.com. The only different face from the Euro crowd was supposed to be in-form Roma midfielder Lorenzo Pellegrini, who on Sunday scored his sixth goal of the season in all competitions.

However injuries in the run-up to and during the weekend's Serie A fixtures mean Juventus striker Moise Kean, AC Milan defender Davide Calabria and Inter Milan youngster Federico Dimarco have all been drafted in at the last minute.

The trio have respectively come on board in place of Italy's usual starting center-for-

ward Ciro Immobile and Atalanta's Rafael Tolo and Matteo Pessina. For Dimarco it's a first ever call up and comes from the man who in 2014 gave the 23-year-old his debut at Inter Milan, where he has impressed so far this season.

Similar philosophies

The match will also see the return of Gianluigi Donnarumma to the San Siro after leaving AC Milan on a free transfer to go to Paris Saint-Germain this summer. Asked whether he might be harangued by Milan fans following a move which left a bad taste in the mouth of supporters, Donnarumma said: "It would be sad if that happened. 'I always gave everything for Milan and I hope the subject can be put to one side,'" he added.

Luis Enrique has too had injury problems with club matches coming thick and fast between last month's international break and the Final Four. Teenage sensation Pedri will not take part after getting injured for the second time in less than a month, missing out on similarly young squad to the one which surpassed expectations at the Euro.

Pedri was one of the best performers of the tournament and gave a celebrated Italy midfield of Jorginho, Marco Verratti and Nicolo Barella a tough time for much of their thrilling semi-final. Tottenham's Bryan Gil has also been brought in after Marcos Llorente picked up a thigh injury during Atletico Madrid's 2-0 win over Barca at the weekend, while the Catalan giants' 17-year-old midfielder Gavi has been picked despite only having four la Liga appearances to his name.

Former Barca coach Luis Enrique was lauded by the Italians after he heaped praise on them despite what must have been a painful defeat at Wembley, and he continued his charm offensive ahead of what promises to be a worthy opener to the Final Four. "We could have beaten them but we didn't manage to do it, we're two teams with a similar philosophy and we hope to take part in another exciting match," he said. —AFP

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Sabah Hospital	24812000	Kaifan	24849807
Amiri Hospital	22450005	Shamiya	24848913
Maternity Hospital	24843100	Shuwaikh	24814507
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700	Abdullah Salem	22549134
Chest Hospital	24849400	Nuzha	22526804
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010	Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Adan Hospital	23940620	Qadsiya	22515088
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300		Dasmah
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000		22532265
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9		Bneid Al-Gar
			22531908
			Shaab
			22518752
			Qibla
			22459381
			Ayoun Al-Qibla
			22451082
			Mirqab
			22456536
			Sharq
			22465401
			Salmiya
			25746401

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075

Kuwait Times
Established 1961

Now you can browse
www.kuwaittimes.net
e-mail: info@kuwaittimes.net

For labor-related inquiries and complaints:
Call MSALHOTLINE 128

Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is
1889988

112

CHANGE OF NAME

I, **Jose Mathew** holder of Indian Passport No. U0196249 having permanent address VIII-79, Vattoly (H), Near East Church, Angamaly, Ernakulam, Kerala - 683572. Residing in Kuwait at present Mangaf, Block-4, Street 23, Bldg-123 Kuwait, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as under: Given name - Jose Mathew and Surname - Jovi. (C 0958)

I, **FARUK SULAIMAN** Sulaiman DOB: 01.06.1980 residing at 161A 1102, Pallivasal Street 1 Kalamarudur, Villupuram, Tamilnadu - 606102, declare that I have changed my name and hereafter I shall be known and called as **MUBARAK SULAINAN** only. (C 0957) 5-10-2021

I, **Kasturi Myneeswaara**, Indian Passport No. K46526841 have decided to change the name as **KASTURI MUNISWARA**.

I, **DAVID KINGSTON BRITTO HAGGAI**, Indian Passport No. T5328063 have changed name to **KINGSTON BRITTO HAGGAI**. (C 0956)

In-form Salah adjusts sights to World Cup as Egypt aim for top



LIVERPOOL: Liverpool's Egyptian midfielder Mohamed Salah (center) warms up with teammates before their English Premier League football match against Manchester City at Anfield in Liverpool, northwest England, on Sunday. — AFP

JOHANNESBURG: Mohamed Salah, fresh from scoring a brilliant goal for Liverpool against Manchester City, switches his attention to 2022 World Cup qualifying this week as Egypt hope to get their campaign back on track. The record seven-time African champions face surprise Group F leaders Libya at home and away and need at least four points to take over first place ahead of the final two rounds during November.

Only the 10 group winners advance to the final qualifying round and Egypt and fellow first seeds Cameroon, Ghana, Morocco and the Democratic Republic of Congo have catching-up to do. AFP Sport looks at the situation in each group with 41 matchday two, three and four qualifiers scheduled for next week.

Group A

Riyad Mahrez-captained reigning African champions Algeria have an impressive home record against Niger in World Cup qualifying, scoring 10 unanswered goals in two matches. Another convincing home win is on the cards for a team boasting an African record 29-match unbeaten run, but second-place Burkina Faso are likely to remain level on points with Algeria by defeating Djibouti.

Group B

Table-toppers Tunisia have won all four previous World Cup qualifiers against Mauritania and there is nothing to suggest they will not extend that perfect record in Rades. A Tunisian side captained by Saint-

Etienne's Wahbi Khazri and coached by Mondher Kebaier enter the match boosted by two impressive victories while the Mauritians have disappointed when losing twice.

Group C

It is difficult to imagine any result in Lagos other than a comfortable victory for leaders Nigeria over the Central African Republic, who will lack unavailable Atletico Madrid midfielder Godfrey Kondogbia. After a routine home win over Liberia last month, a severely weakened Super Eagles side triumphed away to Cape Verde and they will be back to near full strength for the visit of the Wild Beasts.

Group D

Considered the toughest section to win as rivals Cameroon and the Ivory Coast have qualified for the World Cup 10 times between them. The Ivorians hold a one-point lead thanks to a 2-1 home win over the Cameroonians, but the poor state of the pitch at the recently opened national stadium in Abidjan means they must host Malawi in Benin.

Group E

Mali have made a good start in the only section that does not contain a previous World Cup qualifier, build-

ing a two-point advantage over Kenya and Uganda with Rwanda last. A Malian squad including Southampton midfielder Moussa Djenepo are handicapped by having to play home matches in Morocco due to the poor state of their stadiums, but they are favored to beat Kenya.

Group F

Libya stole a march on Egypt by snatching a late home victory over Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang's Gabon and then winning in Angola. After shading Angola, Egypt were lucky to hold Gabon and the draw cost coach Hossam el Badry his job with former Real Madrid manager and Manchester United assistant manager Carlos Queiroz taking over.

Group G

Pacesetters South Africa face bogey team Ethiopia, who took four points off them in 2014 qualifiers, leading to Bafana Bafana (The Boys) coaches Pitso Mosimane and Gordon Igesund being sacked. Ghana and Zimbabwe will have new coaches for back-to-back meetings with Serb Milovan Rajevac replacing Charles Akonnor at the Black Stars and

Norman Mapeza succeeding Croat Zdravko Logarusic at the Warriors.

Group H

Sadio Mane's Senegal could seal first place with two victories over closest challengers Namibia, another country affected by stadium standards and forced to host matches in neighboring South Africa. The biggest threat to the Senegalese will probably come from Peter Shalulile, a consistent scorer for Mamelodi Sundowns, the dominant club in South Africa.

Group I

Morocco, whose first choice line-up includes star Sevilla forward Youssef en-Nesyri, will play 'away' matches against Guinea-Bissau and Guinea at home, giving them a huge advantage. Leaders Guinea-Bissau do not have an international-standard stadium while FIFA currently considers Guinea an unsafe destination after a coup forced Morocco to flee Conakry last month.

Group J

Tanzania were seeded fourth, but lead Benin on goals scored with section favorites DR Congo third and without a win despite two goals from recalled 35-year-old Dieumerci Mbokani. The top two meet in Dar es Salaam and Cotonou and former Aston Villa forward Mbwana Samatta captains a Tanzanian team coached by Dane Kim Poulsen. — AFP



Egypt plays Libya home and away

Union deplores 'lack of vision' with biennial World Cup

PARIS: The world footballers' union FIFPro attacked the "lack of holistic vision" of the game's institutions, including FIFA's proposal for a biennial World Cup, with its general secretary, saying the debates were prompted by "commercial interests". Speaking by videoconference on the sidelines of the presentation yesterday of a report on the playing demands of professional players, Jonas Baer-Hoffmann called for a "reasonable and effective reform" to lighten the burden on footballers and reduce the chance of injury.

"There is an absolute lack of holistic vision and leadership from most of the institutions," he said about FIFA's proposal for a biennial World Cup. "It is very much a transactional affair in which proposals, whether good, bad or ugly for football have very little basis for a conversation or consultation, because everything is aligned to the commercial interests of different competitions. That really undermines our chance to have a reasonable and effective reform. We would really like to try to differentiate between conversations about the calendar and that about competitions. These are two very separate conversations."

The debate around the international calendar and a World Cup every two years has been revived in recent weeks by ex-Arsenal coach Arsene Wenger, FIFA's head of global development. Wenger says the idea would be to have a final phase every summer from 2025-2026, alternating World Cups and continental tournaments like the European Championships and

Copa America. Qualifying matches would be grouped together in October, or in October and March.

He refutes the argument that the players would face increased strain, arguing that they would have to make fewer long journeys and would have a minimum of 25 days rest after playing in summer tournaments for their countries. A full report is due to be released by FIFA in November, ahead of a "global summit" by the end of the year. The idea has already led to widespread criticism from managers, while UEFA has been scathing in its response but FIFPro struck a more pragmatic approach.

"Condensing windows is an interesting one," said Jonas Baer-Hoffmann. "We had a first meeting with FIFA about this about a week ago. There is a lot in this whole proposal we still need to look at and analyze. Reducing windows would be a positive as it would reduce travel. FIFA are also suggesting going from 10 games we have in the current window down to seven. I see upsides for coaches who would have more time to work with players, so there is merit."

He warned, however, that the biennial competition could just make the rich football nations richer at the expense of developing countries. "The entire potential thought process for innovation is being put into the peak of the pyramid," he said. "The notion seems to be: 'let's generate as much money there as possible and then there might be some trickle-down to help the pyramid out'. I don't think that's working particularly well." — AFP

eFootball fiasco symptom of growing rush to bring out games

TOKYO: The scathing reviews of the "grotesque" eFootball 2022 and its "horrible" graphics are a potent illustration of the risks posed by increasing pressure to rush video games to market, experts say. The latest edition of the game previously known as Pro Evolution Soccer was meant to offer something to compete with undisputed football game champion FIFA, with maker Konami opting for a free-to-play model to attract fans.

But the release was almost universally panned, with just a 10 percent positive rating on game platform Steam days after its release. With players crying foul, Japanese gaming giant Konami last week apologized and promised to take the criticism into account as it updated eFootball.

It was all too reminiscent of the outcry that followed the disastrous launch of Cyberpunk 2077, which was riddled with bugs and was withdrawn from Sony's PlayStation store just a week after its release. "This kind of thing is becoming more prevalent, sadly," said Mia Consalvo, Canada research chair in games studies at Concordia University.

Part of the issue is simply the increasing sophistication of video games, "leading to many more chances for bugs to emerge", she told AFP. "Some can be really difficult to fix, while others may not appear unless certain conditions are met and possibly were missed in official game testing."

Developers and publishers face increasing financial pressure to get games out "so they can start generating revenue, particularly if they have already been in development for several years", Consalvo said. That pressure may have been especially acute for a free title such as eFootball, which relies on in-game purchases including upgraded strips for revenue.

Nintendo's Shigeru Miyamoto is said to have declared that "a delayed game is eventually good, but a rushed game

is forever bad", but experts say that maxim may no longer hold. "Since the appearance of hard drives on consoles, it's become possible to 'repair a game'. You can do patches, you can make important changes," said Daniel Andreyev, an author and journalist specializing in video games.

'You can only launch once'

That has created an environment where developers and publishers know they can go back in and fix problems after release — a risky gamble. "Sometimes, they cut corners to finish on time and hope nobody will notice the flaws, but occasionally, they miss badly," said Michael Pachter, an analyst at Wedbush. "It's likely that all games are rushed out, but only a handful are flawed enough to trigger controversy."

That's what has happened with eFootball and Cyberpunk 2077, said Serkan Toto, an analyst at Kantan Games in Tokyo. "These games were brought to market broken beyond repair, with management totally ignoring the production side, which of course always knows if their titles are not ready for release yet," he told AFP.

Putting out a buggy game is a risky move, particularly at a time when fans have more avenues than ever to vent their discontent. "You can only launch every game once, and you need to nail that," added Toto. "If not, everything after that is pure damage control, which costs nerves, money and resources." And while pre-orders aren't affected by post-release griping, there can be a reputational effect that impacts future business, Consalvo said. That's what happened with WWE 2K20, which was released in 2019 and is among the 100 worst-rated games on Steam, with eFootball currently at the bottom. The reception was so bad that the game's publisher decided not to bring out another version the following year.

But a buggy launch is not always a death knell for a game. Cyberpunk 2077 returned to the PlayStation store six months after its debut and now has mostly positive reviews on Steam. And survival and space exploration game No Man's Sky, which was missing promised features such as multi-player mode at its launch, has gone on to surpass initial expectations with a significant community of players and mostly positive reviews. — AFP