



3 Kuwait reiterates rejection of all forms of terrorism, extremism



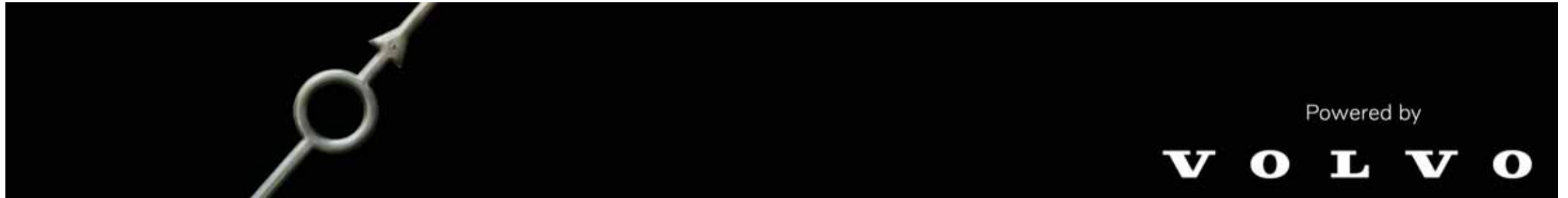
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COVID causes steep rise in depression, anxiety

Kuwait introduces mental health services • Booster shot registration opens



KUWAIT: The health ministry's website opened registrations to receive the COVID-19 vaccine booster shot yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

KUWAIT/PARIS: A major study showed yesterday that cases of depression and anxiety surged by more than a quarter globally during the first year of the pandemic, especially among women and young adults. In the first worldwide estimate of the mental health impact of COVID-19, researchers estimated that 2020 saw an additional 52 million people suffer from major depressive disorder, and an additional 76 million cases of anxiety. These represent a 28- and 26-percent increase in the two disorders respectively, according to the study, published in The Lancet medical journal.

Meanwhile, Kuwait has introduced new mental health services to address complications caused by the coronavirus pandemic in the past 18 months. As life is returning to normal gradually with COVID-19 vaccination rates averaging over 70 percent, Kuwait Center for Mental Health (KCMH) has succeeded in promoting the

importance of mental health to the public. "The coronavirus pandemic forced countries around the world to close their borders and impose strict entry restrictions and quarantine. They restricted large gatherings in order to contain the spread of the virus, which largely affected some segments of the population, especially those suffering from mental health issues," Director of KCMH Dr Khulood Al-Ali said.

Amidst the devastating impact of COVID-19 on mental health, Dr Al-Ali told KUNA, World Mental Health Day, which is marked today, was an opportunity to raise awareness about mental health issues. COVID-19 affects the society in general, she added, and this could cause growing anxiety. She said mental health cases could rise to 50 percent following coronavirus infections.

Dr Al-Ali said the ministry of health formed a team to provide therapy for healthcare workers and people infected

with the virus. The ministry also provided video messages to help people overcome the pandemic and think positively. There was also a support team to help people who were in quarantine or locked up during the lockdown periods, she said.

Dr Al-Ali said World Mental Health Day aims at raising awareness about the importance of having good mental health in order to address stress, depression, excessive anxiety and feeling of guilt. She said there are organizations that help in raising awareness about mental health and improving the way society looks at mental health patients.

Dr Ammar Al-Sayegh, head of the mental health department at KCMH, said the center was reaching out to the public in order to raise mental health awareness. Speaking to KUNA, Dr Al-Sayegh said COVID-19 has been impacting living and mental conditions of people around the

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News in brief

UK, GCC negotiate trade deal

MANAMA: The United Kingdom and the six Gulf Cooperation Council states have begun preliminary talks on a free trade agreement, Bahrain said, as London seeks to bolster its trade position post-Brexit. "It brings me great joy and pleasure to officially announce the official launch of FTA negotiations between GCC countries and UK today," Zayed bin Rashid Al-Zayani, Bahrain's minister of industry, commerce and tourism, said late Friday. — AFP

10 hurt in attack on Saudi airport

RIYADH: Ten people were wounded in a drone attack on a civilian airport in the Saudi city of Jeddah that was blamed on Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels, official media said yesterday. The Saudi-led coalition fighting alongside the Yemeni government said travelers and airport employees were among those injured in Friday's attack, updating an earlier toll of five. SPA said the attack caused "minor material damage and some broken glass fronts" at King Abdullah Airport in Jazan. — AFP

Facebook 'censors' Palestinians

JERUSALEM: Facebook and its Instagram platform have wrongfully removed and suppressed content by Palestinians, including about abuses during Zionist-Palestinian violence this year, Human Rights Watch said on Friday. The US-based watchdog cited three examples in which Instagram removed posts for containing "hate speech or symbols", yet the posts were later reinstated after complaints. In addition, digital rights monitors reported hundreds of deleted posts, suspended accounts and other restrictions. — AFP

Wanted Lebanese hijacker dies

BEIRUT: A Lebanese man who is wanted by the FBI for his involvement in a 1985 plane hijacking died of cancer on Friday. Ali Atwi was among three Lebanese on a list of people sought by the FBI in connection with the June 14, 1985 hijacking to Beirut of TWA flight 847, during which US Navy diver Robert Stethem was tortured and murdered. Atwi was a member of the powerful Lebanese Shiite group Hezbollah. — AFP

Theft of catalytic converters on the rise in Kuwait

By Nawara Fattahova

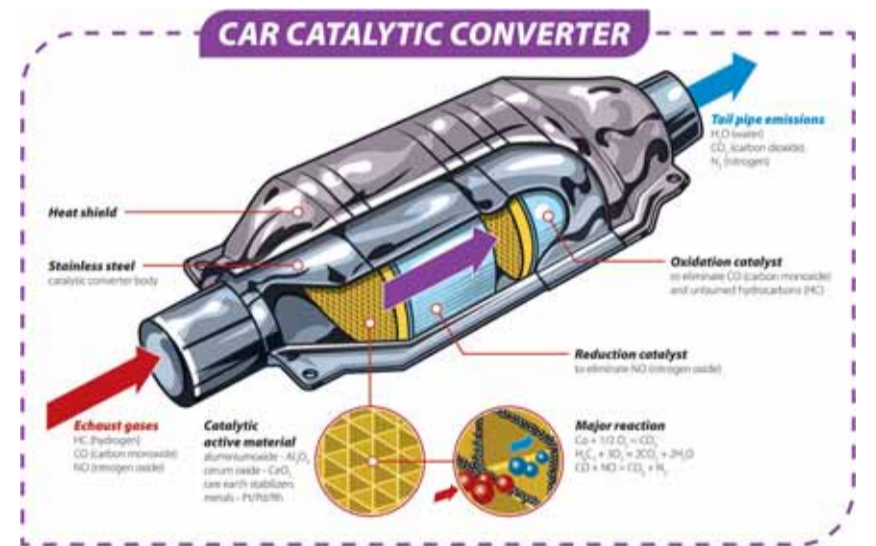
KUWAIT: There has been a rise in the theft of vehicle catalytic converters recently, allegedly by workers at some auto repair shops as well as from parked cars. The catalytic converter is an important part that controls emissions produced from the vehicle to protect the environment and curb pollution. The part is expensive, ranging from KD 250 for a Mitsubishi Pajero up to KD 490 for the Nissan Z and even higher for more expensive vehicles.

One of the main reasons catalytic converters are stolen is because they contain expensive metals like platinum, palladium and rhodium. They are also sold to used spare part dealers in the

scrap area or to garages. A catalytic converter is an exhaust emission control device that converts toxic gases and pollutants in exhaust gas from an internal combustion engine into less-toxic pollutants by catalyzing a redox reaction.

In February this year, the Environment Public Authority signed a memorandum with interior ministry that added a new condition to the technical inspection of vehicles - that car emissions should conform with special standards should renewing car licenses. But according to a car inspection center, this law has not yet come into force.

A mechanic in Shuwaikh said police have conducted several raids at garages in Shuwaikh industrial Area and confiscated catalytic converters found at these



garages. "The police warned garage workers that it's not allowed to remove this part from the vehicles. I guess this came after customers complained catalytic converters were stolen from their vehi-

cles, especially after it was announced that emissions tests will be done during the technical checking, for which this part is essential," he told Kuwait Times.

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Total blackout in Lebanon as fuel runs out

BEIRUT: Lebanon was plunged into a total blackout yesterday after two main power stations went offline because they ran out of fuel, the state electricity corporation said. The Mediterranean country is battling one of the planet's worst economic crises since the 1850s, and has in recent months struggled to import enough fuel oil for its power plants.

First president of Iran Banisadr dies in exile

PARIS: Iran's first president after the 1979 Islamic revolution, Abolhassan Banisadr, died in a Paris hospital yesterday aged 88, after decades of exile in France following his dismissal by parliament. "After a long illness, Abolhassan Banisadr died on Saturday at the (Pitie-)Salpetriere hospital" in southeast Paris, official IRNA news agency

said, citing a source close to the former president. His family in France confirmed his death. "We would like to inform the honorable people of Iran and all the activists of independence and freedom that... Abolhassan Banisadr has passed away... after a long struggle with illness," they said in a statement. The family statement hailed Banisadr as someone who "defended freedoms".

But he was slammed by Iran's judiciary. "All these years, under the shadow of French and Western intelligence, he did not miss a beat to defame the people and the system of the Islamic republic," said a statement published on its Mizan Online website.

State electricity in most places is barely available for an hour a day amid rolling power cuts, while the fuel needed to power private backup generators is also in short supply. "After the Deir Ammar power station was forced to stop producing power yesterday morning (Friday) due its gasoil reserves running out, the Zahran plant also stopped this afternoon for the same reason," Electricite du Liban said in a statement.

This led to the network's "complete collapse without any possibility of restoring it for the time being", it said. It was the second such complete outage reported by EDL since the start of the month, after a similar incident last Saturday. A source at the energy ministry told AFP that all was being done "to find a way out of the problem and ensure fuel".

EDL said that a fuel oil shipment was expected to arrive yesterday evening, and was expected to unload at the beginning of next week. Restoring electricity is one of the many tough tasks facing Lebanon's new government, formed last month after 13 months of political wrangling.

Several measures have been launched in a desperate bid to keep the lights on. Lebanon has reached an agreement towards bringing Jordanian electricity and Egyptian gas into the country via war-torn Syria, while Shiite movement Hezbollah has separately started hydrocarbon deliveries from Iran. The state is also bringing in some oil fuel for power stations in exchange for medical services under a swap deal with Iraq. — AFP



AUVERS-SUR-OISE, France: This file photo taken on Aug 19, 1981 shows former president of Iran Abolhassan Banisadr. — AFP (See Page 7)

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Local

Two drown, one goes missing while swimming off Messila beach: Interior

Seven workers rescued from fire at Safat Square



KUWAIT: A Kuwait Fire Force boat participates in a search operation for a person who went missing while swimming off the Messila beach. — Kuwait Fire Force photos



Firemen carry a person rescued off the Messila beach.

KUWAIT: Two persons died after being retrieved from the sea off Al-Bedaa shores near the Messila coast, the Ministry of Interior announced on Friday. The two victims were among nine residents who were rescued but they were in critical condition, it said, adding that a 10th person was still missing. The operations room of the coast guard received a notification that 10 people faced difficulty while swimming due to strong currents. Kuwait Fire Force and coast guard patrols rushed to the scene and managed to retrieve nine persons but two of them died later on at the hospital. The seven others are in stable condition while search and rescue operations continue to account for the missing person, according to a statement from the ministry. The



Ten washed ashore by strong currents



Flames engulf a tower under demolition at Safat Square in Kuwait City.



Firemen battle a blaze in a tower under demolition at Safat Square in Kuwait City.

statement urged swimmers to keep vigilant, abide by the safety precautions and contact the operations room of the coast guard via the phone number 1880888 or the emergency hotline 112 if need be.

In other news, KFF said that firefighters managed to safely rescue seven workers from a blazing tower under demolition at Safat Square in Kuwait City Thursday night. The fire was subdued and no injuries were reported, the KFF public relations and media dept. said in a statement this evening. Upon receiving notification of the incident, fire engines from the City, Al-Hilali and Al-Salmiya fire stations, and backup corps rushed to the scene. They found the first three stories of the 15-storey building engulfed in flames; they also found seven workers trapped in upper stories and brought them out. Investigators opened a probe to determine the cause of the incident, according to the statement. — KUNA

Lord Mayor of London completes Kuwait visit

KUWAIT: The Lord Mayor of the City of London, Alderman William Russell, visited Kuwait from 6-8 October. The Lord Mayor is an international ambassador for the UK's financial and professional services sector. The UK is the leading exporter of financial services across the world, to the value of £64 billion. London houses more foreign banks, and accounts for more international bank lending, than any other center. The UK also offers exceptional maritime services, Islamic finance, legal services, insurance, education, and infrastructure financing and delivery. The Lord Mayor also heads the City of London Corporation, the governing body of the Square Mile dedicated to a vibrant and thriving city, supporting a diverse and sustainable London within a globally-successful UK.

During his visit, the Lord Mayor called on His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, Minister of Finance Khalifa Al-Hamada, and Chairman of the Kuwait Investment Authority Ghanem Al-Ghenaiman. He also met with Group Chairman of the National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) Nasser Musaed Al-Sayer, and Chairman of the Capital Markets Authority Ahmed Al-Melhem. At a joint public event, the Lord Mayor took the opportunity to address members of the Kuwait Banking Association.

The Lord Mayor's priorities over the course of the visit included highlighting the upcoming UN climate change conference, COP26, which will be held in Glasgow later this year. The COP26 agenda for 2021 is vitally important in setting direction and obtaining commitments from all countries to tackle the worst effects of climate change and limit global warming to 1.5 degrees or less. Coupled to this aim, the Lord Mayor has highlighted how UK expertise and innovation in sustainable finance can help the Kuwaiti financial services sector to unlock the huge opportunities offered by the green tran-

sition.

The Lord Mayor has also sought to deepen the UK's ties with Kuwait's sovereign wealth fund through the Kuwait Investment Authority, promoting inward sovereign wealth investment in support of the HMIG agenda. He has also promoted opportunities for UK-based Financial and Professional Service firms in Kuwait and reaffirmed the important relationship between our two friendly nations.

The Lord Mayor of the City of London, William Russell said: "It is a pleasure to be here in Kuwait and an honor to meet with His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait. The bonds between the UK and Kuwait remain strong and enduring. We welcome the continued vote of confidence from Kuwait in London and the UK's economy, with the Kuwait Investment Authority recommitting to spend \$180 billion of investments through its London office. This creates shared jobs and prosperity for both of our countries."

"London's offer to global investors continues to go from strength to strength. Its unique combination of time zone, language, legal system, global talent, and financial services ecosystem which makes us truly a gateway to global capital and advice. As we approach the COP26 summit, the UK is very keen for Kuwait to become an ally in the fight against climate change. The City of London Corporation will be hosting a Green Horizon Summit at COP26. We are delighted to see that Kuwait has committed to a target of having 15 percent of its electricity generated from renewables by 2030. By working together, British expertise and innovation in sustainable finance can help the Kuwaiti financial services sector to unlock the huge opportunities offered by the green transition."

British Ambassador to Kuwait Belinda Lewis said: "The Lord Mayor's visit highlights the close cooperation between Kuwait and the UK in the field of financial and professional services. The Corporation of London, headed by the Lord Mayor, has a fascinating history dating back centuries and the City of London today remains a vibrant, cosmopolitan hotbed of talent. London and the UK are truly global in outlook, keen to partner with others to share world leading expertise and professionalism."

Queensland's School of Public Health. "Meeting the added demand for mental health services due to COVID-19 will be challenging, but taking no action should not be an option."

Analyzing data collected across North America, Europe and East Asia researchers modelled the expected prevalence of depression and anxiety. Had the pandemic not occurred, 193 million cases of depression would have been expected. This compared with an observed 246 million cases during 2020. Similarly, for anxiety, models predicted 298 million cases of anxiety globally without COVID-19, when in fact the actual number of cases last year was 374 million.

The analysis showed that women suffered disproportionately, largely because pandemic measures exacerbated existing health and social inequality in most nations. Additional caring and domestic duties still mainly fall to women, and women are far more likely to be victims of domestic violence, which surged during the pandemic. School and college closures restricted young people's ability to learn, interact with peers, and gain employment, leading to outsized mental health impacts among 20-24-year-olds, the study showed.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated many existing inequalities, and social determinants of mental health disorders, and the underpinning mechanisms to improve mental health in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic globally," said Alize Ferrari, from the University of Queensland. "It is crucial that policymakers take underlying factors such as these into account as part of measures to strengthen mental health services." —Agencies

Amiri Hospital doctors remove record large stone

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeon at Amiri Hospital Dental Center Dr Mohammad Abdelkareem Al-Masri said a major operation was carried out on a 55-year-old patient - a rare procedure to remove a very large salivary gland stone. He said the stone removed is larger than the one registered by Guinness World Records, which weighed 50 gm and was 6 cm long, as this one weighs 74 gm

and is 6 cm long.

Dr Masri said the patient, who is diabetic, had an infection in the salivary gland on the right side of the jaw. The stone was discovered during treatment. The surgery was carried out after all preparations were completed. It took two hours to remove the stone and the salivary gland. The patient left hospital three days later.

On the reasons stones are formed in salivary glands, he said this happens due to severe dehydration and drinking too little water, especially during high temperatures, adding that such cases are widespread but not of such a large size.



Dr Mohammad Al-Masri

First president of Iran Banisadr...

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Banisadr won Iran's first free election in 1980 to become president hot on the heels of the previous year's Islamic revolution. But he was dismissed by the Iranian parliament in 1981 as his relations with late supreme leader Ayatollah Ruhollah

Khomeini deteriorated. Since then, he had been living in exile in France. Born on March 22, 1933 in a village near Hamadan in western Iran, Banisadr was a supporter of liberal Islam. A practicing Muslim, at the age of 17 he became active in the ranks of the National Front of Iran, the movement of nationalist leader Mohammad Mossadegh. After studying theology, economics and sociology, Banisadr became a staunch opponent of the Shah's regime.

Wanted by the police, he was forced to flee Iran in 1963 and settled in Paris. In 1970, he advocated the union of the Iranian opposition around Khomeini, who was exiled in Iraq at the time. In Oct 1978, Khomeini went to France, and Banisadr became part of his inner circle, referring to him as "dear father".

Banisadr would later express regret that he had not recognized Khomeini's "taste for power".

On Feb 1, 1979, Banisadr was on the plane that brought Khomeini back to Iran. He served as

Iran's minister of economics and, for a few days, foreign affairs. The man at times referred to as "Khomeini's spiritual son" was elected president of the Islamic Republic of Iran on Jan 26, 1980.

From the start of his mandate, Banisadr faced immense difficulties: The US hostage crisis, the Iran-Iraq war, economic woes and, above all, the opposition of powerful clerics. As armed forces chief from February 1980 to June 1981, he reorganized Iran's military and spent much of his time on the front lines of the eight-year war with Iraq. But the proponent of a "third Islamic path" that respected democratic principles, he faced intense pressure from ultraconservative clerics.

After over a year of disputes with some senior members of the Shiite clergy and the Islamic Republic Party that controlled parliament, the democratization process came to a halt. On June 21, 1981, Banisadr was dismissed by the Majles for "political incompetence" with Khomeini's approval. After hiding for a week, he was smuggled onto an air force jetliner hijacked by one of his supporters, and escaped to France, where he was granted asylum and provided with police protection.

Once in exile, Banisadr founded the National Council of Resistance of Iran with Massoud Rajavi, leader of the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran and representatives from minority communities such as Iranian Kurds. Banisadr fell out with Rajavi, however, and later left the council. He wrote a book that accused Iran's ayatollahs of plotting to seize power, and testified about the murders of Iranian dissidents that he blamed on the mullahs. He had been living in Versailles since May 1984. — AFP

COVID causes steep rise...

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world, in addition to restrictions on transportation and businesses coupled with hard-to-get healthcare. He commended media for spreading correct information about mental health conditions and explaining that mental health diseases were just like other diseases, which can be treated.

Meanwhile, the health ministry has started registration for the third dose or booster shot of the COVID-19 vaccine in individuals aged 18 years and older. Priority for the booster shot will be for high-risk individuals at least six months after their second dose, the ministry's spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad said in a press statement yesterday.

COVID-19 has claimed nearly 5 million lives since it emerged in late 2019, but experts say this is likely to be a vast underestimate. Friday's study showed that the hardest-hit countries were saddled with the greatest mental health burden, with a strong link between high COVID-19 case levels, restrictions on movement, and elevated rates of depression and anxiety.

"Our findings highlight an urgent need to strengthen mental health systems in order to address the growing burden of major depressive disorder and anxiety disorders worldwide," said lead study author Damian Santomauro, from the University of

Theft of catalytic converters on...

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"Some drivers used to remove the catalytic converters from their vehicle based on the advice of the garage, as the vehicle apparently runs faster without it. The garage even used to pay the customer around KD 50 for the converter. But after the police raids, most garages won't remove it even if the customer pays for it," he added.

A salesman at an auto dealership confirmed more people are now asking for catalytic converters. "I've heard many people in Salmiya, Maidan Hawally, Hawally and Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh were victims of theft



of this part from their vehicles. The driver will realize the catalytic converter is missing when they start hearing loud noises from the exhaust," the salesman told Kuwait Times. Another mechanic at a garage in Shuwaik said he knows a customer whose converter was stolen by a tow truck driver while transporting the car to the garage.

Local

Kuwait reiterates rejection to all forms of terrorism, extremism

Kuwait reaffirms need to achieve sustainable development goals

NEW YORK: The State of Kuwait reiterated yesterday its firm stance rejecting all forms of terrorism and extremism regardless of their causes, motives and stressing that it supported all international efforts to combat it. This came in a speech delivered by the Second Secretary Bashar Al-Muwaizri during a discussion of measures to eliminate international terrorism in the sixth committee of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly. He pointed out that the fight against terrorism needs international efforts to confront this criminal scourge by taking measures to ensure respect for human rights, the rules of law and to prevent impunity. He added that the coronavirus pandemic has temporarily reduced the threats of the terrorism phenomenon, but it has also had a negative impact on the social and economic level which terrorist groups may exploit to broadcast their propaganda and promote their terrorist ideas.

Muwaizri indicated that the reintegration and rehabilitation of foreign terrorist fighters and their families constitutes a major challenge for the international community, in addition to hold accountable and prosecute of terrorist acts. He stressed the need to develop comprehensive strategies for prosecution and to rely on integrated policies to address the root causes of the terrorism while strengthening international judicial cooperation. Kuwait continues its efforts to combat terrorism

and its financing, as the Supreme Committee of Insurance issued a set of rules on combating money laundering and terrorist financing.

Sustainable development

Meanwhile, Kuwait reaffirmed the need to achieve the objectives of the 2030 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) despite the challenges posed by the coronavirus (COVID-19) global pandemic. This reiteration came during a speech deliv-



Fight against terrorism needs international efforts

ered by diplomatic attache Bader Al-Daihani at the second committee discussions of the UN General Assembly. The State of Kuwait's leadership believed in the importance of achieving the SDGs, which will have a positive impact on the world economy, the environment and global climate, said the diplomat said.



NEW YORK: Kuwait's Second Secretary Bashar Al-Muwaizri speaks during a discussion of measures to eliminate international terrorism in the sixth committee of the United Nations General Assembly.



Kuwait's diplomatic attache Bader Al-Daihani delivers a speech at the second committee discussions of the UN General Assembly. — KUNA photos

Daihani commended outcome of the second summit on the SDGs Moment, held back in September, saying that it was a positive addition to march for sustainable development. On the coronavirus spread, the Kuwait diplomat reflected his nation's eagerness to combat the spread of COVID-19, revealing that his country donated a sum of \$40 million to the COVAX scheme to deliver vaccines worldwide. He also revealed that Kuwait had donat-

ed \$327 million to WHO and other international organizations to curb the spread of the virus.

On Kuwait's economic contributions to the world, Dhaiani pointed out that the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) had helped various countries around the world to achieve development long-term soft loans. The fund had contributed around \$22 billion in loans and financial assistance since establishment, he revealed. — KUNA



Kuwait booth at Dubai Expo draws large crowds

DUBAI: For the second week, the Kuwaiti pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai has attracted a

large number of visitors from different countries. Visitors were impressed by the eye-catching Kuwait's history, folklore, projects and humanitarian, social and cultural role were showcased. Furthermore, they got familiar with the efforts of the State of Kuwait in attaining sustainability and development just as reflected in the Kuwaiti booth's title: 'New Kuwait... New Opportunities for Sustainability'. — KUNA



Kuwaiti sand, light painter illustrates Gulf heritage pride at Expo

DUBAI: Through use of sand and light to the sound of music, Kuwait's Sulaiman Al-Enezi portrayed images of great accomplishments and

patriotism in the Gulf Arab region at his country's pavilion one week into Expo 2020 Dubai. An interactive sand painting delivered by the artist to attending crowds depicted the developments leading up to the launch of Hope Probe, an ongoing United Arab Emirates-backed exploration mission of Mars: the first of its kind in the Arab region. Commenting on the artwork, he said the space mission is a "source of pride for the UAE and other Gulf Arab states." The Kuwaiti artist has been an avid sand painter since childhood but recently got into light painting, albeit with a twist, as his works come in an interactive, ever-changing format. —KUNA



Children relish Kuwait's pavilion at Expo Dubai



DUBAI: Kuwait's pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai welcomed on Friday a large number of children who came to enjoy its fascinating exhibits and activities. Children listened to an interactive and exciting presentation and musical performance, and enjoyed lights as well as watched stuffed wildlife animals inside the facility. — KUNA



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News in brief

Kuwait oil at \$82.42 pb

KUWAIT: The price of Kuwaiti oil rose by \$3.86 to \$82.42 per barrel on Friday compared to \$78.56 pb the day before, announced Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) yesterday. In global markets, the Brent crude rose 44 cents to reach at \$82.39 pb and the West Texas Intermediate rose by \$1.05 to \$79.35 pb.

Tremors felt in Kuwait

KUWAIT: Tremors were felt in different areas around Kuwait after an earthquake jolted west Iran early yesterday morning. Kuwait National Seismic Network (KNSN), affiliated to Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR), confirmed yesterday that an earthquake at the magnitude of 4.8 on Richter Scale hit western Iran. The earthquake hit at 2:16 am Kuwait's local time and struck at the depth of 10 kilometers beneath earth's surface, and at a location of 290 kilometers far from Kuwait City, KNSN added.

Kuwait backs Pakistan

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry on Friday voiced Kuwait's sympathy with Pakistan over a recent strong earthquake that hit its southwestern Balochistan Province and left numerous casualties. The ministry said in a statement that the State of Kuwait stands by the government and people of Pakistan in the face of this natural disaster. The ministry also expressed sincere condolences and commiserations to the families of the victims and wished quick recovery for all those injured in the quake.

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: This file photo shows a long line of public transportation buses at the busy Abdullah Al-Mubarak Street in Kuwait City. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh (To have your picture featured in the Kuwait Times' 'Photo of the Day' section, please send your horizontal, high resolution and unedited photos to local@kuwaittimes.com, along with the full name and Instagram account, in addition to a description showing the picture's location and date taken)

Kuwait-treated victims of Lebanon blast return home

BEIRUT: After a successful treatment trip in Kuwait, four of the victims of the August 15 tragic fuel tank explosion in Lebanon returned home on board a Kuwait Airways plane Thursday. "We are grateful to the Kuwaiti Amir and people," Lebanese Minister of Health Firass Abiad said upon receiving the returning compatriots at the Beirut-Rafic Hariri International Airport. The Lebanese minister voiced appreciation to Kuwait's backing to the Lebanese people at all times of distress.

Meanwhile, Deputy Ambassador of Kuwait in Lebanon Abdullah Al-Shaheen noted that the four were flown to Kuwait from nearly one and a half months ago and had received medical care in Kuwait's hospitals upon directives from His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Following the blast, the Kuwait Red Crescent Society announced contributing to the costs of hospitalizing the victims and the Kuwaiti government sent a plane to transport six of the seriously injured victims to Kuwait to get required care. At least 31 people were killed and 80 others were injured in the fuel tank explosion which took place in the town of



BEIRUT: A photo showing cardboard boxes containing baby formula donated by Kuwait to people in Lebanon. — KUNA

Tleil in the Lebanese northern district of Akkar.

Separately, Beirut International Airport in Beirut received a Kuwaiti airplane carrying three tons of baby formula as a gift from the Kuwaiti people to the Lebanese people. The humanitarian aid was delivered to the Lebanese Women's Organization for Care and Social Communication, under the supervision of the Kuwaiti Embassy in Lebanon, represented by First Secretary Yassin Al-Majed. In a statement to the press, Group Captain Rakan Al-Zaman said that the shipment was carrying baby formula, which

is urgent relief for Lebanon, provided by the 'Qawafil Association for Relief and Development' in cooperation with the Kuwaiti Ministry of Defense. He also noted that this relief is part of what the Kuwaiti army is doing to support Lebanon under these circumstances. Kuwait was one of the first countries to rush to provide a humanitarian aid to Lebanon immediately after the explosion of Beirut Port in August 2020 through an air bridge, which transported through 18 Kuwaiti planes more than 820 tons of needs to the Lebanese people. — KUNA

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IWG organizes photo exhibition at Italian embassy

KUWAIT: In keeping with its aim to celebrate the diversity of its members with a range of different events that highlight the uniquely wonderful cultures and traditions from around the world, the International Women's Group, in cooperation with the Italian Embassy, organized a photo exhibition in the embassy's Spazio Italia-Kuwait, entitled 'The Great Beauty' by Remo Casilli and 'Capturing Al-Kout' by Usman Mohammed Iqbal. The group's public relations coordinator, Laila Boulos, introduced the Italian Ambassador Carlo Baldocci, who welcomed the artists, members and guests to the embassy.

In his remarks, Ambassador Baldocci explained that he had decided to open a special area in the Italian Embassy, called the 'Spazio Italia-Kuwait', as a unique place dedicated to fostering dialogue between people, as well as promoting projects, activities, and joint initiatives between the two countries. He also stressed that the current exhibition is a perfect example of cultural exchange, and the beginning of more events to follow. As a sign of appreciation, the IWG presented a commemorative shield in honor of the ambassador.

Next, Cristiana Baldocci, wife of the Italian Ambassador and President of the International Women's Group in Kuwait, welcomed everyone and thanked Sheikha Hanouf Bader Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, Honorary President of the IWG, for her kind support. She also thanked the IWG board for their help in organizing the event.

Baldocci introduced the exhibition by saying that it is a photographic dialogue between two cities: Kuwait City and Rome. She said: "Through this exhibition, we will explore exactly what is meant by urban cultural heritage. Something that is inherited,



passed down from previous generations. It is a kind of heritage that doesn't consist of money or property, but of culture, values and traditions; that implies a shared bond, our belonging to a community. It represents our history and our identity; Our bond to the past, to our present, and the future and above all, love for our cities"

For the first time, photographer Usman Muhammad Iqbal, born and raised in Kuwait, presented his photographs that reflect facets of the original Kuwaiti heritage, and aspects of the development of the environment and art in the area. His exceptional technique has already earned him international visibility and the beauty of the images shows the importance of Kuwaiti heritage; the heritage that binds the past to the present and the future of this country.

Remo Casilli, a successful Roman photographer who has already exhibited in Italy and abroad, presented the wonderful evening and night images of Rome, the 'Eternal City', illuminated and celebratory. After Baldocci conducted a ribbon cutting ceremony to open the exhibition, the guests were delighted to see the photographs, and the photographers were honored for their exceptional work in photo documentation. A light meal was prepared by the chefs of the Crowne Plaza and in closing, special prizes were drawn for the attendees.



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MANAUS: Photo shows aerial view of graves of COVID-19 victims at the Nossa Senhora Aparecida cemetery in Manaus, Amazon state, Brazil. Brazil on October 8 surpassed 600,000 deaths from COVID-19, according to figures released by the health ministry. — AFP

Brazil surpasses 600,000 COVID deaths

Latin America's COVID death toll surpasses 1.5 million

RIO DE JANEIRO: Brazil has surpassed 600,000 deaths from COVID-19, the health ministry said yesterday. The country of 213 million has also recorded more than 21.5 million cases of the deadly virus. It is the second worst affected country in the world by COVID deaths after the United States, although many experts consider the official numbers to be underestimates. The US recently passed 700,000 deaths, although its population is 35 percent larger.

Brazil registered 615 new deaths on Friday, as well as 18,000 cases in the previous 24 hours. "The situation has improved but we cannot lower our guard," Margareth Dalcolmo, pulmonologist and researcher at the prestigious Fiocruz research institute said.

She said the pandemic could only be considered under control once "we have 80 percent of the population vaccinated." So far 71.4 percent of Brazilians have received at least one vaccination

dose but only 45.9 percent are fully immunized. Brazil's vaccination program began in late January, several weeks after the likes of Argentina and the US, something specialists blamed on a lack of government planning. Things have dramatically improved from three months ago, though, when the immuniza-



Over 21.5 million cases recorded

tion drive was crawling along and 2,000 Brazilians a day were dying from COVID.

That death rate dropped below 1,000 at the end of July and kept shrinking until it stabilized around 500 in September.

Brazil is far from seeing "the light at the end of the tunnel, the situation remains worrying," said Domingos Alves, a researcher at the Sao Paulo University's faculty of medicine. Despite these concerns, major cities such as Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo continue with their push to return to normal life. Rio's mayor Eduardo Paes has even said February's carnival, one of the most popular in the world, will take place "without restrictions."

Latin America's death toll from COVID-19 surpassed 1.5 million Friday, according to an AFP tally drawn from official figures. The toll is at least 1,500,350 deaths, with more than 45 million cases of the virus recorded. Brazil in particular surpassed 600,000 deaths on Friday, the second hardest hit country after the United States. After Brazil come Mexico, Peru, Colombia and Argentina in terms of deaths. Peru has the highest per capita COVID toll, at 605 fatalities per 100,00 inhabitants. Globally the pan-



BRASILIA: Demonstrators protest in front of Planalto Palace in Brasilia as Brazil reaches the milestone of 600,000 people killed by the novel coronavirus COVID-19. — AFP

dem has now claimed more than 4.8 million lives, with more than 237 million cases of the disease reported. AFP com-

pires its tally with figures from national governments and the World Health Organization. — AFP

Sierra Leone abolishes inhumane death penalty

FREETOWN: Sierra Leone's president on Friday signed a bill abolishing the death penalty, declaring the West African country had "exercised horrors of a cruel past" after a long campaign to end capital punishment. President Julius Maada Bio signed the abolition bill during a ceremony in the capital Freetown after lawmakers approved the text in July. In a statement, the president denounced capital punishment as "inhumane." "We today affirm our belief in the sanctity of life," he said. Sierra Leone, which is still recovering after decades of civil war, had frequently come under fire from rights groups for keeping capital punishment on the books.

Deputy minister of justice Umaru Napoleon Koroma told AFP that Sierra Leone's first recorded execution dated from 1798 - around a decade after Britain founded the colony for freed slaves in 1787. Ninety-four people were living under a death sentence at the end of 2020, the minister added. No execution has taken place in the country since 1998, however, and death sentences were often commuted. After long resisting a formal ban on capital punishment, the government announced abolition plans in May. The parliament then voted in favor in July.

Under the new law, execution will be replaced with life imprisonment or a minimum 30-year jail term for crimes such as murder or mutiny. Sierra Leone joins a growing number of African countries that have outlawed the death penalty, with Chad abolishing the pun-

ishment last year. The European Union's diplomatic service said in a statement that Sierra Leone's move "enhances the respect for human dignity in the country and reflects the growing trend in Africa and around the world to confine capital punishment to the history books".

'Ultimate cudgel'

Sierra Leone's 1991 constitution allowed the use of the death penalty for aggravated robbery, murder, treason and mutiny. The country's last executions in 1998 targeted 24 military officers who had attempted a coup the year before. The diamond-rich but poor former British colony was ravaged by a 1991-2002 civil war that claimed 120,000 lives.

A truth and reconciliation commission set up in 2005 to investigate the brutal conflict recommended outlawing the death penalty, calling it "an affront to civilized society". But the authorities in the nation of 7.5 million people resisted the idea, and courts continued to condemn people to death. On Friday, Bio said "some cautioned it was unwise to let go of the ultimate cudgel that had kept political opponents in line." "My position was a hard and firm no to the death penalty in all its forms," he said. "We are a civilized nation".

Bio's assent means the death penalty is now officially off the books. According to Amnesty International, 108 countries had completely scrapped the death penalty by the end of 2020, while 144 had abolished it either in law or in practice. — AFP

COVID-19 vaccines for kids? Strategies around the world

PARIS: Pfizer has requested emergency approval from US health authorities to use its COVID jab in children aged five to 11. Here is a look at different approaches to vaccinating children against the virus and the debates it has launched around the world.

What changes are made for kids?

Pfizer tested its jab on more than 2,000 US children aged five to 11 and submitted results to the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for approval. The dosage for children in that age range is a third of what it is for adults: 0.1 mL rather than 0.3 mL. Pfizer and BioNTech say children in trials reacted well to the vaccine and that their immune response was "robust" and "comparable" to that observed in older adolescents and young adults aged 16 to 25. If the FDA grants authorization when it convenes on October 26, children in that age range-of whom there are some 28 million in the US-could start getting vaccinated by the end of the month.

Are other countries doing this?

While many countries have begun vaccinating adolescents aged 12 and older very few have extended jabs to children younger than that. On September 15 Cuba began administering doses of its Abdala and Soberana vaccines-which are not approved internationally-to children aged two to 11 years. Also in mid-September Cambodia began vaccinating kids aged six and up with the Chinese Sinovac jab. Sinovac has been approved for adults in more than 50 countries but before Cambodia only China had authorized its use in children over three. Sinovac has also launched clinical trials of its jab in 14,000 children aged six months to 17 years old in Chile, Kenya, Malaysia, the Philippines and in South Africa.

In early August the United Arab Emirates started offering Sinopharm, another Chinese jab, to children aged three to 17. Venezuela announced in September that it would start vacci-

nating children and adolescents aged three to 18 in October.

In Israel children aged five to 11 with complicating health factors-such as chronic lung illnesses, autoimmune diseases or neurological problems-have been able to get vaccinated since the end of July.

What is the argument against?

Arnaud Fontanet, an epidemiologist advisor to the French government, told AFP that the major question is whether the risk posed by COVID to children in this age range outweighs the risk of potential jab side effects. For children in America the threat of severe COVID is elevated, he said. "The risk of hospitalization for an infected child there is 10 times higher than for a child in western Europe," he said, citing the prevalence of pre-existing conditions like obesity and diabetes. Fontanet said that in southern US states where vaccination rates are low, paediatric services in hospitals are stretched thinly. The situation that could push US authorities to quickly approve jabs for younger children.

Will more kids get jabs?

The last few months have seen the World Health Organization (WHO) hammer home the importance of getting poorer adult populations vaccinated before extending jabs to children in rich countries. In its global vaccine strategy published on Thursday, the WHO said whether young children need to be get jabs depends on how the virus evolves and on proven vaccine safety in that age group. Fontanet says western European countries will be "much more hesitant" than the United States to lower the age range for vaccination. He cites current data that shows infections are relatively benign in children aged five to 11, even with the now-dominant Delta variant.

Vaccination rates among the elderly are also rising, he added, which reduces the risk of that fragile population being contaminated by infections in young children. Fontanet also notes that parents of children in that age group tend to show more resistance to vaccines. "We always expect parents to be a little more hesitant," he said. Getting millions of American children jabs means an opportunity to observe any side effects that may have escaped detection in clinical trials. "It's really in our best interest to not rush and look at the data that will come from large-scale vaccination of children in the US," Fontanet added.— AFP

International

Journalists Maria Ressa, Dmitry Muratov win Nobel Peace Prize

Duo honored 'for their efforts to safeguard freedom of expression'

OSLO: Investigative journalists Maria Ressa of the Philippines and Dmitry Muratov of Russia won the Nobel Peace Prize on Friday for their work promoting freedom of expression at a time when liberty of the press is increasingly under threat. Ressa, also a US citizen, is co-founder of Rappler, a digital media company for investigative journalism. Muratov is a co-founder of Russia's leading independent newspaper Novaya Gazeta. The pair were honored "for their efforts to safeguard freedom of expression, which is a precondition for democracy and lasting peace," said the chairwoman of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, Berit Reiss-Andersen.

"They are representatives of all journalists who stand up for this ideal in a world in which democracy and freedom of the press face increasingly adverse conditions," she said. Ressa, 58, the only woman to win a Nobel so far this year, said the prize shows that "nothing is possible without facts", referring to the links between democracy and freedom of expression. "A world without facts means a world without truth and trust," the outspoken critic of Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte told a livestreamed interview with Rappler.

She told Norwegian TV2 the honor would give her and her colleagues "tremendous energy to continue the

fight". Muratov dedicated his half of the prize to his newspaper's six journalists and contributors killed since 2000, who include the prominent investigative journalist Anna Politkovskaya. "I can't take credit for this. This is Novaya Gazeta's," he was cited by Russian news agency TASS as saying. The newspaper on Thursday commemorated 15 years since Politkovskaya's killing.

Muratov also said he would have given the award to jailed Kremlin critic

founder independent media outlets and defending them against forces that seek their silence."

'Killings and threats'

Ressa and Rappler, which she co-founded in 2012 and heads, have faced multiple criminal charges and investigations after publishing stories critical of Duterte's policies, including his bloody drug war. The former CNN correspondent is on bail pending an appeal against a conviction last year in a cyber libel case, for which she faces up to six years in prison. The chairwoman of the Norwegian Nobel Committee said Rappler has "focused critical attention on the Duterte regime's controversial, murderous anti-drug campaign. "The number of deaths is so high that the campaign resembles a war waged against the country's own population," Reiss-Andersen added.

Ressa and Rappler have also documented how social media is being used to spread fake news, harass opponents and manipulate public discourse. Time magazine named her a Person of the Year in 2018. Muratov, 59, has defended freedom of speech in Russia for decades, under increasingly challenging conditions. Novaya Gazeta, founded in 1993, is one of the few media outlets left voicing criticism of Putin. Muratov has



Ressa - the only woman to win so far this year

Alexei Navalny. The Kremlin meanwhile congratulated Muratov, with President Vladimir Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov telling reporters: "He is talented. He is courageous." US President Joe Biden also congratulated the two winners. "They have worked to check the abuse of power, expose corruption, and demand transparency," he said in a statement. "They have been tenacious in



OSLO: This combination of pictures shows Maria Ressa (left), co-founder and CEO of the Philippines-based news website Rappler and Dmitry Muratov, editor-in-Chief of Russia's main opposition newspaper Novaya Gazeta. The Nobel Peace Prize goes to journalists Maria Ressa (Philippines) and Russian Dmitry Muratov, the Nobel Peace Prize committee announced on October 8, 2021 in Oslo. —AFP

served several times as chief editor since 1995. Former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev was one of the first investors, using part of his own 1990 Nobel Peace Prize winnings to fund it, according to the paper. He said the prize

was "good news" for the world's press. "This award raises the importance of the press in the modern world to great heights." Novaya Gazeta's opponents have responded with harassment, threats, violence and murder. —AFP

News in brief

Bootleg alcohol kills 17

MOSCOW: Seventeen people in Russia died after drinking surrogate alcohol containing highly toxic methanol, officials said Friday, with investigators launching criminal probes. The deaths are the latest in Russia from the consumption of a cheap alcohol substitute, a persistent problem that authorities have previously said must be solved. An additional 16 people in the region of Orenburg, around 1,500 kilometers southeast of Moscow in the southern Urals, suffered alcohol poisoning. "As of now we know of 33 victims, 17 of whom have died," the governor's office said on the messaging app Telegram. Tests showed that the victims had consumed alcohol containing methanol, which unlike ethanol—the usual form of alcohol found in drinks—is highly toxic and can cause blindness even in very small doses. —AFP

Building collapse kills 5

TBILISI: At least five people were killed when a block of flats partly collapsed in Georgia's Black Sea resort of Batumi, police said yesterday, blaming unsafe renovation work for the accident. Around five floors of the building collapsed on Friday, crushing several cars parked outside and leaving "up to 15 people" missing under the rubble, according to police. "So far emergency responders have saved two citizens, who were brought to hospital, and recovered five bodies," the police said in a statement. Three people have been arrested in a probe into the collapse, the statement added, identifying them as the owner of a ground-floor apartment and two construction workers he had hired. —AFP

Iceland halts Moderna jabs

REYKJAVIK: Iceland on Friday suspended the Moderna anti-COVID vaccine, citing the slight increased risks of cardiac inflammation, going further than its Nordic neighbors which simply limited use of the jabs. "As the supply of Pfizer vaccine is sufficient in the territory ... the chief epidemiologist has decided not to use the Moderna vaccine in Iceland," said a statement published on the website of the Health Directorate. This decision owed to "the increased incidence of myocarditis and pericarditis after vaccination with the Moderna vaccine, as well as with vaccination using Pfizer/BioNTech," the chief epidemiologist said in a statement. For the past two months, Iceland has been administering an additional dose "almost exclusively" of the Moderna vaccine to Icelanders vaccinated with Janssen, a single-dose serum marketed by America's Johnson & Johnson, as well as to elderly and immunocompromised people who received two doses of another vaccine. —AFP

Jihadist IED expert killed

BAMAKO: French anti-jihadist forces in the Sahel said on Friday they had killed a leading member of an extremist group specialized in the laying of improvised explosive devices. Oumarou Moba Modhi was "neutralized" in Mali near the border with Burkina Faso on Thursday. France's Barkhane force said. The joint operation with the Malian military was supported by US forces, it said. The US military provides logistical and intelligence support to French forces in the Sahel. Modhi was linked to Ansaroul Islam, a militant Islamist group founded in 2016 on the Burkina Faso side of the Mali-Burkina border by Ibrahim Malam Dicko, a Burkina Faso preacher. —AFP

Guards shoot dead 6 migrants at Libya detention centre

TRIPOLI: Guards shot dead six migrants at an overcrowded Tripoli detention facility on Friday, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) said, the latest violence against migrants following mass arrests in recent days. "Shooting broke out and six migrants were killed in total. They were shot by the guards," the UN agency's Libya chief Federico Soda told AFP. "We don't know what triggered the incident today but it is related to overcrowding and the terrible, very tense situation" at the Al-Mabani facility in the capital, he said. He added that at least 20 other migrants were wounded and that many more had escaped in the chaos.

An Interior Ministry official quoted by Libyan News Agency said the number of escapees could be around 2,000. Videos online appeared to show hundreds of people, many of them minors, running away from the centre. The killings came a week after sweeping raids in Tripoli, mostly targeting irregular migrants, left at least one person dead and 15

wounded, according to the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL). Doctors without Borders (MSF) said 5,000 migrants and refugees had been swept up in "violent mass arrests", tripling the numbers detained in the city in just five days.

Libyan authorities had said the wave of detentions last Friday and Saturday were part of anti-drug raids on houses and makeshift shelters in Gargaresh, a poor suburb of Tripoli. Soda said the heavily guarded Al-Mabani centre, which has a capacity of 1,000, had by Friday been housing 3,000 migrants, mostly from sub-Saharan Africa, around a third of them in the grounds outside the building. Guards had fired into the air to control previous incidents during the week, he said. "Their detention is arbitrary and indiscriminate," he said. "There are people there who have legal documents but they are stuck in the country."

Dash for 'freedom'

Videos posted on social media,



TRIPOLI: Migrants sit on the ground after being recaptured by Libyan security forces following an escape attempt from a detention facility in the capital Tripoli. —AFP

some filmed from cars, appeared to show hundreds of people climbing over a metal fence and running across the road and down nearby streets. One showed people running through the streets chanting "freedom! freedom!" in English. In another, a migrant said those fleeing were from "Somalia, Sudan, Egypt" and other countries. AFP was unable to immediately verify the footage. A witness told AFP he had seen around 500 migrants heading along a street near the centre.

An AFP reporter later saw at least

140 people who had apparently been recaptured by security forces and gathered under a bridge before being placed on a bus. Particularly since its 2011 revolution unleashed years of violence and lawlessness, Libya has become a key departure point for tens of thousands of migrants hoping to reach Europe. Official centers for migrants detained in the war-battered country are riddled with corruption and violence, including sexual assault, according to the United Nations and rights groups. —AFP



ADDIS ABABA: Members of the Ethiopian defense forces parade in front of a screen in the city of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. — AFP

Ethiopia forces hit Tigray rebels in 'massive' move

ADDIS ABABA: Ethiopian troops and their allies are launching air and ground strikes against Tigray rebels in the northern region of Amhara, humanitarian and rebel sources told AFP, amid growing speculation of a major offensive. A spokesman for the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), which has been locked in a brutal conflict with pro-government forces in northern Ethiopia for 11 months, said yesterday there was a "massive move" against the rebels.

The reports come just days after Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed was sworn in for a new term, vowing to defend "Ethiopia's honor" despite mounting international criticism of the war and alarm about the desperate humanitarian crisis it has triggered. TPLF spokesman Getachew Reda said there had

been "mostly air, drone and artillery bombardment" of rebels, and reported a major troop buildup, saying "tens of thousands are amassed" in northern Amhara including the North Gondar and North Wollo zones.

"We are confident we will thwart the offensive in all fronts and more," he said. "We will stand our ground until the siege is lifted." Humanitarian sources had told AFP that federal soldiers and Amhara regional troops conducted air and ground offensives in the North Wollo area and other locations on Thursday and Friday. Representatives from Amhara, as well as federal and military officials, did not respond to requests for comment and the reported military operations could not be independently confirmed by AFP.

The war erupted in November when Abiy sent troops into Tigray to topple the TPLF, the regional ruling party and former national rulers, a move he said came in response to TPLF attacks on federal army camps. Although government forces quickly took control of Tigray's cities and towns, the TPLF recaptured most of the region including the capital Mekele by late June and Abiy later declared a unilateral ceasefire. —AFP

Facebook grapples with another global outage

SAN FRANCISCO: Facebook on Friday said users around the world again had problems accessing its services for hours due to a tweak of its system, just days after a massive outage caused in a similar fashion. "Sincere apologies to anyone who wasn't able to access our products in the last couple of hours," a Facebook spokesperson told AFP about 21:30 GMT. "We fixed the issue, and everything should be back to normal now."

Website trouble tracker DownDetector showed spikes in reports of problems accessing or using Facebook and its photo-centric Instagram network as well as Messenger and WhatsApp starting about three hours earlier. Facebook attributed the trouble to a configuration change at its computing platform and said that it affected users of the social network and Instagram, Messenger and Workplace globally. People flocked to Twitter to voice frustration.

"What's up with Instagram?" read a tweet that included a picture of cartoon character Bart Simpson sitting in a corner in apparent punishment. "It's not even 4 days and it's already down again." "Problems with Instagram, Facebook, Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp AGAIN!" read a lament in a DownDetector chat forum. Hundreds of millions of people were unable to access Facebook, Instagram or WhatsApp for more than six hours on Monday, underscoring the world's reliance on platforms owned by the Silicon Valley giant.

In an apologetic blog post, Santosh Janardhan, Facebook's vice president of infrastructure, said that day's outage was caused by "configuration changes" on routers that coordinate network traffic between data centers. Cyber experts think that problem boiled down to something called BGP, or Border Gateway Protocol—the system the internet uses to pick the quickest route to move packets of information around. Sami Slim of data center company Telehouse compared BGP to "the internet equivalent of air traffic control." —AFP

International

Afghan Shiites bury their dead; death toll passes 60

Islamic State group claims responsibility

KUNDUZ: Mourners from Afghanistan's minority Shiite community buried their dead yesterday after a suicide attack on a mosque killed more than 60 people, marking the bloodiest assault since US forces left the country in August. A gravedigger in the Shiite cemetery overlooking the northern city of Kunduz told AFP they had handled 62 bodies, and local reports suggested the final toll could be up to 100.

Scores more victims were also wounded in Friday's blast, which was claimed by the Islamic State group and appeared designed to further destabilise Afghanistan in the wake of the Taliban takeover. The regional branch of the sectarian IS, known as Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K), has repeatedly targeted Shiites in Afghanistan. It is a Sunni Islamist group like the Taliban, but the two are bitter rivals. IS-K said the attack was carried out by a Uyghur Muslim suicide bomber who had "detonated an explosive vest amid a crowd" of Shiite worshippers.

The attack happened during Friday prayers - the most important of the week for Muslims - and residents of the city told AFP that hundreds of worshippers were inside. In a heart-wrenching scene, relatives gathered around the newly-dug graves in Kunduz wailed inconsolably over their loved ones. "We are really hurt by what happened," Zemarai Mubarak Zada, 42, told AFP as he mourned his 17-year-old nephew, who he said had wanted to follow in his footsteps and become a doctor. "He wanted to get married. He wanted to go to university," he said.

'Terrifying'

Images from the scene of the attack Friday showed debris strewn inside the mosque, its windows

blown out by the explosion. Some men were seen carrying a body draped in a bloody sheet to an ambulance. "It was a very terrifying incident," said a teacher in Kunduz, who lives near the mosque. "Many of our neighbors have been killed and wounded. A 16-year-old neighbor was killed. They couldn't find half of his body." Aminullah, an eyewitness whose brother was at the mosque, said: "After I heard the explosion, I called my brother but he did not pick up." "I walked towards the mosque and found my



Bloodiest assault since US' pullout

brother wounded and faint. We immediately took him to the MSF hospital."

'Horrible attack'

The Taliban's efforts to consolidate power have been undermined by a series of deadly IS-K attacks. The Taliban security chief in the northern city accused the mosque attackers of trying to foment trouble between Shiites and Sunnis. "We assure our Shiite brothers that in the future, we will provide security for them and that such prob-



KUNDUZ: Relatives lower into a grave the body of a victim of suicide bomb attack on worshippers at a Shiite mosque, in which over 60 people died, during the funeral at a graveyard in Kunduz yesterday. — AFP

lems will not happen to them," Mulawi Dost Muhammad said.

The attack was met with broad international condemnation, with UN chief Antonio Guterres calling for the perpetrators to be brought to justice. Guterres "condemns in the strongest terms today's

horrible attack", the third against a religious institution in Afghanistan in a week, his spokesman said. Viewed as heretics by Sunni extremists such as IS, Shiite Muslims have suffered some of Afghanistan's most violent assaults, with rallies bombed, hospitals targeted and commuters ambushed. — AFP

Banisadr: Iran president who fled to exile

PARIS: Abolhassan Banisadr was Iran's first president following the 1979 Islamic Revolution but fell out with its leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini during a turbulent year or so in power and became a dissident in France. A student activist and imprisoned under the shah, Banisadr was a Paris-based dissident as he continued his studies, before a tumultuous second exile from Iran saw him return to exile after his impeachment by the Islamic republic whose rulers he vehemently criticized.

Born on March 22, 1933 into a clerical family, he was from his teenage years a supporter of prime minister Mohammad Mossadegh, who worked to end foreign interference and nationalize the oil industry, but was ousted in a Western-backed coup. Banisadr became a staunch opponent of the shah, the country's new ruler, and in 1963 fled Iran and settled in Paris, becoming part of Khomeini's inner circle when the ayatollah moved to France. He was on board the plane that brought Khomeini back to Iran on February 1, 1979 after the shah had fled.

Banisadr won a landslide victory in the January 1980 elections, to become the first president in the country's history, enjoying popular support and crucially that of Khomeini who as supreme leader was the final arbiter in all decision-making.

At odds with hardliners

An intellectual and not a cleric, Banisadr was seen as a relative moderate among Iran's first post-revolution leaders. But circumstances rapidly spun out of his control. The seizure of the US embassy in Tehran by students in November 1979 sparked a 444-day hostage crisis, a rupture of relations with the United States and a growing radicalisation of the regime that sat uncomfortably with Banisadr's milder inclinations.

With his relations with Khomeini deteriorating, he found his political standing undermined by the approval by parliament in August 1980 of the populist hardliner Mohammad Ali Rajai as prime minister. Rajai, who unlike Banisadr came from a humble background, was a populist and also one of the political heroes of the controversial 2005-2013 president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

Meanwhile, the outbreak of war with Iraq in September 1980 plunged Banisadr, much more comfortable giving speeches mixing an idiosyncratic combination of philosophy, religion and socialism, into the role of commander-in-chief to which he



AUVERS-SUR-OISE: This file photo shows former president of Iran Abolhassan Banisadr, in Auvers-sur-Oise, in the outskirts of the French capital Paris. Iran's state media reported yesterday that Banisadr has died. — AFP

was singularly ill-suited. Already at odds with hardliners and failing to convince with his often long-winded speeches, a series of setbacks on the battlefield put him under further pressure, with his critics accusing him of mismanaging the war. In June 1981, Khomeini dismissed Banisadr as commander in chief of the armed forces and parliament and then moved to impeach him. — AFP

Iraqis head to early vote with little hope for change

BAGHDAD: Iraqis elect a new parliament today two years after a wave of anti-government protests swept the war-scarred country, but analysts say the vote is unlikely to deliver major change. Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhemi's political future hangs in the balance, with few observers willing to predict who will come out on top after the lengthy backroom haggling that usually follows Iraqi elections. A new single-member constituency system for electing Iraq's 329 lawmakers is supposed to boost independents versus the traditional blocs largely centered on religious, ethnic and clan affiliations.

The election is being held a year early in a rare concession to the youth-led protest movement that broke out in 2019 against a political class widely blamed for graft, unemployment and crumbling public services. Hundreds died during the protests, and dozens more anti-government activists have been killed, kidnapped or intimidated in recent months, with accusations pro-Iran armed groups have been behind the violence.

Many activists have urged a boycott of the polls, and record low

turnout is predicted among Iraq's 25 million eligible voters, while experts predict the main parties are likely to maintain their grip on power. The vote is "unlikely to serve as an agent of change", said Ramzy Mardini of the University of Chicago's Pearson Institute. "The election is meant to be a signal of reform, but ironically those advocating for reform are choosing to not participate... as a protest against the status quo."

Security fears

Security forces, displaced people and prisoners cast the first ballots in the election on Friday, two days before the rest of the country. In Baghdad, there was a heavy security force presence outside polling stations. Iraq is mired in corruption and economic crisis, and nearly a third of its people live in poverty despite the country's oil wealth. The risk of violence is rising amid a proliferation of armed factions and a jihadist resurgence, even as the country tries to emerge from almost two decades of conflict.

A dozen Western governments including the US and the UK on Wednesday called on "all parties to



BAGHDAD: Cars drive in front of electoral billboards of candidates for the upcoming parliamentary elections, in the Iraqi capital Baghdad's Sadr City neighborhood. — AFP

respect the rule of law and the integrity of the electoral process". The United Nations and the European Union have deployed vote monitors and observers. Iraq's political scene remains deeply polarized over sensitive issues including the presence of US troops and the influence of neighboring Iran.

But even in the fragmented parliament, where alliances are stitched up and then undone, political blocs will

have to overcome their differences when it's time to name a prime minister - a position usually reserved for a Shiite Muslim. Shiites account for around 60 percent of Iraq's 40 million people, while Sunnis make up 32-37 percent. The pick for PM will "depend on the level of representation of the different blocs, particularly in the Shiite camp," said Iraqi political scientist Ali al-Baidar. — AFP

Afghans flock to Iranian border, but few can cross

ZARANJ: The number of Afghans attempting to cross the border to Iran has soared since the Taliban swept to power almost two months ago, but few make it across, an official said. Before the Taliban came to power on August 15, around 1,000 to 2,000 people crossed to Iran through the Zaranj border station in the southwestern province of Nimroz every month.

But the border commander for Nimroz province, Mohammad Hashem Hanzaleh, told AFP this week that the number of people attempting to cross has since soared to between 3,000 and 4,000 every day. The hike comes as devastating economic and humanitarian crises lash Afghanistan, with the UN warning that a third of the population faces the threat of famine.

But Hanzaleh said that very few had the papers required to cross. Traders and people holding residence visas, as well as those with visas to seek medical treatment, "are not prevented by Iranian forces," he said, adding that about 500-600 people were allowed across each day. For those without their papers attempting to cross, the experience can be harrowing. Hayatullah, wearing a towel-like tur-

ban and a grey beard, showed off his injured hand, with dark blood seeping through the bandage. "Iranian soldiers took our money. They hit our hands, they tore our hands," he said.

Mohammad Nasim said he had been thwarted three times after trying to scale over the border wall. Two nights earlier, he said Iranian border guards had opened fire and killed two people trying to get across, including one of his friends. That did not stop him from returning the next night, only to find himself "captured" and "beaten", as the guards asked why he was trying to cross without documents. He said he had answered: "If you saw the poverty, hunger and misery of our nation, then you would go to the other side of the border too." "We don't have any other solution." — AFP

News in brief

Two killed in Zionist strike

BEIRUT: A Zionist missile strike on an airbase in central Syria has killed two Damascus-allied foreign fighters and wounded several Syrian service personnel, a Britain-based war monitor said yesterday. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the two foreigners were killed in the raid on the T4 airbase late Friday, but their nationality was not immediately clear. The official Syrian news agency SANA earlier said that, at around 9:00 pm, the enemy... fired a volley of missiles towards the T4 military airport. The aggression wounded six soldiers and led to some material damage, it added. The Observatory said the attack targeted a drone depot at the base. Contacted by AFP, a Zionist army spokesperson said the military did not comment on foreign media reports. — AFP

Gas explosions kill 6 Chinese

HARARE: Six Chinese nationals and two Zimbabweans have been killed in gas explosions at a nickel mine in northern Zimbabwe, a lawmaker said on Friday. The incident involved oxygen gas tanks that exploded at the mine in THE Mazowe area, around 40 kilometers northeast of the capital Harare. "We confirm that six foreigners died," said police spokesman Paul Nyathi told AFP, adding investigations were underway. But a local MP said the death toll was eight, including two Zimbabweans, in two accidents that occurred on Thursday and Friday. "There were two explosions on two different days," local lawmaker Fortune Chasi told AFP on the phone after returning from the scene. — AFP

Over 100 dead or missing

KINSHASA: Over 100 people are dead or missing after nine interlocked canoes sank this week in the Democratic Republic of Congo, officials said yesterday. It was the latest in a series of maritime accidents in the sprawling country where people often travel on overloaded and unsafe vessels on the Congo, one of Africa's biggest rivers. Sixty-one bodies had been recovered from the sinking during the night of Monday to Tuesday, and another 60 are believed to be missing. Nestor Magbado, a spokesman for the governor of the northwestern province of Mongala said. He said there were 39 survivors. With no manifest of the passengers on board, the number missing is an estimate based on the capacity of the boat, he said. — AFP

US college admissions scandal

BOSTON: Two parents who were the first to stand trial in America's massive college admissions scandal were found guilty on Friday of paying bribes to get their children into prestigious universities. Jurors in Boston, Massachusetts convicted financier John Wilson, 62, and former casino executive Gamal Abdelaziz, 64, of bribery and fraud charges following a four-week trial. There are among some 50 people indicted over the elaborate scam which shone a spotlight on how America's rich use their wealth to manipulate the admissions process at elite colleges. Actresses Lori Loughlin and Felicity Huffman were the most high-profile personalities ensnared in the sweeping federal case known as "Operation Varsity Blues." — AFP

Business

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2021

OECD hails 'major victory' as tax holdouts join reform

Minimum corporate tax rate of 15% could add \$150bn to govt coffers annually

PARIS: A global push to enact a minimum international tax on big corporations moved closer to reality as one of the last holdouts, Hungary, agreed to join a reform that now counts 136 countries. The OECD-brokered deal, which sets a global tax of 15 percent, is aimed at stopping international corporations from slashing tax bills by registering in nations with low rates.

"Today's agreement will make our international tax arrangements fairer and work better," said OECD Secretary-General Mathias Cormann on Friday. "This is a major victory for effective and balanced multilateralism." Hungary's announcement came a day after another key opponent, Ireland—whose low tax rate has attracted the likes of Apple and Google—relented and agreed to join the global effort.

With Hungary, 136 countries representing 90 percent of global gross domestic product have now signed up, the Paris-based Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development said. Estonia also joined the reform on Thursday. The OECD said Kenya, Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Pakistan are the last holdouts among 140 countries that have negotiated the tax. Pakistan had been on a previous list of signatories. The organization said countries are aiming to sign a multilateral convention in 2022, with an eye on implementing the reform in 2023.

'Historic moment'

The years-long talks received a boost earlier this year when the administration of US President Joe Biden backed a global minimum tax rate of at least 15 percent. The coronavirus pandemic added urgency to the reforms as countries need new sources of revenue to pay for huge stimulus programs that were deployed during last year's global recession.

"Today's agreement represents a once-in-a-generation accomplishment for economic diplomacy," US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said in a statement. "As of this morning, virtually the entire global economy has decided to end the race to the bottom on corporate taxation," Yellen said.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen called it a "historic moment", saying "all companies have to pay their fair share". The Brussels-based Computer and Communications Industry Association welcomed the deal. It was a step "to ensure that the international tax rules reflect today's global economy," the CCIA's vice president Christian Borggreen said in a statement. "This is an important step towards more fairness and certainty in the global tax system." Facebook said it was "pleased to see an emerging international consensus."

'Shameful'

The social media platform "has long called for reform of the global tax rules,

and we recognize this could mean paying more tax, and in different places," said Facebook vice president for global affairs, Nick Clegg. But the charity Oxfam was scathing.

"Today's tax deal was meant to end tax havens for good. Instead it was written by them," said Oxfam's tax policy expert, Susana Ruiz. "This deal is a shameful and dangerous capitulation to the low-tax model of nations like Ireland." The Hungarian government said in a statement that it agreed to join the global tax after securing concessions including a transitional period of 10 years for a special rate to remain in place.

Hungary has a nine percent tax rate, even lower than Ireland's 12.5 percent. "A compromise has come about that we are able to join wholeheartedly," Hungarian Finance Minister Mihaly Varga said. "Hungary will be able to collect the global tax using a targeted solution."

\$150bn for governments

The OECD said in July that 130 countries had agreed to a tax of "at least" 15 percent. Ireland finally backed down after the phrase "at least" was removed from the reform as it feared that it could have led to future increases of the rate. Ireland's low levy has attracted an outsized number of pharma and tech firms but also drawn accusations that the nation acts as a tax haven. The OECD says a global minimum cor-



PARIS: Secretary General of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Mathias Cormann delivers an inaugural speech at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's Ministerial Council Meeting in Paris. —AFP

porate tax rate of 15 percent could add \$150 billion to government coffers annually. The rate will apply to companies with revenue exceeding 750 million euros (\$867 million).

In addition to the minimum rate, the 136 countries also agreed to reallocate more than \$125 billion of profits from around 100 of the world's most profitable multinationals to countries worldwide. This means companies will have to pay taxes in countries where they have business activities and earn profits,

regardless of whether they have a physical presence here—a change that would affect big US tech firms such as Facebook. G20 leaders are expected to sign off on the deal at a summit in Rome in late October. "It is a far-reaching agreement which ensures our international tax system is fit for purpose in a digitalized and globalized world economy," Cormann said.

"We must now work swiftly and diligently to ensure the effective implementation of this major reform." —AFP

Volcanic grit, water shortage threaten La Palma's bananas

LOS LLANOS DE ARIDANE, Spain: "It's worse than a plague," curses Pedro Antonio Sanchez, fuming over the volcanic grit coating his bananas, the main source of wealth on the Canary island of La Palma. "It's worse than a pest or disease because it scratches (the fruit)," says Sanchez, gesturing at the black sandy deposits that have rained down from the sky since the volcano erupted on September 19.

The volcano has caused huge damage to banana plantations in La Palma—the second-largest producer in the Atlantic Canary Islands—where the crop accounts for 50 percent of the island's economy, industry figures show. Once the black grit lands on the bananas, it is almost impossible to remove.

And it causes further damage in the handling, transport and packing, with the huge bunches—which are known as "pineapples" and can weigh up to 70 kilos (150 pounds) — carried on the shoulders. "You have to blast it off with water or something, to be honest I don't know how to do it," says this 60-year-

old who owns a small plantation.

"When the dew forms overnight, it really makes the grit stick and in the morning it just won't come off," he says, with evident frustration. The skin blackens in the form of a scratch but nothing like the brownish-black markings, known as bruises, which show the fruit is ripe.

And although the banana is perfect, it is rejected and cannot be sold. "European quality regulations ban the sale of bananas with more than four square centimeters of scratches per fruit, even if they are perfect inside and can be eaten without risk," says Esther Dominguez of ASPROCAN, which represents banana producers in the Canary Islands.

One year's crop lost

"It just takes away your desire to work, makes you want to throw in the towel because they are just so ugly," he says, his face darkening as he looks at his damaged fruit. "We're in a really bad situation."

The volcano's eruption has predomi-



LOS LLANOS DE ARIDANE, Spain: Farmer Pedro Antonio Sanchez, 60 years old, works at his banana plantation in Los Llanos de Aridane, on the Canary Island of La Palma. —AFP

nantly hurt the Aridane valley on the western flank of La Palma, although the problem caused by volcanic ash and grit has affected a much wider area. "It is not just the Aridane valley because the wind changes direction and ash is blown all over so 100 percent of the island is affected," Juan Vicente Rodriguez Leal, head of the Covalle agricultural cooperative told AFP.

"So we are going to have a significant loss of at least one year's crop," he said, estimating losses of "around 120 to 130 million euros (\$140 to \$150 million)". The plantations are also suffering from a lack of water after the lava destroyed the area's irrigation pipeline. Bananas, explains Sanchez, need a lot of water and the current shortage "is the biggest threat". —AFP

BoE warns markets could be in for a sharp correction

LONDON: Financial markets, which have rebounded recently on low global interest rates and vast economic stimulus during the coronavirus pandemic, could be in for a "sharp" correction, the Bank of England warned on Friday. Investors have increased their exposure to riskier assets such as equities in view of the brighter economic outlook. But they could be forced to reassess their positions, the BoE's Financial Policy Committee, which is tasked with safeguarding the financial system, warned in a new report.

Like other central banks around the world, including the US Federal Reserve, the BoE launched a massive asset-purchasing program, buying up corporate bonds, that helped to fuel a rally in global markets. "Following the COVID shock, central banks cut interest rates and undertook asset purchases to support economic activity and prevent an unwarranted tightening of financial conditions for corporates and households," the FPC's financial stability report said.

"Since then, risky asset prices have increased and, in a number of markets, asset valuations appear elevated relative to historical norms." Those valuations "could correct sharply if, for example, market participants re-evaluate the prospects for growth, inflation or interest rates," it said.

Markets are on edge over the inflation outlook, as consumer prices soar on the back of economic reopening, supply chain problems, runaway energy costs and other commodity prices. The FPC pointed to "signs of continued loosening in underwriting standards and increased risk-taking in some investment banking businesses". And those risks "can affect UK financial stability through the direct impact on banks and the indirect impact of losses spreading through other parts of the global financial system", it said.

However, the FPC said the core UK banking system was "resilient" to such losses. Central banks are now grappling with how and when to withdraw ultra-loose monetary policy and massive stimulus programs. The US Federal Reserve in September indicated it would start tapering its massive bond-buying program by the end of the year. The Bank of England has so far left its stimulus unchanged, but there were signs of dissent at its most recent policy meeting, when two of its rate-setting panel voted to stop the bond-buying stimulus as soon as possible to help quell inflation. But the other seven members, including governor Andrew Bailey, voted for no change. —AFP

Decision on future of Georgieva's job in IMF 'very soon'

WASHINGTON: The International Monetary Fund said it will decide "very soon" whether its embattled managing director Kristalina Georgieva keeps her job. An investigation by a law firm has concluded that she manipulated data in favor of China while in a senior role at the World Bank.

The IMF Executive Board said after a meeting Friday that it has made "significant progress" in its assessment of the case but agreed "to request more clarifying details with a view to very soon concluding its consideration of the matter." On Thursday Georgieva, 68, said she hoped for an "expeditious resolution" of the case.

The IMF Executive Board is reviewing last month's investigation by the law firm WilmerHale that found that during her time as World Bank CEO, Georgieva was among top officials who pressured staff into changing data to China's benefit in the 2018 edition of its closely watched Doing Business report.

Georgieva spoke to the IMF board this week. She has repeatedly denied the report's conclusions, and on Thursday released a letter from her attorney to the board objecting to WilmerHale's findings, as well as her 12-page testimony to the 24 board members. The law



Kristalina Georgieva

firm found that Georgieva along with her associate Simeon Djankov, a former Bulgarian finance minister who created the report, and Jim Yong Kim, then-president of the bank, pressured staff to change the calculation of China's ranking to avoid angering Beijing. The push came while bank leadership was engaged in sensitive negotiations with Beijing over increasing the bank's lending capital.

The Executive Board could meet again a source close to the matter said on condition of anonymity. This source added that Georgieva has won the support of France and other European countries. The United States, a key member of the IMF, has not yet stated its position on this controversy, according to two sources with knowledge of the situation. Time is of the essence because the IMF and the World Bank begin their fall meetings on Monday. —AFP

Iran's new CB chief wants to rein in inflation

TEHRAN: Iran's new central bank governor Ali Saleh-Abadi has said he intends to implement strict monetary policy in order to control inflation, as the country battles a severe economic crisis.

"The most important priority of the central bank is to control inflation, and with the help of the government's economic team... we (will) try to stabilise various markets in the coming months," the English-language Tehran Times quoted him Friday as saying. Annual inflation reached 43.7 percent in September, according to official figures. Saleh-Abadi said pursuing stability in the foreign currency exchange market would also be a priority, adding that "the necessary mechanisms have been devised to have balance" in the market.

The rial was trading at around 280,000 to the dollar at exchange offices on Friday, compared to 258,000 at the start of the year. "We will try to control the money supply and prevent additional borrowing by banks from the central bank in order to stabilize the market," he told Iranian television this week. Appointed Wednesday, 43-year-old Saleh-Abadi is the youngest Iranian to hold the post of central bank governor.

He holds a doctorate in financial management from the University of Tehran and managed the country's stock exchange from 2005 to 2014, before becoming chief of the Export Development Bank of Iran. Iran has been strangled financially by sanctions reimposed by Washington after then US president Donald Trump pulled out of a multilateral nuclear deal in 2018. The country of 83 million people has since been hit by a severe economic crisis amplified by the COVID pandemic. —AFP

Business



Eng Maziad Al-Harbi tours the new branch



Al-Harbi and Atoui during the honoring ceremony

stc opens doors to its largest and most advanced branch in Kuwait

Revamped to provide an exceptional and interactive experience for all visitors

KUWAIT: Kuwait Telecommunications Company - stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, opened the doors to its largest and most advanced branch in Kuwait at the Marina Mall. Designed to incorporate state-of-the-art technology with a compelling digitized and smart experience, stc's revamped branch falls in line with the Company's digital transformation and corporate strategies.

The grand opening of the new branch concept was attended by the Chief Executive Officer of stc, engineer Maziad Al-Harbi, in addition to other members of stc's executive management. The plan to introduce a new design that integrates both innovative features and improved efficiency aims to showcase the deep understanding that stc enjoys in meeting the diverse needs of its growing customer base. With the gradual resumption to normalcy due to the increased number of vaccinated residents, the new branch welcomes visitors to an exceptional firsthand shopping experience.

The Marina Mall branch consists of two floors, each organized with customer convenience and simplicity in mind. The first floor will include numerous display stations featuring the latest smartphone and entertainment devices from some of the world's top tech-brands. Customers will get to experience the devices firsthand, while learning more about stc's special offers and exclusive plans. The second floor will be dedicated to cus-

tomers support and sales to address any concerns or queries regarding stc's products or services. Additionally, there will be a 24/7 self-service area dedicated to fulfilling customers' requests at their convenience.

Following its ongoing commitment to support the decisions taken by the Ministry of Health to overcome the pandemic, the new branch will apply the necessary precautionary measures such as social distancing, mandatory face masks and regular sanitization to ensure the safety of both customers and employees. stc also maintains the same safety standards in its headquarters, branches, and at any external initiatives it participates in to mitigate the risk associated with the current pandemic.

Commenting on the opening, Chief Consumer Officer (CCO) of stc, engineer Amer Atoui, said, "We consistently focus on enhancing the customer journey for our customers while providing them with ease of access to our products and services. The revamped branch aims to provide a simplified, yet more personalized experience, in which customers can explore the range of popular devices that we offer. With the new features incorporated into the customer-centric model that we applied when designing this branch, our goal is to offer an entertaining and interactive experience for our visitors, whether they are new or existing customers."

Atoui added, "We will continue to introduce new



KUWAIT: Eng Maziad Al-Harbi poses for a group photo with stc team

methods to engage our customers with our offerings and provide them with an experience in line with some of the innovations introduced in this digital era. Whether it is through one of our branches, digital platforms, or through our call center, our primary objective of

enhancing the lifestyles of our customers remains consistent. This goes hand in hand with our corporate strategy that builds on our exclusive offers and promotions, strengthening our 5G network, and offering a range of solutions at affordable and competitive prices."

Delta wave tossed wrench into US job market in Sept

LOS ANGELES: The US economy was predicted to add hundreds of thousands of jobs last month but instead gained only 194,000 as the Delta variant of COVID-19 again denied President Joe Biden the soaring labor market he is banking on-at least for now. Schools shed jobs, and the bars and restaurants that have become a barometer of the virus' threat to business added barely any positions in the Labor Department's September employment report released Friday, which at best presented a mixed verdict on the state of the world's largest economy.

On a more positive note, the unemployment rate ticked down more than expected to 4.8 percent, and the last two months' jobs gains have been revised upwards, underlining that the United States has come a long way from the devastating weeks last year when COVID caused tens of millions to lose their jobs. Biden has been banking on an economic revival to build support for his presidency-defining spending bills while also fending off the Republican opposition's attempts to use the country's debt limit to force a retreat on his ambitious agenda. The data underscores how the virus's fast-spreading variant has complicated those plans, though cases have declined nationwide since the cutoff for the report's data, in the first half of September. Biden called the drop in the unemployment rate "a significant improvement from when I took office, and a sign that our recovery is moving forward, even in the face of a COVID pandemic."

But the Republican National Committee was scathing, tweeting: "Joe Biden has failed Americans." Economists view the data as likely enough for the Federal Reserve to begin slowing its massive purchases of bonds and securities meant to help the country through the pandemic, as they signaled they could do later this year. "With debt ceiling shenanigans pushed back until December 3, the road is clear for an announcement at the November" meeting of the Fed's policy committee, Lydia Boussour of Oxford Economics said.

Back from the depths

The monthly employment data have become progress reports for the United States' bounceback after more than 20 million jobs were lost to the pandemic, and the latest report showed the economy had regained 17.4 million positions since the downturn's nadir in September 2020. However there were still five million positions missing, with job growth averaging 561,000 per month this year and fluctuating significantly.

In July, the economy added an upwardly revised total of nearly 1.1 million positions. But that was before Delta struck, slashing job down to 366,000 in August, according to revised data from Friday's report. Industries that bore the brunt of the pandemic suffered in September, with food and drinking places adding barely any positions for the second straight month after averaging gains of 197,000 between January and July. Overall leisure and hospitality sector employment rose 74,000 positions, professional and business services added 60,000 jobs, retail trade gained 56,000 and transportation and warehousing rose 47,000.

Shortfall at schools

Schools appeared to shed workers and hold back overall jobs gains, with local government education employment falling 144,000 and state government education shedding 17,000 positions during the season when they typically add staff as the new school year begins, the data said. There was also little movement in the labor force participation rate indicating the share of the population employed or actively looking for work. It stood at 61.6 percent last month, within the range it has hovered since June of last year. The US labor market's racial inequalities continued in September, with the Hispanic unemployment rate declining to 6.3 percent and the rate for African Americans falling sharply to 7.9 percent, though both were above the 4.2 percent rate for white people. In the education sector, the report warned that "recent employment changes are challenging to interpret" and said the pandemic had "distorted the normal seasonal hiring and layoff patterns."

Weak leisure and hospitality hiring likely slowed the employment gains overall, and Ian Shepherdson of Pantheon Macroeconomics predicted "October will be much better, given the continued decline in Delta cases and rising activity in the restaurant, airline and hotel sectors." — AFP



LOS ANGELES, US: Melissa Honore-Madere of the US Postal Service helps applicant Andrew Valenzuela with his application during a job fair at a Post Office in Los Angeles in this recent file photo. — AFP

Burgan Bank's offer for youth customers on movie 'Venom'

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced that it is offering its youth customers the chance to watch the prescreening of the new movie "Venom" for free at Grand Cinemas movie theatre in Al-Hamra Luxury Centre. The movie screening organized in collaboration with Grand Cinemas will be held on Wednesday October, 13th, 2021 at 8 PM. Burgan Youth account customer can book their free prescreening seats through Grand Cinemas box office at Al-HAMRA Centre by simply presenting their Youth ATM card starting today. The seats are limited, and each customer is entitled to 2 free tickets.

Burgan Bank strives to continuously reward its Youth account customers with exclusive offers and promotions at their favorite trendy and popular brands and outlets, in addition to great lifestyle and entertainment experiences.

US and China chief trade negotiators hold 'candid exchange'

WASHINGTON: US Trade Representative Katherine Tai spoke with Chinese Vice Premier Liu He on Friday to discuss Chinese commercial practices that Washington deems unfair. This was the second consultation between the chief trade negotiators from the world's two biggest economies after relations were damaged under former US president Donald Trump. The two last spoke in May. "During their candid exchange, Ambassador Tai and Vice Premier Liu acknowledged the importance of the bilateral trade relationship and the impact that it has not only on the United States and China but also the global economy," the USTR said in a statement. China's state-run Xinhua news agency said the two sides "conducted pragmatic, candid and constructive exchanges."

"Both sides expressed their core concerns and agreed to resolve each other's legitimate concerns through consultation," it said. The Friday discussion was "an opportunity for the United States and China to commit to forging a trade relationship that is managed responsibly," a USTR official said on condition of anonymity. Tai underscored US concerns "relating to China's state-led, non-market policies and practices that harm American workers, farmers and businesses," the USTR said. The Biden administration says China's massive state subsidies for national companies, intellectual property theft and other factors create a heavily uneven playing field in trade. Trump imposed tariffs on Chinese products worth \$370 billion in 2018, citing trade practices Washington deemed "unfair." But many US companies have criticized the levies, saying they drive up costs, since importers bear their brunt.—AFP

Irish tech sector weighs implications of global tax plan

DUBLIN: The day after Ireland backed plans for a minimum global corporation tax of 15 percent, tech firms lured to the Republic by its historically low levy are waking up to the possibility that their situation might now change radically. "Ireland has long sold stability and certainty of its regime as being an attractive feature for foreign investments," economics lecturer Seamus Coffey, from University College Cork, told AFP. "I don't think such stability and certainty can be considered to be as reliable now."

On Thursday, Finance Minister Paschal Donohoe said Ireland had relented its holdout against global tax reform efforts helmed by the Paris-based Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The scheme aims to stop multinationals cutting tax bills by setting up bases in nations with low rates.

Since 2003, Ireland has taxed corporations at a rate of 12.5 percent. While that has drawn accusations that the country is a tax haven, Dublin insists that the low levy is key to attracting foreign investment and jobs. Coffey said an increase in corporation tax of 2.5 percentage points will not lead to an exodus of employers from Ireland over the short or medium term.

But the manner in which Ireland was strong-armed into change by the OECD and G7 nations may stick in the mind of employers considering Ireland as a new prospect in the longer term. "The significance of Ireland's corporate tax rate being changed as a result of outside influences... shouldn't be discounted," he said. "The pipeline of investments may not be as readily available as it was in the past."

Tax 'brand'

Facebook, Google and Apple all maintain large offices in Ireland. The digital sector accounts for 13 percent of the country's gross domestic product and employs 210,000, according to industry lobby group Technology Ireland. The tech boom is most starkly visible in Dublin where the "Silicon Docks" host metal and glass office hubs for Google and Facebook, towering over the capital's skyline.

Government investment agency IDA Ireland said the country "has become the global technology hub of choice when it comes to attracting the strategic business activities of ICT companies". In a country of just five million, the 12.5 percent rate has been a key draw. "The importance of the 12.5 percent now is really that it's known worldwide by anybody with an interest in this area," said Trinity College Dublin professor Frank Barry.—AFP



DUBLIN: Ireland's Finance Minister Paschal Donohoe speaks during a press conference in Dublin on Friday. — AFP

Business

KFH wins 'Best Private Bank for Islamic Services' award

Award in recognition of its digital excellence and technology adoption

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has won the highly commended achievement "Best Private Bank for Islamic Services" Award globally at the 31st Private Banker International Global Wealth Awards 2021. The award recognizes how reputed banks are adapting to market and technological shifts in a post-COVID-19 economy, their socially responsible investment strategies, and how industry participants have differentiated their proposition to protect and grow revenues to offset the immediate losses caused by the unprecedented economic downturn resulting from COVID-19. Other main areas of evaluation for banks included digital innovation and adoption of technology to improve client experience. An independent panel of judges evaluates each submission and ranks each entry. The total of all the scores is then combined and compared to other submissions to determine the winner.

Haytham Al-Terkait, Group Chief Information Officer at (KFH), expressed his pride that KFH gained "Best Private Bank for Islamic Services 2021" award. He said that this prestigious award reflects the Bank's success in developing best innovative banking solutions, its



Haytham Al-Terkait

leadership as a global Islamic institution, and its improved financial performance as well as high flexibility during the pandemic.

He confirmed that the award is a culmination of KFH's efforts in providing the highest standards of Islamic financial services, especially after the significant success achieved by KFH which contributed to

the development of the banking industry. This is in addition to its keenness to develop the services in the Islamic finance industry.

Digital excellence

Al-Terkait added that "despite the exceptional repercussions of the pandemic on the markets and economies, we were unique in launching several digital services in 2020 and 2021. For example, KFH was the

first bank to implement the E-signature service for personal finance transactions and to offer instant card issuance using hybrid solution where customers can print their cards within 3 minutes. Moreover, KFH introduces integrated digital services through different channels: KFHonline app, KFH Go and the website, among other alternative channels."

He explained that the award is well deserved thanks to the remarkable contributions by KFH in developing the Islamic financial services and innovating products that meet the needs of customers efficiently and effectively while keeping pace with the latest banking and financial technologies.

Strengths

Al-Terkait confirmed that the global awards gained by KFH this year reflect the core strengths the bank enjoys, including Islamic diversified and solid franchisees, high liquidity, geographic spread on the Group level, as well as diversified banking and investment services that adopt the latest global technologies and standards.

"In addition to its leading position in financial services and Sukuk markets, KFH achieved qualitative leaps in implementing digital transformation strategy through adopting the latest financial innovations", he said. According to MEED said: "With its legacy as the first Islamic bank to be established in Kuwait, Kuwait Finance House has achieved a great deal in its 44 years of operation. As the only Islamic bank covering multiple international markets, they are able to offer an unrivalled breadth of service to their clients."

Private Banker International (PBI) is an editorially independent briefing service aimed at banks, financial services companies, related intermediaries, and technology vendors in the private banking and wealth management sector. It also provides valuable and credible information on global private banking strategies, products and services, regulation and compliance, M&A activity as well as deals and technology. The 31st edition of the Private Banker International Global Wealth Awards is presented by Private Banker International publication, organized in collaboration with Middle East Economic Digest (MEED), and its parent company GlobalData.



Ooredoo Kuwait opens pre-orders for all-new iPhone13

KUWAIT: Ooredoo Telecom, the first to introduce innovative digital services in Kuwait, has revealed that pre-orders for the iPhone13 line set via the company's website is now open which started from October 8.

With a beautiful all-new design, iPhone13 devices feature a dramatically more powerful camera system, the world's fastest smartphone chip, A15 Bionic designed by Apple, a huge leap in battery life, exceptional durability with the Ceramic Shield front cover, and Super Retina XDR display with ProMotion for a more immersive viewing experience. In addition to a super intelligent software for new photo and filmmaking techniques. Mijbil Alayoub, Senior Director, Corporate Communications - Ooredoo Kuwait said: "We adapt the principle of "first-movers" as one of the main pillars of the company's strategy, as we always strive to take proactive steps before the real event occur in the competitive market, which gives our customers the priority to enjoy the latest products and devices that aim to meet the growing and changing demands and needs of the modern customer."

Pre-orders of the all-new iPhone13 Mini, iPhone13, iPhone13 Pro, and iPhone13 Pro Max are still open, noting that the devices will be available soon for customers in branches and on the company's official website www.ooredoo.com.kw.

LuLu Hypermarket launches 'Awesome South Africa 2021' promotion

KUWAIT: LuLu Hypermarket, the leading retailer in the region and regarded as among the most powerful retailers in the world, launched the 'Awesome South Africa 2021' promotion at all its outlets in Kuwait from 6



ABK collaborates with Fawzia Sultan Healthcare network

KUWAIT: In its continuous efforts to promote physical and mental wellbeing amongst its employees, Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) in alignment with World Mental Health Day announced its collaboration with Fawzia Sultan Healthcare Network program. The program will provide a 'Mental Health & Wellbeing Workshop' and an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) which is designed to achieve a sustainable health regimen, supported by a systematic

approach to enhance employees' lives in and out of the workplace. The program also aims to assist employees with personal and work-related issues that may impact job performance, health, mental and emotional wellbeing.

As part of the program, sessions have been subsidized, and exclusive discounts have been applied for counseling sessions, Psychoeducational Assessment, Neuropsychological Assessments, IQ/ Cognitive Assessment, and Personality Assessments. Due to the pandemic, unprecedented challenges negatively impacted the physical and mental health of businesses and employees alike, shedding light on the importance of a healthy workplace and positive environment.

Afrah Al-Arbash, Acting GM - Human Resources Division, said: "Through programs such as the Mental Health & Wellbeing Workshops and Employee Assistance Program (EAP), ABK is reaffirming its employee-first approach commitment as well as reinforcing the Bank's pledge towards preserving and developing its employees through recognition and support".

October. The week-long festival, which runs to 12 October, was inaugurated by South African Ambassador to Kuwait Manelisi GENGE, at the Al-Qurain outlet of the hypermarket in the presence of top management officials.

The 'Awesome South Africa 2021' promotion that highlights and celebrates the extensive range and multiplicity of high-quality food products from the 'Rainbow Nation', provides shoppers with the opportunity to purchase some of the finest and most popular South African food items at very special prices.

Among the competitively priced products being offered at during the promotion period are more than three dozen popular South African brands, including: All Gold, All Joy, B Well, Bakers, Blue Diamond, Bokomo,



Key questions on the global tax movement

PARIS: The OECD hailed a "major victory" on Friday as 136 countries agreed on a global minimum tax rate on multinational corporations that a number of holdout countries had opposed. Hungary, Ireland and Estonia became the latest countries to join the reform.

Here are key questions regarding the global tax:

How did we get here?

In 2017, the OECD was tasked by the G20 group of industrialized and emerging economies to fight what is known as domestic tax base erosion and profit shifting (BEPS). This refers to the way in which multinational companies take advantage of different countries' tax systems to limit the amount of tax they pay, also known as tax optimization. The talks got a boost earlier this year when the administration of US President Joe Biden backed a global minimum tax rate of at least 15 percent to put an end to a "race to the bottom" between nations. The coronavirus pandemic has also added urgency to the reforms as countries need new sources of revenue to pay for huge stimulus programs that were deployed during last year's global recession.

Two-pillar reform

The proposed reform comprises two pillars to deter companies from establishing bases in countries with low taxes to maximize profits earned elsewhere. The first pillar would give countries a share of the taxes on profits earned there, though the tax would still be collected where the company has its fiscal base.

Multinationals operate in many countries-oil giant BP is present in 85, for example-but usually pay taxes on profits only in their tax home. This provision would initial-

ly apply only to the top 100 or so companies, before expanding after seven years. The second pillar is a global minimum corporate tax rate of "at least" 15 percent to stop competition between countries over who can offer companies the lowest rate.

What were some of the objections?

Ireland, whose low rate has attracted the likes of Apple, Google and Facebook, was reluctant to join the global tax movement because the proposed deal talked about a rate of "at least" 15 percent.

Dublin feared it could leave the door open to further increases in the future. But Finance Minister Paschal Donohoe said Ireland would raise its corporate tax rate from 12.5 to 15 percent for multinationals with more than 750 million euros (\$867 million) in annual sales.

Hungary agreed to sign up after securing concessions including a transitional period of 10 years for a special rate to remain in place. "The Hungarian standpoint has been consistent throughout: we made it clear that we would only adopt a global minimum tax that does not lead to a tax increase in Hungary, does not endanger the competitive advantage of the Hungarian economy, and protects the workplaces of the Hungarian people," Finance Minister Mihaly Varga said.

What now?

With Estonia, Ireland and Hungary all relenting this week, Kenya, Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Pakistan are the last remaining holdouts among the 140 nations taking part in negotiations. The OECD says a global minimum corporate tax rate of 15 percent could add \$150 billion to government coffers annually.

In addition to the minimum rate, the 136 countries also agreed to reallocate more than \$125 billion of profits from around 100 of the world's most profitable multinationals to countries worldwide.

G20 leaders are expected to sign off on the deal when they meet in Rome in late October. But the process does not end there. The legislatures of each signatory will then have to approve the reform, with the OECD hoping that the new tax regime could be in place by 2023. — AFP



KUWAIT: South African Ambassador to Kuwait Manelisi Genge inaugurates 'Awesome South Africa 2021' festival at the Al-Qurain outlet of Lulu Hypermarket in the presence of top management officials.



Competitors run along a sand dune during Stage 5 of the 35th edition of the Marathon des Sables.

Blisters, diarrhoea, comas: Marathon runners battle Moroccan desert

For the survivors who cross the finish line of the 35th Marathon des Sables yesterday, the six-day, 254km slog across the sands have brought heat exhaustion, blisters, diarrhoea and joy. "It's so hot! It's unbearable. I cry while walking. I am exhausted, my head is spinning," said Sixtine Morizot, a 30-year-old from Paris as she sank her feet into the sand as best she could. This year, the temperatures have been particularly high in the Moroccan desert. They reached 52 degrees celsius on the second stage. A competitor died of a heart attack after overheating. "It's special this year, because there have been a lot of retirements where the main cause was dehydration," said Frederic Compagnon, head doctor of a 45-person team.



Rachid (left) and Mohamed el-Morabity respectively first and second placed so far in the 35th edition of the Marathon des Sables make fire at the bivouac at the end of the 5th stage of the race, in Sud Jebel Irhfelt NiTissalt in the southern Moroccan Sahara desert.



Competitors take part in the Stage 4 of the 35th edition of the Marathon des Sables between Jebel El Mraier and Boulchrhal in the southern Moroccan Sahara desert. The 35th edition of the marathon is a live stage 250 kilometers race through a formidable landscape in one of the world's most inhospitable climates. — AFP photos

"The temperatures are high but not extreme. It is hot and people were not prepared well enough. There are heat-strokes, which associated with high temperatures also cause hallucinations, even comas", he said, adding that he had counted nine runners who had fallen into comas. Alix Noblat, who appeared in French TV reality show Koh Lanta, lost consciousness during the third stage. She had literally emptied herself, like almost half of the camp,

because of an epidemic of gastro which spread like wildfire.

The nightly bivouacs are animated by vomiting and diarrhoea. "It's like Jurassic Park, you can hear the vomiting!" Noblat said. At the race bivouac, the podiatrists are busy. Every evening, runners lie on their backs and stretch out their legs, offering their blistered feet for treatment. Compagnon said he saw one man whose skin on the soles of his feet had completely disappeared, leaving the flesh raw. On Thursday's marathon 86.2km fourth stage, race leader Rachid Al Morabity finished in 8hr 46min 16 sec at an average speed of 9.23km per hour.

'I want to go dancing!'

A few seconds under 22 hours later, Christine Taieb and Valerie Angot, two Frenchwomen, crossed the line holding hands to the acclaim of the other competitors. They were followed home by Nadjib and his two camels, whose job is to bring up the rear. "I didn't expect this welcome!" said Taieb, who is running her first Marathon des Sables at 70. She was however penalized 30 minutes for 'exceptional water assistance' during the stage.

"I'm still here. It hurts a lot," she said on Friday evening. "To cross the finish line tomorrow would be so amazing," she said, looking ahead to the stage, at 7.7km a relative sprint. "When I think about it. Wow! it's going to be a very intense feeling." Ahead of Friday's 42.2km penultimate stage, Morizot was bubbly. It is her first Marathon des Sables. "And it's my last," she said. "It's the hardest race of my life. Really. I have accomplished something. I came to surpass myself, to push my limits. The contract is fulfilled. I will not do it again". — AFP

"I'm an average woman, I'm overweight, I'm 70 years old, I've worked a lot. But even at 70, you can enjoy yourself. I have worked hard but I feel great, I want to go dancing! But I know that I will go limp when I do my laundry tonight," she says. At the other age extreme is Anna Krojjer a 16-year-old Dane who lives in London and the youngest competitor. She is running with her father who completed the race in 2014.

"I'm still here. It hurts a lot," she said on Friday evening. "To cross the finish line tomorrow would be so amazing," she said, looking ahead to the stage, at 7.7km a relative sprint. "When I think about it. Wow! it's going to be a very intense feeling." Ahead of Friday's 42.2km penultimate stage, Morizot was bubbly. It is her first Marathon des Sables. "And it's my last," she said. "It's the hardest race of my life. Really. I have accomplished something. I came to surpass myself, to push my limits. The contract is fulfilled. I will not do it again". — AFP



Athletes compete in Stage 1 of the 35th edition of the Marathon des Sables between Borj Irdi and Tisserdimine in the southern Moroccan Sahara desert.



Competitors prepare to start Stage 3 of the 35th edition of the Marathon des Sables between Kourci Dial Zaid and Jebel El Mraier in the southern Moroccan Sahara desert.



Competitors receive care in a tent after the Stage 4 of the 35th edition of the Marathon des Sables between Jebel El Mraier and Boulchrhal in the southern Moroccan Sahara desert.

For David Hockney, lockdown was natural blessing

British artist David Hockney has always been a workhorse, so his months of lockdown in France were a welcome opportunity to devote himself to observing nature. "I really enjoy looking," the dapper 84-year-old told AFP. "If

you look at the world, it's very beautiful. But you've got to have a clear head and there's lots of things that stop you looking," Hockney was speaking to AFP at the Musee de L'Orangerie in Paris, which is displaying the stunning fruits of that period in an exhibition, "A Year in Normandy", that opens on October 13.

It features a 91-metre-long frieze made up from some of the 220 pictures he created during the strange year of solitude in 2020. It is a clear nod to the 19th century masters of landscape, particularly Monet, who inhabits some of the neighboring rooms in the museum. "When the lockdown came I didn't mind at all," said

Hockney, 84, resplendent as ever in his trademark round-rimmed glasses and a checked suit. "We were in an isolated place and I worked every day because there were no visitors. Visitors put me off, get in the way."

All of the drawings were made on an iPad, which has become his preferred way to make art - much more than the photographs that used to be so central to his work. "I'm really off photography now," he said. "Everyone's a photographer. Everyone has a mobile phone in their pocket, they can all take photographs. Photographs are very boring." He loves drawing on the iPad, freeing him up from

the paraphernalia of regular painting. "It's a new technique. I don't think there's many people doing it," he said.

'You can't cancel Spring'

The dazzling colours of the Normandy countryside are a perfect fit for Hockney, who made his name with sun-soaked scenes from California in the 1960s. Though known for his jet-set lifestyle, sartorial elegance and large retinue of friends, he has always been an industrial worker and was delighted to have time to devote himself to nature, which has become his principal muse in recent years.

"They cancelled the Olympic Games,

but you can't cancel the Spring," he said with a mischievous grin. "The first day we came to Normandy, we watched a marvellous sunset over the Seine estuary. We had the clarity of Van Gogh." He dismisses the idea that landscapes are no longer an interesting subject for art. "Nature is the source of everything. When I went to Yorkshire 16 years ago, people 'said you can't paint landscape today'. I said 'that's just because of the paintings - the landscape itself can't be boring'. "The depictions of it have become boring, that's all. You've got to make them a bit different - and that's what I've tried to do." — AFP

Genesis postpone UK tour dates over positive COVID tests

English rock group Genesis has been forced to cancel four UK tour dates after band members tested positive for coronavirus ahead of shows in London and Glasgow. The band, which found massive international success in the 1980s, said in a statement on Friday they were "devastated" the show that evening and performances over the following three days would not go ahead.

The statement did not say whether the positive tests had impacted plans for Genesis' upcoming North America tour, which is due to start in Chicago on November 15. "Following guidance and advice from the Government, it is with huge regret that the final four shows of Genesis' Last Domino? Tour... have had to be postponed due to positive COVID-19 tests within the band," the statement said.

"This is a hugely frustrating development for the band who are devastated with this unlucky turn of events. They hate having to take these steps but the safety of the audience and touring crew has to take priority. They look forward to seeing you upon their return." The band said it was working to reschedule the postponed shows at the SSE Hydro arena in Glasgow and London's O2 Arena and would

announce new dates "as soon as possible". Tickets purchased for the performances will remain valid for the rearranged shows, they said.

The upcoming tour of the US and Canada is due to include shows in Washington DC, Charlotte, Montreal, Toronto, Buffalo, Detroit, Cleveland and Philadelphia. The 2021 tours, Genesis' first since 2007, has seen the line-up of Phil Collins, Tony Banks

and Mike Rutherford expanded to include Collins's 20-year-old son Nicholas on drums. The band's original trio are all now in their early 70s. Collins, who previously provided vocals and drums, has been left unable to play because of lingering health problems. — AFP

CHILEAN SCIENTIST PLANS TO CLEAN UP MINING WITH 'METAL EATING' BACTERIA

Starving microorganisms capable of surviving in extreme conditions have already managed to "eat" a nail in just three days. In Chile, a scientist is testing "metal-eating" bacteria she hopes could help clean up the country's highly-polluting mining industry.

In her laboratory in Antofagasta, an industrial town 1,100-kilometers north of Santiago, 33-year-old biotechnologist Nadac Reales has been carrying out tests with extremophiles - organisms that live in extreme environments.

truck hoppers that can hold 50 tons of rock, cannot and are often discarded in Chile's Atacama desert, home to the majority of the country's mining industry. Chile is the world's largest producer of copper, which accounts for up to 15 percent of the country's GDP, resulting in a lot of mining waste that pollutes the environment. In her research, Reales, who now runs her own company Rudanac Biotec, concentrated on iron-oxidizing bacteria called Leptospirillum.

She extracted the bacteria from the



Chilean biotechnologist Nadac Reales works in her laboratory at a mining site in Antofagasta, Chile.



Reales came up with her idea while still at university as she was conducting tests at a mining plant using microorganisms to improve the extraction of copper. "I realized there were various needs in the mining industry, for example what happened with the metallic waste," she told AFP.

Some metals can be recycled in smelting plants but others, such as HGV

Tatio geysers located 4,200 meters above sea level, some 350 kilometers from Antofagasta. The bacteria "live in an acidic environment that is practically unaffected by relatively high concentrations of most metals," she said. "At first the bacteria took two months to disintegrate a nail." But when starved, they had to adapt and find a way of feeding themselves. After two years of trials, the



Picture of an old fire truck parked at the main square of the abandoned town of Pedro de Valdivia, built around an ex salt-peter mine, north of the Chilean city of Antofagasta. The deserted town, 1,600 km north of Santiago in the province of Antofagasta, was built in 1930 and housed about 14,000 people. In 1996 it was abandoned and became a National Historic Monument. — AFP photos

result was a marked increase in the speed at which the bacteria "ate," devouring a nail in just three days.

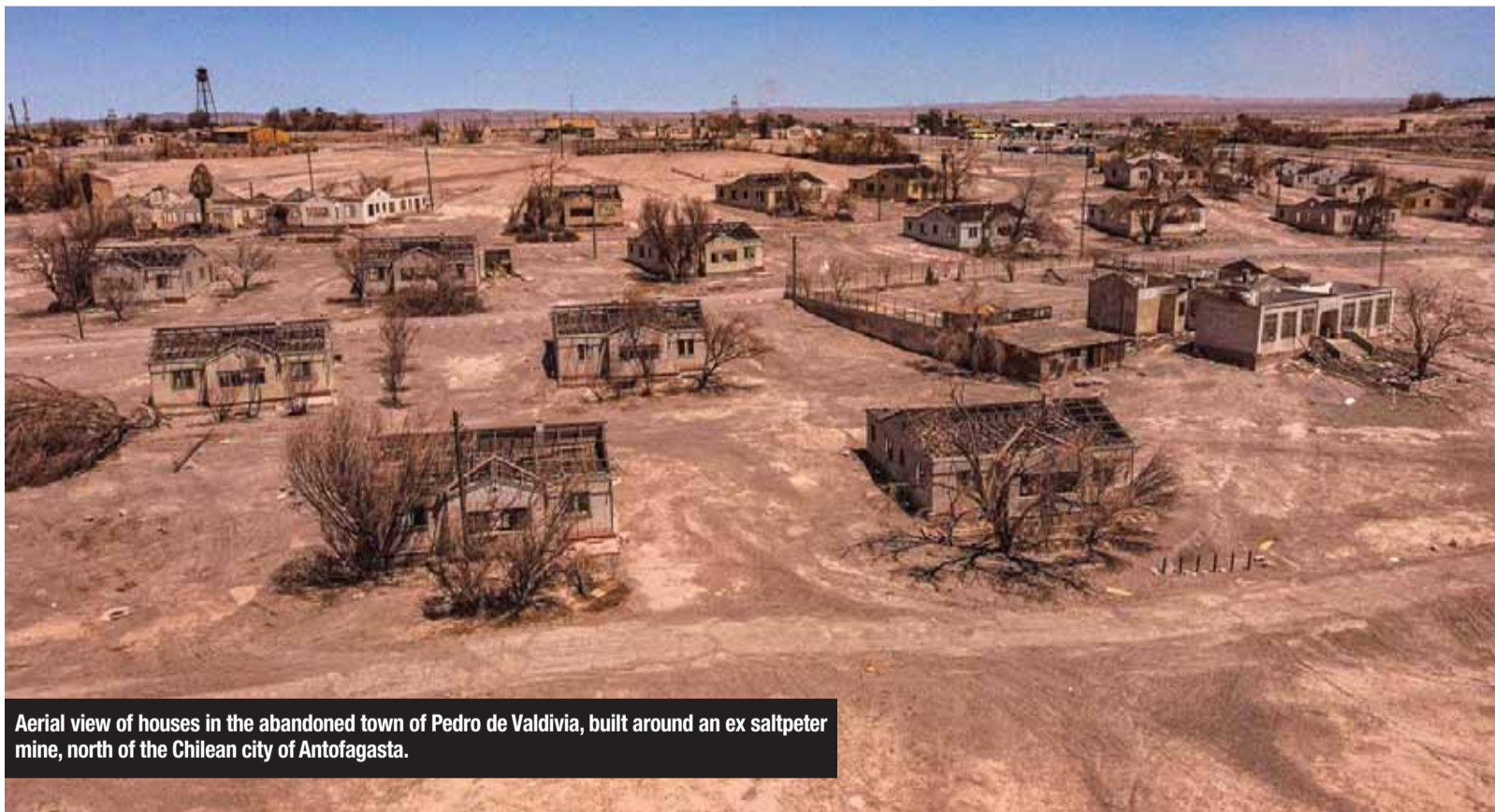
Surprising benefit

Reales says "chemical and microbiological tests" have proved the bacteria are not harmful to humans or the environment. "We've always seen a lot of potential in this project that has already passed an important test in the laboratory," said Drina Vejar, a microbiologist who is part of a four-person team working with Reales. "It's really necessary at this time when we have to plan for a more sustainable development, especially in all these cities with so many polluting industries."

Mining companies have shown interest in the research but while Rudanac Biotec previously benefitted from a state fund for start-ups, the company needs investment to move on to its next stage of trials. Reales says she needs money to see if her method will "eat a medium sized beam or a hopper." When the disintegration process is complete, what remains is a reddish liquid residue, a solution known as a lixiviant that itself possesses a surprising quality. "After bioremediation the product generated (the liquid) can improve the recovery of copper in a process called hydrometallurgy," said Reales.

Essentially, the liquid residue can be used to extract copper from rock in a

more sustainable manner than the current use of chemicals in leaching. Reales says it means green mining is "totally feasible." That is of great interest to mining companies that could use it to improve their large scale extraction of copper or other minerals, while also reducing their pollution, something they are required to do by law. Reales recently submitted a request for an international patent for her technology, but more importantly she hopes it will help reduce metal waste blotting the landscape in the mining regions of her country. — AFP



Aerial view of houses in the abandoned town of Pedro de Valdivia, built around an ex salt-peter mine, north of the Chilean city of Antofagasta.



Photo shows a picture of old children's games in the abandoned town of Pedro de Valdivia, built around an ex salt-peter mine, north of the Chilean city of Antofagasta.



Aerial view taken in the deserted town of Pedro de Valdivia, built around an ex salt-peter mine, north of the Chilean city of Antofagasta.

R. Kelly victim: 'I want remorse from him'

A young victim of sexual predator R. Kelly said Friday his conviction in a US court had freed her from the burden she was carrying. Faith Rodgers told reporters she was now able to get on with her life, with her abuser facing the possibility of dying in jail for decades of sexual abuse of women and children.

"I no longer have to explain myself," 24-year-old Rodgers said. "There's no black and white" since the conviction. "So it lifts the weight off my chest." Kelly, 54, was found guilty in September of nine criminal counts, including the most serious of racketeering, following six weeks of disturbing testimony. A jury heard how for decades he had recruited women and teenagers for sex, before grooming and brutally abusing them.

"I got nothing to say to him. There is nothing I want to see (from him)," Rodgers said of her expectations for Kelly's May 4 sentencing. "The apology is the conviction." Rodgers met Kelly in 2018. She says he initiated "non-consensual, painful and abusive sex" and infected her with sexually transmitted diseases. The case against Kelly, which was delayed for more than a year by the pandemic, is something of a milestone for the #MeToo movement because it was the first in which the majority of complainants were Black women.

Rodgers, who was speaking in Los Angeles, said Kelly's six-week trial in New York had been difficult. "There's like a lot of arrogance... the whole time in the courtroom. I knew he was trying to goad me and... shake (me) up a little bit. "That behavior was very, I would say, childish and not appropriate." Perhaps, she suggested, the sentencing would be the right time for Kelly to show contrition. "What I would like to see at that time is a little bit of remorse and accountability," she said. — AFP

Pop diva Adele breaks silence and bares pain in return interview

British megastar Adele has spoken of her "year of anxiety" that led her to live like a "recluse", in a rare interview published in Vogue ahead of the release of her new album "30". "I thought, I'm just going to lock myself in a house," she said of her anxiety-fueled retreat from the public glare, which began with two cancelled shows at London's Wembley Stadium in 2017 due to problems with her voice.

"That's what I did. I was very reclusive. It paid off. People are used to me being a recluse," she said in comments published on the fashion magazine's website late Thursday, her first major interview since 2016. The 33-year-old singer graces the cover of its US and UK editions this month. It was during what she called her subsequent "year of anxiety" that her marriage to Simon Konecki, with whom she had a son Angelo in 2011, fell apart. "Neither of us did anything wrong," she said. "Neither of us hurt each other or anything like that. 'I've

been on my journey to find my true happiness ever since," added Adele, who currently lived in Los Angeles.

Finding root of anxiety

Adele revealed that a new song on the album was inspired by a comment her son made to her as the marriage collapsed. She took solace in "a lot of sound baths"-a meditative experience in which participants are "bathed" in sound waves-alongside more traditional meditation, exercise, and "a lot of therapy". "I realized that when I was working out, I didn't have any anxiety." Adele added that therapy had made her realize that much of her anxiety stemmed from her childhood and relationship with father Marc Evans, who left home when she was aged 2.

"My relationship with men in general, my entire life, has always been: 'You're going to hurt me, so I'll hurt you first'. It's just toxic and prevents me from actually finding any happiness," she told Vogue. However, the

pair "got our peace" before Evans died of cancer earlier this year.

The stresses of the business and the death of compatriot Amy Winehouse almost led her to quitting the industry altogether, she revealed, at one point writing to her manager: "This isn't really for me. It's not why I love music".

"I got really famous right as Amy Winehouse died," she told Vogue. "And we watched her die right in front of our eyes." The Oscar and 15-time Grammy Award winning soul star told fans to expect a slight change in sound with the new album, noting there "isn't a bombastic 'Hello'," referring to her 2015 smash single. Her lyrics have also taken a change of course, she said. "I realized that I was the problem," she added. "All the other albums are like, you did this! You did that!.. Then I was like... I'm the running theme, actually. Maybe it's me!" — AFP

Lifestyle | Features

Biden restores protections to Utah land where dinosaurs once roamed

Utah land rich in dinosaur fossils has regained protection stripped away by former President Donald Trump, easing fears that they would be ravaged by mining and other commercial activity. "Close to 10 percent of all dinosaurs known in the world are from Utah," said Jim Kirkland, a paleontologist who has explored Utah's Grand Staircase monument area for nearly 50 years. "It's pretty remarkable."

Grand Staircase has a worldwide reputation for the quality and range of dinosaur fossils found. At the end of 2017, Trump's administration pulled back borders of three protected areas, two of them in Utah, opening previously safeguarded land to mining and fishing. The move was popular with industry groups but angered conservationists, researchers, and indigenous tribes.

"When they cut the boundaries back, some sites that are near and dear to my heart, that I had discovered, were chopped out," Kirkland told AFP. He was left to hope that the remains of triceratops and other dinosaurs would not be obliterated in the name of corporate profit. President Joe Biden on Friday restored environmental protections for two wild Utah expanses linked to America's indigenous history, and also a biodiverse area of the Atlantic.

Biden signed the proclamations at a ceremony on the North Lawn at the White House, restoring the full size and status at Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante monuments in Utah, as well as the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts area off the east coast. "After the last administration chipped away their protections, today I'm proud to announce the protection and expansion of three of our most treasured national monuments," he said.



In this file photo, volunteers and researchers with the Denver Museum of Nature and Science work to excavate dinosaur bones and fossils from a hillside during an expedition at the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument in Utah. — AFP photos

Bones vs Coal

For paleontologists, few regions in the world come close to the Rocky Mountains, with the dinosaur treasures buried there. During the Late Cretaceous period - 100 to 66 million ago years ago, just before the dinosaurs went extinct - all kinds of dinosaurs and mammals inhabited the area. Researchers continue to be amazed by the diversity and abundance of

dinosaur bones found here, along with how well they have been preserved.

A few scattered vertebrae are not enough to identify a previously unknown species. To do that, scientists need many parts of a skeleton and, ideally, specimens from several of the creatures. "So many of our duck-billed dinosaurs, like this one, are still covered with the impressions of their skin; you can see their scales," said Joe

Sertich, dinosaurs curator at the Denver Museum of Nature & Science.

"The mudstone and sandstone of Grand Staircase preserve some of the best quality dinosaur bones you'll see anywhere in the world." But the land is also rich in minerals such as coal and it is of interest to the tourism industry and ranchers. Sertich believes the competing interests could co-exist, but taking away pro-

tection status opens the door to theft, vandalism, and destruction. "When you operate a coal mine... many of these fossils are lost forever," Sertich told AFP during a tour of the museum.

The last dinosaur

And while some may think that digging up dinosaur bones is not a priority, scientists say studying how they lived and died provides a better understanding of climate change threatening life today. "By going back into dinosaur ecosystems, we learn a lot about the world around us right now," Sertich said. "This is the only way we can learn how evolution works on millions-of-year time scales."

He has been combing the Grand Staircase for fossils for 17 years. "Being able to find to find new dinosaurs every time you spend one or two weeks out in the field is unlike anything you can do anywhere," the museum curator said. Sertich pointed to bones from a new species of domed dinosaur that were unearthed just five meters from Trump's shrunken boundary line. "By preserving a place like this, we have this repository where dinosaurs can always be discovered," Sertich said. — AFP



Photo shows ancient granaries, part of the House on Fire ruins, in the South Fork of Mule Canyon in the Bears Ears National Monument Blanding, Utah.



Hikers travel the South Fork of Mule Canyon in the Bears Ears National Monument outside Blanding, Utah.

Taleban now guard site of Buddhas they destroyed

Taleban gunmen now stand guard at the gaping rock cavities that once housed two ancient statues of the Buddha - desecrated with dynamite by the Islamists during their last stint in power. The monuments in Bamiyan province had stood for 1,500 years but their destruction was ordered in 2001 by that regime - already infamous then after banning television and imposing ultra-strict rules governing the conduct of women - for being against the Muslim faith.

Hundreds of cadres from across the country spent more than three weeks



A Hazara worker watches while preparing to load coal onto a truck near the site where the Salsal Buddha statue once stood before being destroyed by the Taleban in Bamiyan province.

demolishing the towering statues carved into the side of a cliff, sparking a global outcry. "The Buddhas were destroyed by the Taleban authorities in 2001," reads a bronze plaque set in the stone, while the

white flag of the country's new leaders flutters on a nearby gatehouse.

Two young fighters loiter listlessly just yards away. Afghanistan's new Prime Minister Mohammad Hassan Akhund was "one of the architects of the destruction of Buddhas", according to historian Ali A. Olomi of Penn State Abington University. Asked if it had been a good idea to blow up the statues - regarded as one of the greatest crimes against world heritage - young Taleban member Saifurrahman Mohammadi does not hide his embarrassment.

"Well... I can't really comment," said Mohammadi, recently appointed to the Bamiyan province cultural affairs office. "I was very young," he told AFP. "If they did it, the Islamic Emirate must have had their reasons. "But what is certain is that now we are committed to protecting the historical heritage of our country. It is our responsibility." Mohammadi said he



Members of Taleban stand in front of the site where the Shahmama Buddha statue once stood before being destroyed by the Taleban.



Hazara workers prepare to load coal onto a truck near the site where the Salsal Buddha statue once stood before being destroyed by the Taleban in Bamiyan province. — AFP

recently spoke with UNESCO officials who fled abroad after the Taleban takeover to ask them to return to Afghanistan and guarantee their safety.

Local officials and former UNESCO employees formerly based there told AFP that around a thousand priceless artefacts once stored in nearby warehouses were stolen or destroyed following the Taleban takeover. "I confirm that looting did take place, but it was before our arrival," Mohammadi said, blaming the thefts on the vacuum left by the old authorities after they fled. "We are investigating and we are trying to get them back," he added.

Crossroads of civilisations

The Bamiyan valley is nestled in the heart of the Hindu Kush mountain range and marks the westernmost reach of Buddhism from its birthplace in the Indian subcontinent. Persian, Turkish, Chinese and Greek influences have also intersected there over the centuries and left behind an extraordinary built environment, much of which remains unexplored. The statues survived a 17th-century incursion by Mughal emperor Aurangzeb, and later those of Persian king Nader Shah, who damaged them

with cannon fire. Traces of them remain lying around the Bamiyan site under canvas tents, torn by the winds of the valley.

World heritage specialists are highly doubtful they will ever be rebuilt. But the new Taleban regime insists that it wants to protect the country's archaeological heritage, despite the global shock triggered by the images of the Buddhas disappearing in clouds of dust. With the country's economy reeling "they realize that the work to protect heritage provides regular income," said Philippe Marquis, the director of the French archaeological delegation in Afghanistan.

Laborers are working at Bamiyan to put the final touches on a cultural centre and museum as part of a \$20 million UNESCO-backed project that was to be inaugurated with great fanfare this month. "Now we have to see how it will work," said Philippe Delanghe, chief of the culture program at UNESCO's Kabul office, currently based in France. "The current administration wants us to come back to work together. It seems pretty secure," he added. — AFP

Sports

Webb shines as Giants blank Dodgers, Red Sox pummel Rays

Astros defeat White Sox, need one win to claim series

LOS ANGELES: Logan Webb dominated in his playoff debut Friday, striking out 10 in over seven shutout innings as the San Francisco Giants defeated the Los Angeles Dodgers 4-0 in the opening game of the National League Series. Webb got plenty of support from the Giants' sluggers as San Francisco scored all their runs off home runs in front of a crowd of 41,900 at Oracle Park.



Brewers beat Braves in National League

Buster Posey hit a two-run home run while Kris Bryant and Brandon Crawford added solo shots for the Giants, who are going head-to-head in the postseason with the Dodgers for the first time in the 131-year history of their New York-born rivalry.

The Giants needed an 11-4 home win over the San Diego Padres on the final day of the regular season to claim the division. They then watched the defending World Series champion Dodgers dispose of the St

Louis Cardinals in the NL wild-card game on Wednesday to set the stage for a series between the two most successful clubs ever to meet in the Major League Baseball playoffs.

Webb, who allowed no walks, limited the Dodgers to five hits in his longest outing of the season. He said he was nervous when taking the mound for his first post-season game. "I was trying to calm down. The first two pitches, I was jittery. After that I settled in," he said. "The guys played good defense behind me. It was a fun night." Crawford's homer came with two outs in the eighth off the Dodgers' pitcher, Alex Vesia, to round out the scoring. Tyler Rogers got the final out of the eighth inning and Camilo Doval worked a 1-2-3 ninth to complete the Giants' shutout. Dodgers starting pitcher Walker Buehler surrendered three runs on six hits in 6 1/3 innings. He walked one and struck out five.

Red Sox hammer Rays

In the American League, the Boston Red Sox hammered a franchise playoff record five home runs as they pounded the Tampa Bay Rays 14-6 to level their playoff series at one game each. Boston had 20 hits on the night, bouncing back from a game-one shut-out in emphatic style at Tropicana Field in Tampa.

After Boston put two early runs on the board, the Rays responded with a grand slam from first baseman Jordan Luplow. Yandi Diaz added a run-scoring single



SAN FRANCISCO: Logan Webb of the San Francisco Giants delivers a pitch in the first inning against the Los Angeles Dodgers during Game 1 of the National League Division Series at Oracle Park on Friday in San Francisco, California. — AFP

to put the Rays up 5-2 after one inning. But Boston hit two home runs in both the third and fifth innings to regain control.

Alex Verdugo and Xander Bogaerts hit solo blasts in the third and JD Martinez belted a three-run homer in

the fifth — when Enrique Hernandez added a solo blast. The record-setting fifth-homer came from Rafael Devers in the top of the eighth inning and put the Red Sox up 11-6. Christian Vazquez drove in a run in the ninth and Hernandez scored two with his fifth hit of the night. The Red Sox will try to ride the momentum when the best-of-five American League division series shifts to Boston tonight.

Meanwhile, the Houston Astros powered their way to a 2-0 lead over the Chicago White Sox in their AL series, erupting for five runs in the seventh inning on the way to a 9-4 victory. The burst included a two-run double from Carlos Correa and a two-run homer from Kyle Tucker that saw the Astros break a 4-4 deadlock.

They took a 2-0 lead and can wrap up a spot in the AL Championship series with a victory in Chicago tonight. "Obviously you feel great going to Chicago with a two-game lead, but at the same time we've got to take care of business," Correa said. "It's not 100 percent." Elsewhere in the NL, the Milwaukee Brewers emerged with a 2-1 victory from a tense battle with the Atlanta Braves. Atlanta starting pitcher Charlie Morton and Milwaukee's Corbin Burnes dueled through six innings with neither surrendering a run. But Morton opened the seventh by hitting Avisail Garcia with a pitch and four pitches later Rowdy Tellez slammed a two-run home run off Morton to snap a scoreless tie and put the Brewers on the road to victory. — AFP



ISTANBUL: Mercedes' British driver Lewis Hamilton drives during the qualifying session at the Intercity Istanbul Park in Istanbul yesterday, ahead of the Formula One Grand Prix of Turkey. — AFP

Hamilton dominates qualifying to minimize grid penalty in Turkey

ISTANBUL: Lewis Hamilton found a silver lining yesterday, dominating qualifying for the Turkish Grand Prix to minimize the damage from the 10-place grid penalty Mercedes decided to incur by changing his engine ahead of the race. At a race where qualifying was red flagged last season and after morning practice was also interrupted by a red flag as drivers spun on a wet track, qualifying started under a cloud as team radar predicted that rain would start to fall on parts of course in less than three minutes.

Yet, the rain held off and, after a panicky start, Hamilton improved his time in each of the three qualifying phases. After breaking the 16-year-old track record in practice on Friday broke it again in each of the three qualifying sessions. He finished the session with a time of 1min 22.868sec, 0.130sec ahead of Bottas with Verstappen 0.328 back. "The track's completely different," said Hamilton. "The track is absolutely awesome, with the grip level it gives us now."

Frenchmen Charles Leclerc in a Ferrari, and Pierre Gasly in an Alpha Tauri will start on the second row. Veteran Spaniard Fernando Alonso and Mexican Sergio Perez of Red Bull occupy the next two places. Hamilton leads Verstappen by two points in the standings and will start nine places behind the Dutchman today even though the Mercedes has been faster all weekend. "I'll give it everything," said Hamilton. "Tomorrow is going to be difficult to move up. Hopefully we can give the fans a good race."

Bottas was also happy and insisted that today "I will race my own race". "As a team result as we really planned," he said. "Hamilton with the minimum penalty and me on pole." Mercedes principal Toto Wolff was

not sure if his petrol tank was half full or half empty. "You need to look at the positives that the car is very quick and we can start from pole," he said. "On the negative side we could have had a front-row lockout." He said it would be "very difficult" for Hamilton to move up but added: "the Red Bulls haven't been so competitive this weekend."

Verstappen said he had been having problems since the start of the weekend but the team had made adjustments between Friday and Saturday. "Third was the maximum today," he said. "I will try to pick up as many points as we can tomorrow."

Some drivers starting ahead of Hamilton admitted they will be looking over their shoulders. "He'll be passed me in a couple of laps," said Lando Norris who will start seventh in his McLaren. Gasly said he'd try to make his Alpha Tauri as wide as possible. "It's pretty much what I try every race" adding he held off Bottas for 30 laps in Sochi. "We know Lewis is going to come from the back tomorrow," Gasly said.

Fastest time

Before the start of qualifying, drivers queued up to beat the expected downpour and put in a quick lap, but with the track still damp from earlier rain and in cool conditions that meant tires took longer to warm up, many struggled to keep their cars on course.

Hamilton was particularly eager, barging past several other cars as they approached the start. The Briton exceeded track limits on the first corner. Verstappen was among several drivers who soon spun. "Getting the temperature in the tires for the first lap wasn't easy," Hamilton said.

But the rain held off and as the track dried, Hamilton posted the fastest time in the first qualifying session at 1min 24.585sec. At the other end of the field, Mick Schumacher reached the second qualifying session for the first time in his career. The German eventually qualified 14th. The Haas driver pulled out a fast lap right at the end of the 20-minute first session to push McLaren's Daniel Ricciardo, the winner in Italy last month, into the bottom five and out of qualifying. — AFP

Ballon d'Or, which honours the best footballer in the world after a poll among national team coaches and captains and journalists.

Algeria have hosted Niger — who are 89 places below the north Africans in the latest FIFA world rankings — three times in World Cup qualifying and scored 16 goals while conceding just one. The Blida blitz stretched to 30 matches the unbeaten run of Algeria, who last lost in October 2018 away to Benin in an Africa Cup of Nations qualifier.



SOWETO: Ivory Coast's Jeremie Boga celebrates after scoring his goal during the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 qualifying round Group D football match between Malawi and Ivory Coast at the Orlando Stadium in Soweto on Friday. — AFP

Mahrez scores twice as Algeria extend unbeaten run

JOHANNESBURG: Riyadh Mahrez celebrated being included on Friday among 30 Ballon d'Or nominees by scoring twice as he captained Algeria to a 6-1 thrashing of Niger in World Cup qualifying. The result in Blida kept the reigning African champions top of Group A, ahead of Burkina Faso on goal difference in a two-team fight to finish first and qualify for the final elimination round next March. It also stretched Algeria's undefeated run to 30 matches.

Both Mahrez goals came from set pieces as he converted a free-kick to break the deadlock on 27 minutes and give the Desert Foxes a 1-0 half-time advantage. After Sofiane Feghouli doubled the lead two minutes into the second half, Manchester City winger and former African Footballer of the Year Mahrez scored from a penalty on the hour for a 3-1 lead.

Nigerien Zakariya Souleymane conceded an own-goal and Islam Slimani took his World Cup qualifying goal tally to six with a brace. Mahrez and Liverpool star Mohamed Salah are the two Africans vying for the

Germany, Netherlands edge closer to World Cup finals

PARIS: Germany needed a late winner from Thomas Mueller to beat Romania 2-1 while the Netherlands eked out a 1-0 win in Latvia to stay on course for the World Cup finals on Friday. Four-time world champions Germany now have a six-point lead in Group J after their win in Hamburg. However, it was another rollercoaster evening for the European giants.

Romania took a shock ninth minute lead when Rangers winger Ianis Hagi ghosted through the defence and fired past Germany goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen, a late replacement for injured Manuel Neuer. Serge Gnabry equalised with his 20th goal in 30 internationals after 52 minutes.

Mueller then came off the bench for his 107th Germany appearance to claim his 40th international goal nine minutes from time. "It was annoying to concede the early goal, but the team fought, never gave up and played with confidence," said Germany head coach Hansi Flick. "In the end, the win is more than deserved as we dominated for long stretches." The result extends Germany's lead at the top of Group J ahead of tomorrow's next qualifier away to North Macedonia. A win in Skopje would put the Germans on the brink of punching their World Cup ticket.

Davy Klaassen scored with a fine volley after 19 minutes in Riga to give the Dutch the three points in a 1-0 win over Latvia which kept them in charge of Group G. They have a two-point advantage over Norway who drew 1-1 with third-placed Turkey.

Kerem Akturkoglu gave the Turks, coached for the first time by Stefan Kuntz, a sixth-minute lead in Istanbul. However, his maiden international goal was

cancelled out by Kristian Thorstvedt four minutes before the interval.

Own-goal howler

Former German international Kuntz was brought in to replace Senol Gunes who was axed after Turkey were thumped 6-1 by the Netherlands last month. In Group E, Aaron Ramsey and Daniel James inspired Wales to a 2-2 draw with the Czech Republic in Prague.

Both teams have eight points in the fight for the second spot in Group E, trailing runaway leaders Belgium with 16, but Wales have a game in hand. Ramsey, skipping the team in the absence of the injured Gareth Bale, opened the scoring on 36 minutes following a Neco Williams cross.

The Czechs were level a minute later when goalkeeper Danny Ward cleared a half-shot, half-pass from Filip Novak and Jakub Pesek was ready with a rebound. The hosts went ahead with a farcical own goal on 49 minutes as Ramsey back-passed, but Ward was not ready and the ball rolled over his foot and slid in at the lefthand post.

James equalized for Wales on 69 minutes as he blasted the ball past goalkeeper Tomas Vaclik following a superb pass from second-half substitute Harry Wilson. "I thought the lads were outstanding, we've created enough to win four games of football," said Wales coach Rob Page who backed Ward to recover from his own-goal howler.

"Danny Ward has been superb for me. I'm fortunate to have three outstanding goalkeepers, but Ward will absolutely bounce back," he said. Croatia, the runners-up to France in the 2018 World Cup final, still lead Group H after a 3-0 win in Cyprus.

Ivan Perisic, in first-half injury-time, and goals in the last 10 minutes from Josko Gvardiol and Marko Livaja secured the three points. Croatia have 16 points as do Russia after the 2018 hosts beat Slovakia 1-0 in Kazan thanks to a 24th-minute own-goal by Milan Skriniar. — AFP



HAMBURG: Germany's midfielder Kai Havertz (center) vies for the ball with Romania's defenders Cristian Manea (right) and Vlad Chiriches during the two teams' FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 qualification Group J football match in Hamburg, northern Germany, on Friday. — AFP

Abdoul Tapsoba scored twice for Burkina Faso in a 4-0 victory over Djibouti, who hosted the match in Moroccan city Marrakech because they do not have an international-standard stadium. Egypt replaced Libya as Group F leaders by winning the top-of-the-table clash 1-0 in Alexandria through a superb goal from debutant Omar Marmoush. The VfB Stuttgart forward unleashed an unstoppable shot past goalkeeper Muhammad Nashnouch from the edge of the box in the 49th minute.

Queiroz wins again

Success made it two victories from two matches for Mozambique-born former Real Madrid manager and Manchester United assistant Carlos Queiroz, a recent replacement for sacked Egypt coach Hossam el Badry. When the draw to divide 40 African hopefuls into 10 sections was made, Group D stood out as the most difficult with two top-10 ranked teams, Cameroon and the Ivory Coast, pitted against each other.

Cameroon hold the African record for World Cup appearances with seven and the Ivory Coast were at the global showcase three consecutive times before missing out on the 2018 finals in Russia. A weakened Ivorian side scored two late goals to complete a 3-0 win over Malawi, whose lack of an international-standard stadium forced them to play in Soweto near Johannesburg.

Victory lifted the Ivory Coast to seven points at the halfway stage, one more than Cameroon, whose veteran forward Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting bagged a brace in a 3-1 win over Mozambique in Douala. Ivory Coast rested four Premier League players — Eric Bailly, Maxwell Cornet, Nicolas Pepe and Wilfried Zaha — ahead of the return match against Malawi tomorrow. That left Wolves defender Willy Boly as the only England-based player in the starting line-up, and the absence of the 'big names' was hardly noticed as they quickly established control. — AFP

Sports

Newcastle dream big after Saudi-led takeover

New director vows to transform club into Premier League champions

NEWCASTLE: Newcastle are dreaming of Premier League glory after the Saudi-led consortium behind the blockbuster takeover outlined their "ambitious" plans. Thousands of jubilant supporters swarmed to Newcastle's St James' Park stadium after the drawn-out £305 million (\$415 million) deal was agreed, chanting "we've got our club back".

The takeover was rubber-stamped by the Premier League on Thursday after it received legally binding assurances that Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund, which has an 80 percent stake in the club, was not acting on behalf of the kingdom's government. That is despite the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, Mohammed bin Salman, being listed as the PIF's chairman.

The takeover brings to an end the 14-year reign of the deeply unpopular sportswear tycoon Mike Ashley. Retired warehouseman Justin Cowan, speaking to AFP outside St James' Park on Friday, admitted there were concerns among supporters over the new ownership but said most were buoyant. "It's great for the city," he said. "It's absolutely brilliant. They have got human rights issues. Everyone knows that, but we need this. We need it so bad. The club, the city, we've been put down loads of times. We're a sleeping giant and it's about time. It's lovely for the club and for the region. Everyone's happy."

Luke Watson, 29, a warehouse worker, also welcomed the takeover. "I'm so happy it's unreal," he said. "Now we've got someone that wants to invest in the club and take the club somewhere."

Newcastle's new chairman Yasir Al-Rumayyan stoked the fans' excitement in an open letter, promising to deliver a team they can be proud of. "Most importantly, you can expect ambition. Like you, we want to create a consistently successful team. We're here to build long-term success for the club," he wrote on Friday. "Owning this club is not a responsibility we have taken on lightly and we will never lose sight of what it means to be part of Newcastle United."

“It's great for the city”

It's great for the city

Sleeping giant

Newcastle, languishing second from bottom of the Premier League without a win in seven games, are nevertheless one of the best-supported clubs in the English top-flight. The "Toon Army" routinely fill St James' Park to its 52,000 capacity, but Newcastle have not won a major trophy since 1969. The club's new owners will hope to follow the template established by reigning Premier League



NEWCASTLE: Newcastle United supporters celebrate outside the club's stadium St James' Park in Newcastle upon Tyne in northeast England on Thursday after the sale of the football club to a Saudi-led consortium was confirmed. —AFP

champions Manchester City, who have become serial trophy winners since a 2008 takeover by Sheikh Mansour, a member of the Abu Dhabi royal family.

New director Amanda Staveley, a driving force behind the takeover, vowed to transform the club into Premier League champions in the long-term. "Of course we have the same ambitions as Manchester City and PSG in terms of trophies, absolutely, but that will take time," Staveley told

the Daily Mail. "Do we want to win the Premier League within five to 10 years? Yes. We want to see trophies. But trophies need investment, time, patience and team work." Staveley said she had spoken to under-fire boss Steve Bruce and while she insisted no decisions had been made about the future of the manager, his departure seems likely. Bruce said he wanted to continue but accepted he may be replaced. —AFP

Amanda Staveley: Public face of Newcastle's Saudi takeover

NEWCASTLE: Amanda Staveley, the British financier who steered the Saudi-led takeover of Premier League club Newcastle United, is a well-connected operator who specializes in marrying Gulf money with opportunities in Europe.

Staveley is the public face of the takeover, the first time the Saudis have taken control of a top-tier football club in Europe. She has made a lucrative career as an intermediary for wealthy Gulf-based investors looking to invest in Europe through her company, PCP Capital Partners. An indication of the circles in which she moves is the rumor that she once turned down a marriage proposal from Prince Andrew, Queen Elizabeth II's third child.

Staveley's introduction to the upper echelons of Gulf society came when she ran a restaurant in Newmarket, the center of Britain's horse racing industry, where she got to know the Dubai royals who own a string of racehorses.

The 48-year-old came to public prominence 12

years ago when she brokered a deal to sell Manchester City to Sheikh Mansour Bin Zayed Al Nahyan of Abu Dhabi. City, who like Newcastle were a club with a long history but few trophies, have since won the Premier League five times thanks to a huge injection of funds from their new owners that helped attract former Barcelona and Bayern Munich coach Pep Guardiola and players including Kevin de Bruyne and Sergio Aguero.

'No interference'

A major obstacle to the Newcastle takeover receiving the green light from the Premier League authorities was the issue of whether the Saudi state would interfere in the running of the club. Eighty percent of the funding is coming from the Saudi sovereign wealth fund, the Public Investment Fund (PIF), swelled by the proceeds of the world's largest oil deposits. Asked if the Saudi state and its representatives would meddle in the club, Staveley told the BBC:

"No, not at all. Absolutely not." She added: "Our partner is not the Saudi state, our partner is PIF."

Before the deal for City, Staveley tried several times to help Gulf-based buyers get a foothold in the Premier League, notably with a failed attempt to buy Liverpool through a Dubai-led consortium in 2008. That same year, in the grip of the subprime crisis, British bank Barclays secured 6.5 billion pounds (\$8.85 billion at today's rates) of emergency funding from Abu Dhabi and Qatar, with Staveley playing the role of intermediary. The circumstances of the deal led to Staveley suing Barclays for up to 1.5 billion pounds after her client, Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan of Abu Dhabi, invested heavily as part of the rescue package. Staveley alleged that more favorable terms were offered to the Qataris. —AFP

Such a huge claim led to Barclays describing the damages case as "opportunistic and speculative" and suggesting Staveley had exaggerated the extent of her contacts book in the Gulf and the importance of her role in the Barclays deal — claims that were strenuously denied by Staveley. The judge in the case ruled in February this year that Barclays had been "guilty of serious deceit" but said Staveley had suffered no financial loss from the deal. —AFP



NEWCASTLE: Newcastle United's new director Amanda Staveley (center) talks to the media as she leaves the foyer of St James' Park in Newcastle upon Tyne in northeast England on Friday, after the sale of the football club to a Saudi-led consortium was confirmed the previous day. —AFP

KFH wraps up 3rd season of FIFA 21 tournament

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) launched the third season of the PlayStation "FIFA 21" tournament for Hesabi customers which was held at KFH Auto showroom with great youth attendance and the participation of more than 60 players representing 32 teams.

The tournament comes as part of a comprehensive program comprising several activities, events and competitions allocated specially for Hesabi customers, to reiterate KFH care for its youth customers and its continuous endeavor to introduce the best advantages to suit their needs and fulfill their aspirations. Caring for youth has always been one of

the most strategic pivots of KFH and comes as part of its social responsibility and sustainability strategy.

The tournament comprised cash prizes of more than KD 1,000 for the first three winning teams in addition to prizes and gifts to the public. KFH Executive Manager, Media and Government Relations Mohammed Al-Faris presented the prizes to the winners who, in their turn, praised the remarkable organizing of the tournament and KFH efforts to support and enhance the interests of youth through various activities and events.

Exclusive youth campaigns

KFH lays great emphasis on youth by launching several exclusive campaigns e.g., the "Win with Hesabi" campaign which gives customer the chance to win three Jeep Wrangler cars annually in addition to 120 cash prizes of KD 250 each to 10 winners monthly, the cam-

paign held in cooperation with Dhahia Juice and Pick Restaurants where Hesabi customers can make free orders every Wednesday from Dhahia Juice and on Thursday from Pick Restaurants. The campaign was greatly welcomed and praised by the youth on KFH accounts and through social media.

KFH organized, for Hesabi customers and the youth tier, the fourth edition of the "Up to Challenge" championship, in cooperation with "Flare Fitness" sporting club. The competition was held at "Flare Fitness" club at Shuwaikh area with the participation of more than 100 contestants. The owners of the first three positions were honored with cash prizes from KFH bearing in mind that the winner of the third position was granted a one subscription for health meals from "Macro".

Offers, discounts and surprises

KFH continued its campaign which



KUWAIT: KFH Executive Manager, Media and Government Relations Mohammed Al-Faris honors the tournament's winners.

comprises a variety of banking products and services in addition to offers, discounts, surprises and prizes for its youth customers as part of the "Hesabi" campaign. Big discounts are offered at a selected group of the most famous

shops selling youth products. KFH continues its endeavor to support and back up youth initiatives and participate in the development of their creations and talents and praising their accomplishments in various fields.

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

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

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France pit their restored pride against youthful Spain in Nations League final



TURIN: France's forward Kylian Mbappe (left) celebrates with teammates after scoring a goal during the UEFA Nations League semi-final football match between Belgium and France at the Juventus stadium in Turin, on Thursday. — AFP

MILAN: France have got their groove back as they prepare for the Nations League final against Spain on the back of a thrilling comeback win over Belgium which helped ease the pain of a poor Euro 2020. Down by two goals at half-time on Thursday following quickfire strikes from Yannick Carrasco and Romelu Lukaku, a demoralizing run of results and performances appeared set to continue in Turin.

However, driven by an exceptional display by Kylian Mbappe on his 50th France appearance, Les Bleus fought back to level and in a thrilling finale Theo Hernandez crashed home the last-minute winner which set up an exciting final at the San Siro tonight.

The Nations League might not be anywhere near as important as the World Cup or European Championship but the wild celebrations among the players and small pocket of France fans at the Allianz Stadium showed just how good it felt to play like world champions again. Asked where the win

ranked on the list of his triumphs as France coach, Didier Deschamps said it was "one of the best".

"We had one of the best, if not the best teams in the world in front of us... but despite everything, and in a difficult situation we had both quality and pride, character when things don't go our way," he told reporters. Thursday's win in Deschamps' old stomping ground of Turin felt like catharsis following a fraught summer marked by the last-16 elimination from the Euro at the hands of Switzerland.

Mbappe in particular put in the sort of performance banished memories of the penalty miss that cost France against the Swiss and reminded people why Real Madrid tried to pry him away from Paris Saint-Germain after the Euro, setting up France's first and

netting the spot-kick which took them level.

'We're still here'

They now head to Milan with a new spring in their step, confident that they can see off a Spain side which stopped Italy's record run of matches without defeat at 37 with a 2-1 win on Wednesday. "So we don't win all our matches, we don't win three, four or 5-0 all the time but how many competitive matches do we win?" said Deschamps. "Ok, we were knocked out of the Euro by the Swiss, but the France national team is still here, and we're still one of the best teams around."

Roberto Martinez said after a painful defeat for Belgium that his star-studded team couldn't handle

the weight of expectation that accompanies their matches, but on Sunday France will face opposition with a much more carefree disposition.

The manner with which a Spanish side containing the youthful likes of 17-year-old Gavi swaggered around the San Siro at times on Wednesday suggested that La Roja have genuine hope of success not just for the future, but also right now.

Barcelona midfielder Gavi stunned with his maturity as Spain's youngest ever player but Yereimi Pino was also impressive when he replaced goal hero Ferran Torres early in the second half, making his international debut less than two weeks from his 19th birthday.

"It was a special match because we lost to them in the Euro semi-final, so what could be better than beating them on their own patch?" said Torres, whose first-half brace sank European champions Italy. "I'm really happy with the team, and the results keep coming." — AFP

Italy, Belgium battle for third place



Benzema still dreaming of Balon d'Or

MADRID: Real Madrid's on-form striker Karim Benzema has been dreaming of winning the Ballon d'Or since he was a little boy, he told Spanish daily AS in an interview published yesterday. Benzema was selected on the long list of 30 for the 2021 Ballon d'Or on Friday a day after scoring as France beat Belgium 3-2 and make the Nations League final.

"I've been dreaming of winning it since I was a kid, we all do, all professional players," said Benzema. "So I've been doing everything possible and will continue to do so, because I hope to win it and fulfill my childhood dream."

With nine goals in eight games for Madrid this season Benzema has flowered since Cristiano Ronaldo moved on two years ago. "What is important is that people enjoy my football and that I feel happy and proud. There are strikers these days playing very well into their 30s and scoring many goals," said Benzema, who will be 34 in December.

"Modern football allows for that," he said. "It's always a pleasure to be named on this list of the top 30 players, and I'll keep it in a corner of my mind as an objective in the big matches." France tackle Spain tonight in the Nations League final. "I'm sure it'll be a huge final. Spain are a young team, but a very talented one. I just hope above all that it's a great game," he said.

Six-time winner Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo, a five-time victor, were among the 30 names revealed for the Ballon d'Or award. The serial favorites face competition that includes Kylian Mbappe,



TURIN: France's forward Karim Benzema reacts after a training session at the Olympic stadium in Turin, on Friday two days prior to the UEFA Nations League final football match between Spain and France. — AFP

Neymar, Karim Benzema, Jorginho and N'Golo Kante who are also considered as leading runners in the list unveiled by France Football magazine. The prestigious award was not handed out in 2020 due to the pandemic. There are also 20 women in the running for their own prize to be announced in Paris on November 29.

French champions PSG can boast Messi, a winner in the Copa America this summer, and teammates Mbappe and Neymar who last season took the ambitious club to the Champions League last-four. Italian midfielder Jorginho gets the nod after helping Chelsea to the Champions League title as well as playing a major role as Italy won the delayed Euro 2020.

Chelsea teammate Kante, man of the match in the Champions League semi-final and final, is also on the list. Ronaldo, who was third in the 2019 Ballon d'Or vote

behind Messi and Liverpool's Virgil van Dijk, sees former Real Madrid teammate Karim Benzema also nominated.

Also in the running are Bayern Munich's Robert Lewandowski, the top scorer in Europe with 41 goals, as well as Dortmund's Erling Braut Haaland, the Champions League's best scorer with 10 goals. England, the Euro 2020 finalists, are represented by Harry Kane, Mason Mount, Phil Foden and Raheem Sterling.

Among the women, 2019 winner Megan Rapinoe, whose United States team were knocked out of the Olympics in the quarter-finals, was missing from the nominations. Christine Sinclair, of Olympic gold medal winning Canada, is in the running. Champions League winners Barcelona are represented by Alexia Putellas, already voted UEFA's best player, and Jennifer Hermoso, joint top-scorer in the Champions League. — AFP

Kuwait wins three medals in Gulf shooting tourney

Teams		
RK	NATION	TOTAL
01	BAHRAIN	1839.1
02	KUWAIT	1791.2
03	UNITED ARAB EMIRATES	1779

Individual			
RK	NAME	NATION	TOTAL
01	Maryam Moh. Ghadban Arzouki	KUWAIT	243.8
02	MARWA ALAMAIRI	BAHRAIN	242.1
03	YASMIN ABD. TAHLAK	UAE	221.7

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait shooters won three medals: one gold, one silver and one bronze at the Gulf Elite Airgun Shooting Tournament held online from October 7-9. The competition was organized by the GCC shooting organizing committee with the participation of five GCC shooting federations. Kuwait's Maryam Arzouki won the gold medal in the 10-meter air rifle individual event, with Bahrain's Marwa Alamairi second and UAE's Yasmeen Tahlak third.

Kuwait's team of Arzouki, Batool Ashkanani and Shamma Al-Rashidi won second place in the team event,

with Bahrain first and UAE third. As for the men, Ali Al-Mutairi, Abdullah Al-Harby and Sultan Al-Osaimi took the bronze in the team event, as Saudi Arabia won gold and Bahrain silver.

Secretary General of Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations Obaid Al-Osaimi, on behalf of the shooting community, dedicated the win to HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, who always supported shooting and shooters and motivated them to make more achievements in the name of Kuwait.