



3 Kuwaiti female journalists excel in reporting, attract high views



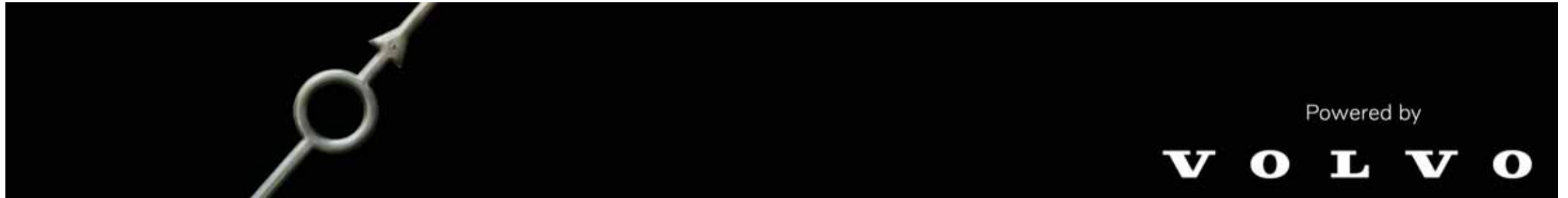
5 Uganda teachers turn coffin makers after schools shut



12 'Squid Game' Netflix's biggest-ever launch hit



16 Kenya athlete Tirop found dead with stab wounds



Two people attempt to commit suicide from Jaber Causeway

One man in critical condition, other stable after both rescued



KUWAIT: Firemen use ropes to rescue a man who jumped from Jaber Causeway late Tuesday.

KUWAIT: Two people tried to commit suicide by jumping from the Jaber Causeway into open waters in two separate incidents reported over a period of less than 24 hours, authorities said yesterday. The first incident was reported Tuesday night when firefighters managed to rescue a person who jumped from the causeway in a failed attempt to commit suicide, Kuwait Fire Force said.

Firemen used ropes to descend from the bridge, locate the man and rescue him, KFF noted, adding he was handed over to medical emergency personnel in critical condition. The man reportedly got out of a taxi that stopped on the side of the bridge, then immediately scaled the railing and jumped, according to eyewitnesses' reports.

In the second incident reported yesterday morning, a man jumped into the waters but was saved when a person on a passing boat rushed to his aid. The man was in a stable condition as he was handed over to authorities. Earlier this month, authorities banned cycling, walking and other activities on Jaber Causeway after a cyclist was killed by a motorist, who fled the scene. The interior ministry said the ban aimed at protecting lives amid a recent

increase in traffic accidents on the bridge.

The latest suicide attempts come a month after a woman jumped to her death from Jaber Causeway, a case that was classified as the first documented suicide from the bridge to be reported by authorities in Kuwait since the causeway was inaugurated two years ago. There had been several unsuccessful suicide attempts from the bridge before that.

In July, the interior ministry said a traffic policeman stopped a woman from jumping from the causeway in an apparent suicide attempt. The traffic department had published a video showing a police officer stepping in and catching a woman while she was trying to jump off the bridge, bringing her back to safety before he and other officers are seen attending to her in her car.

The officer was on patrol on the causeway when he approached the vehicle that had stopped on the side of the road, as seen in the video dated July 19. He checked on the driver, then waited for the vehicle to move, but instead the woman walked out of the car and approached the railing. The policeman ran towards her and caught her when she started climbing it.

News in brief

Daily aspirin may harm seniors

WASHINGTON: A US government expert panel said Tuesday it no longer recommends a daily dose of aspirin to reduce the risk of heart attack and stroke in people aged 60 and over. People aged 40-59 who are at a higher risk of developing cardiovascular disease but have no history of it, should consult with their doctor and make an individual decision on whether to start taking the medicine. — AFP

Phthalates linked to deaths

NEW YORK: Daily exposure to phthalates, a group of chemicals used in everything from plastic containers to makeup, may lead to approximately 100,000 deaths in older Americans annually, a study from New York University warned Tuesday. The chemicals can enter the body through such items and are linked to obesity, diabetes and heart disease, said the study. — AFP (See Page 5)

Lebanese pound back in freefall

BEIRUT: The Lebanese pound sold for more than 20,000 to the dollar yesterday, losing almost all the value it regained following the announcement of a new government last month. The pound, officially pegged at 1,500 to the greenback since 1997, has lost more than 90 percent of its black market value since the start of an unprecedented economic crisis in 2019. The plummeting pound sold for a record low of more than 23,000 to the dollar on the black market in July. — AFP

Iran tests anti-missile defenses

TEHRAN: The Iranian military said yesterday it has successfully tested anti-missile defenses for "sensitive" sites during war games in central Iran, after Zionist and US warnings over its nuclear program. The exercises, which began on Tuesday, combined the army's "Majid" defense system with the "Dezful" system of the elite Revolutionary Guard Corps to destroy incoming cruise missiles. Iran's central region is home to the Natanz enrichment plant and other nuclear sites. — AFP

Shatner in tears after space flight

LAUNCH SITE ONE, Texas: Star Trek's William Shatner, one of history's most recognizable science fiction stars, finally became a real space traveler yesterday on Blue Origin's second crewed mission, calling it the most profound experience of his life. "It was unbelievable," said the 90-year-old Canadian, who played Captain James T Kirk in the television series more than half a century ago, was moved to

tears after the 11-minute journey beyond Earth's atmosphere and back again to the Texas desert.

A New Shepard rocket took off from the company's base around 9:49 am (1449 GMT) after experiencing two brief delays, eventually soaring to 106 km above sea level. Shatner was joined by Blue Origin executive Audrey Powers, Planet Labs co-founder Chris Boshuizen, an Australian national, and Glen de Vries of clinical research platform Medidata Solutions.

Founder Jeff Bezos was on hand to greet the crewmembers as they climbed out of the capsule and were showered with applause and champagne.

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Cobra killer gets life for wife's murder

NEW DELHI: An Indian man who used a cobra and a viper to murder his wife was sentenced to life in jail yesterday in what prosecutors called the "rarest of rare" cases. Sooraj Kumar set loose a highly venomous Russell's viper snake on his wife Uthra that left her in hospital for almost two months, prosecutors said. While she recovered at her parents' house, the 28-year-old husband obtained a cobra from a snake handler and threw

it at his sleeping wife.

Its poisonous bite killed the 25-year-old woman. Sooraj pleaded not guilty but police said his phone records showed he was in touch with snake handlers and had watched snake videos on the Internet before the killing in March last year in Kollam in the southern state of Kerala. Sooraj stayed in the room with Uthra after the cobra bit her and went about his morning routine the next day when alerted by the woman's mother, said prosecutors.

"The mode of execution and the diabolic plan of the accused to murder Uthra, his wife who was bedridden, makes it (the case) fall into the category of rarest of rare," said the

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Families sell gold to survive cash crunch

MUMBAI: In Mumbai's jewelry bazaar, Kavita Jogani gingerly places her wedding bangles on the shopkeeper's scales, one of the thousands of Indians parting with their most cherished asset - gold. It was not an easy decision - Jogani was desperate after her garment business took a severe hit in the past year and a half with multiple coronavirus lock-

downs, making it difficult to pay shop bills and the salaries of her 15 employees.

The headline growth numbers suggest Asia's third-largest economy is rebounding from the economic crisis unleashed by COVID-19, but there is no end yet to the financial pain for many Indians. "I don't have any other option than selling the gold," said Jogani as she waited nervously for the shop owner to make her an offer. "I bought these bangles before my wedding 23 years ago," the 45-year-old told AFP.

Business closures and job losses pushed more than 230 million Indians into poverty in the past year, according to a study by Azim Premji University, leaving many struggling to pay



VAN HORN, Texas: In this still image taken from video, New Shepard NS-18 mission crewmember, "Star Trek" actor William Shatner (center), speaks with Blue Origin founder Jeff Bezos (right) yesterday after landing in the West Texas region. — AFP



KOLLAM, India: Police take Sooraj Kumar into custody after he was sentenced to life in jail for murdering his wife with a snake yesterday. — AFP



MUMBAI: A shop manager examines a gold bangle at a jewelry shop on Aug 11, 2021. — AFP

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Local

Deputy Amir receives Kuwaiti officials, Kosovo Foreign Minister

Sheikh Mishal congratulates Iraq President on successful elections



KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Parliament Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem. — KUNA photos

KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday at Bayan Palace Parliament Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem. His Highness the Deputy Amir also received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. Furthermore, His Highness received Kuwaiti



His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

Foreign Minister and State Minister for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah accompanied by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kosovo Donika Gervalla-Schwarz. Several senior officials attended the meeting.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Deputy Amir made a

phone call to Iraqi President Barham Saleh, conveying His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's greetings and congratulations on the successful parliamentary elections. His Highness the Deputy Amir also commended the electoral process regarding the proper organizing and preparation efforts, wishing the members of parliament all

success in order to further the journey of advancement and construction, and achieve all that the Republic of Iraq and its people aspire to. President Saleh expressed his sincere thanks and appreciation for His Highness' kind sentiments towards Iraq and its people, wishing His Highness good health and the people of Kuwait more prosperity. — KUNA



His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kosovo Donika Gervalla-Schwarz.

Kuwait Premier receives Kosovo Foreign Minister

KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received yesterday Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kosovo Donika Gervalla-Schwarz. Kuwait's Foreign Minister and State Minister for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah attended the meeting.

Meanwhile Sheikh Dr Ahmad held a meeting with his Kosovan counterpart, during which they tackled bilateral ties and means to enhance and boost them in various fields, especially economic, commercial and investments ones, as well as issues of common interest. Following the talks, both sides signed two memoranda of understanding in various arenas of cooperation. — KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kosovo Donika Gervalla-Schwarz. — KUNA photos



Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah (right) and Kosovo's Foreign Minister Donika Gervalla-Schwarz are seen after signing an agreement between the two countries.

KCCI seeks to boost economic relations with Kosovo

KUWAIT: Deputy Chairman of Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) Abdulwahab Al-Wazzan affirmed yesterday that the chamber is fully ready to devote all its resources to boost

economic relations and trade exchange with the Republic of Kosovo. During his meeting with Kosovo's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Donika Gervalla-Schwarz, he stressed the importance of introducing Kuwaiti business sector to business environment in Kosovo and present investment and commercial opportunities available there through holding various economic activities such as seminars, conferences and trade fairs.

Meanwhile, Minister Gervalla noted that her country is interested in meeting Kuwaiti private

sector about ways to improve economic relations, affirming that Kosovo government is working on enhancing the business environment and exploiting its natural resources especially in the agricultural field, given the fact that it has vast unused farmland. One of Kosovo's top priorities is to reduce unemployment rate and provide suitable job opportunities, added Gervalla, noting that the majority of the Kosovan people are under the age of 35 with high level of education and high efficiency. She boasted that this makes the human element one of the most important resources that

can be employed in the field of industrialization. In the meantime, Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry member Fahd Al-Joan said that the official trade data indicate that the size of trade exchange between Kuwait and Kosovo falls short of expectations, which requires doubling joint efforts to raise the trade balance. Joaan affirmed the Kuwaiti private sector's readiness to establish commercial and investment partnerships with its Kosovan counterpart if the appropriate business environment is available. — KUNA

Cobra killer gets life for...

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public prosecutor, who had sought the death penalty. Snake handler Vava Suresh said it was possible that Sooraj had "inflicted pain on the reptile to

provoke it to bite", the Hindustan Times newspaper quoted him as saying.

Ulthra was from an affluent family but her husband, a bank worker, was not well off. The dead woman's parents became suspicious after Sooraj tried to take control of her property after the death. Their marriage involved a big dowry including a new car and 500,000 rupees (around \$20,000). According to media reports, Sooraj's family was charged with conspiracy after some of Ulthra's gold was found buried near Sooraj's home days after the murder. — AFP

famous role. "Let's go along with it and enjoy the ride," he said in a video release before the launch.

For Blue Origin, meanwhile, a second mission in less than three months represents another step forward as it tries to establish itself as space tourism's leading player. Boshuizen and Vries brought the company's total number of paying customers to three, after Dutch teen Oliver Daemen who was on board the first flight. Competition in the sector is heating up.

Virgin Galactic, which offers a similar experience of a few minutes' weightlessness and a view of the Earth's curvature from the cosmos, launched its founder Richard Branson in July, a few days before Bezos. And in September, SpaceX sent four private citizens on a three-day trip whizzing around the planet - an altogether more ambitious, but also likely far more expensive endeavor.

For many space enthusiasts, Shatner's voyage was a fitting coda for a pop culture phenomenon that inspired generations of astronauts, scientists and engineers. The show has had a long-running association with NASA, whose scientists were sent early scripts to vet their accuracy, according to Cushman, the writer. "Those scientists, as well as nearly everyone at those space agencies, were avid Star Trek watchers, and they well understood that the popularity of the series helped spark growing interest and funding for the space program," he said.

Another mega-fan: Bezos himself. The Amazon founder shared an Instagram post of Star Trek artwork he made when he was nine years old, which included a communication device that influenced flip phone design decades later. Bezos has said Amazon's Alexa voice assistant was inspired by the conversational computer on the Enterprise, and he even made a cameo as an alien in the 2016 film "Star Trek Beyond", sporting an egg-shaped head. — AFP

Families sell gold to survive...

Continued from Page 1

rent, school fees and hospital bills. Their difficulties have been compounded in recent weeks by soaring prices for electricity, fuel and other items. Desperate for cash, many families and small businesses have been putting up gold jewelry - their last resort - as collateral to secure short-term loans to tide them over.

Banks disbursed "loans against gold jewelry" worth 4.71 trillion rupees (\$64 billion) in the first eight months of 2021, a whopping 74 percent jump year-on-year, central bank data showed. And many of these loans have gone sour with borrowers unable to keep up with repayments, leaving lenders to auction off the gold. Newspapers have been flooded with notices for such sales.

Gold has immense financial and cultural significance in India - it is considered essential at weddings, birthdays and religious ceremonies, and also seen as a safe asset that can be transferred from one generation to the next. Indians bought 315.9 tons of gold-use jewelry in 2020, almost as much as the Americas, Europe and the Middle East combined, according to the World Gold Council. Only China bought more.

Indian households are estimated to be sitting on 24,000 tons - worth \$1.5 trillion - in coins, bars and jewelry. "It is the only social security for the woman or any household because there is no such social security program from the government," said Dinesh Jain, director at the All India Gem and Jewelry Domestic Council. "Gold is like liquid cash," he told AFP. "You encash it in at any time of the day and night."

Kumar Jain, 63, whose family has run a shop in Mumbai's historic Zaveri Bazaar for 106 years, says he has never seen so many people coming to sell. "It wasn't like this before the pandemic," he told AFP. Jain says his customers - predominantly women - have sold a vast array of personal jewelry in recent months including gold bangles, rings, necklaces and earrings.

"The worst part is when they sell their 'mangal-



MUMBAI: This picture taken on August 11, 2021 shows a shop manager speaking with customers at a jewellery shop in Mumbai. — AFP

sutra," he said. That necklace "is a sign of a married woman. You start crying when she takes off the 'mangalsutra' from her neck and says, 'Give me money for this.' That's the worst scenario."

Jogani, the garment business owner in Mumbai, was able to find some breathing space by selling some of her jewelry. In exchange for her eight bangles, a small necklace and a few rings, she got 200,000 rupees (\$2,695) in cash. "Earlier, I would neglect these things when my mother used to tell me that 'you have to save in gold,'" Jogani said. "But now I... know. Everyone should save in gold." — AFP

Shatner in tears after...

Continued from Page 1

Like the roughly 600 astronauts who have gone before him, Shatner marveled at the experience of weightlessness and the stunning view of our world from space. "What you have given me is the most profound experience I can imagine. I'm so filled with emotion about what just happened," he told Bezos. "You look down, and there's the blue down there, and the black up there ... there is mother Earth, and just comfort, and there is just - is that death?"

The mission was a replay of the company's maiden human flight in July, which included Bezos and was seen as a breakthrough moment for the nascent space tourism sector. This time around, all attention was focused on Shatner, who became the oldest-ever astronaut, despite an appearance suggesting a man decades younger.

The intergalactic voyages of the USS Enterprise, commanded by Shatner's character Kirk, helped turn American attention to the stars as the US space program was starting out. "Captain Kirk... represents 'the final frontier' perhaps more than anyone else for a couple different generations of people, in the US and worldwide," screenwriter and Trek historian Marc Cushman told AFP.

Shatner, also known for his role as lawyer Denny Crane in "Boston Legal", among many others, has spoken in the past about an at-times difficult relationship with Star Trek and its fan culture. But in recent years, the actor has leaned into the fame brought about by his most

Local

Kuwaiti female journalists excel in reporting, draw high views

Seeking non-traditional stories, driven by passion



KUWAIT: In this file photo, Kuwaiti journalist Jenan Al-Zaid is seen as she interviews a man while preparing an investigative report in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh. — KUNA photos



Hadeel Al-Musaileem is seen in a gym as part of her reporting on sports in Kuwait.



Dana Al-Uwaisi interviews a man while reporting on popular restaurants in Kuwait.

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti female journalists have excelled in their reporting specially during the coronavirus pandemic, interacting with people smoothly while creating interesting stories that draw high views. It was their passion that made them seek non-traditional stories, giving them a growing popularity.

Radio broadcaster Jenan Al-Zaid said she joined Al-Qabas newspaper's online service in 2019 and did a report about begging in Kuwait. Zaid said she



Dana Al-Bahar reports on the field.



Bibi Al-Khodhari interviews a man during one of her field reporting missions.



Desire to achieve blocks feeling of fear

discovered her passion in investigative reporting. It is adventurous but absolute fun, she said. She began her investigative reporting, she added, about so-called "thieves market" in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, where she also accompanied police forces to report on campaigns against violations by restaurants and coffee shops.

"This report resulted in the locking down of the area for three months. At this instance, the journalist feels how important her role is in covering important issues," said Zaid. She said she did not feel being threatened while reporting in dangerous areas because once she held the microphone she

felt "courage and a great desire to hunt the corrupt... the desire to achieve something blocks any feeling of fear." Zaid admitted she was threatened because of her reports but that would not stop her from doing what she loved.

Hadeel Al-Musaileem said it was her childhood dream to be a journalist and found out that the passion was in reporting about different kinds of topics, like sport stories in which she gets to meet with people with a winning mindset. Musaileem said her family stood by her and also provided feedback on her programs.

Dana Al-Uwaisi said she worked in media since

she was 15 years old but was restricted with the traditional type of media. She joined Al-Qabas online service and began genuine reporting. She said her reports about popular restaurants have great impacts among Kuwaitis and expatriates. It made viewers realize how customers were loyal to a certain restaurant because of the service it offered.

Some Egyptian and Jordanian restaurant owners thanked them for educating people about their food "which is a culture that bring people closer," she said. Uwaisi said she also loved reporting about environmental issues and how dumping of wastes

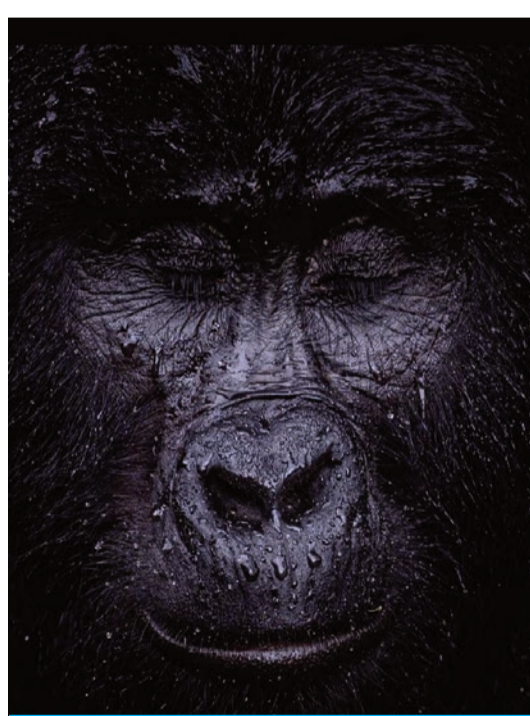
was damaging the environment.

Dana Al-Bahar, a journalist in Sarmad media network and a Mass Communication graduate, said her dedication and hard work made the others acknowledge her effort. Bahar said she loved political programs, covering the 2020 parliamentary elections which was a great experience for her. Bibi Al-Khodhari, meanwhile, said she enjoyed field reporting because it was an opportunity to interact with people. Khodhari hoped to have a personal contribution to media in Kuwait, Gulf and Arab regions in order to make a positive change. — KUNA

Kuwaiti photographer wins British History Museum's award



Kuwaiti photographer Majed Al-Zaabi.



The winning picture.

LONDON: Kuwaiti photographer Majed Al-Zaabi won the British History Museum's award for Animal Portrait. In a press statement late Tuesday, Zaabi said that the winning picture was taken in Uganda of an almost 40-year-old mountain gorilla called Kibande, noting that the trip took four hours on foot up and down. He pointed out that this type of gorilla faces the risk of extinction because of the infringement on its

natural habitat and reducing the number of forests, noting meanwhile that several organizations are exerting huge efforts to protect the species. This year's competition saw 19 categories including three new groups: oceans, wetlands and natural artistry. The two winners, who were revealed via an online ceremony, were selected out of more than 50,000 entries from 95 countries. — KUNA

Kuwait Fire Force inspects preparations for rainy season



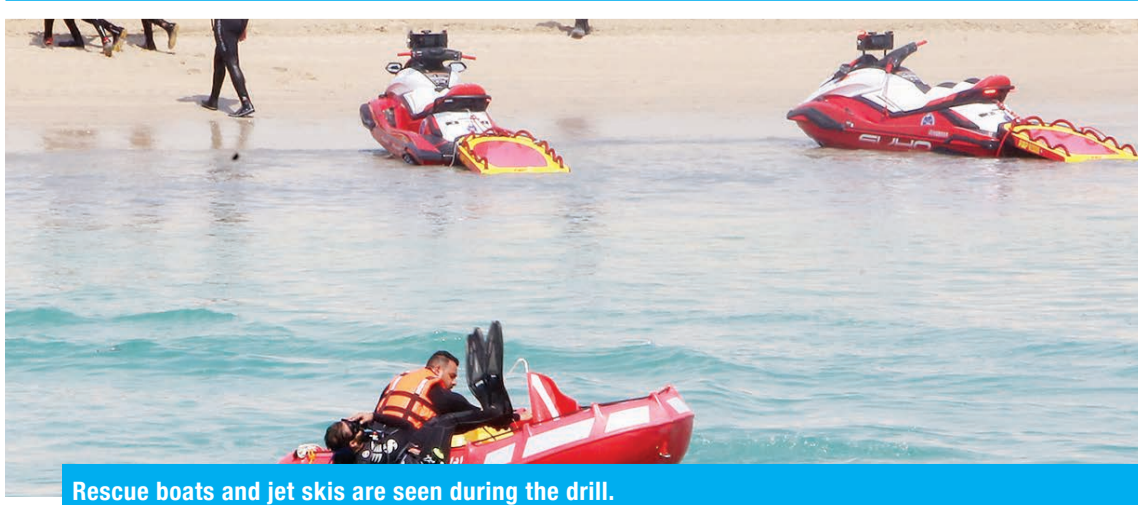
Kuwait Fire Force Chief Lt Gen Khaled Al-Mikrad attends the drill. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Firemen are seen during the drill.

KUWAIT: Kuwait Fire Force said all fire stations are ready to deal with any events and incidents during the upcoming rainy season. The statement was made following a drill and display of fire equipment at Sabah Al-Ahmad Sea City, coinciding with the International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction, in the

presence of Kuwait Fire Force Chief Lt Gen Khaled Al-Mikrad and other senior officials. The display included rain equipment and water pumps of all types, in addition to 10 hydraulic pumps that are considered the most modern in the world and can pump 246,000 liters of water per minute.



Rescue boats and jet skis are seen during the drill.

Local

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stc Masters' grand finale open to viewers through live stream

KUWAIT: Kuwait Telecommunications Company - stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announced that it will be live streaming the grand finale of the stc Masters tournament on masters.stc.com.kw, the stc Masters page on stc's website. Viewers will get to witness the winning champions of the gaming competition organized in collaboration with Zawayya Gaming.

stc issued a statement welcoming all viewers interested in watching the live stream finale to tune in this upcoming Friday and Saturday, 15-16 October 2021, to watch 176 finalists battle it out for the winning titles. The gaming competition consists of four games (FIFA, Call of Duty, PUBG, Fortnite), where finalists got a chance to qualify for the grand finale through weekly tournaments held over the past four months.

Chief Consumer Officer (CCO) of stc, Engineer Amer Atoui, said, "The number of gamers participating in the first season of stc Masters is a testament to the level of demand for such gaming competitions in Kuwait. We are proud to host the upcoming grand finale on October 15 and 16, where we will crown the first champions of stc Masters. Having said that, we welcome all gamers and those interested in watching some of the top gamers in Kuwait battle it out for the ultimate cash prize."

Atoui added, "The successful outcome of the first season of stc Masters reflects our vision of becoming the preferred eSports hub in Kuwait. Season 1 will only serve as a steppingstone in stc's journey into the online gaming industry. We find it essential to enhance the lifestyles of our customers and will continue to introduce new concepts that aim to transform the local market across various industries."

stc Masters provides gamers with a chance to compete for a large prize pool amounting to over USD 50,000 awarded to winners throughout the season. Players who qualified across four gaming titles held over 16 tournaments will be eligible to participate in the grand finale. Following the end of the first season, stc Masters will launch a longer and more extensive season that will maintain the same caliber and consistency of challenging local gamers to prove they are the best in Kuwait. More information on the upcoming seasons will be displayed on masters.stc.com.kw, the stc Masters page on stc's website providing updates and news on the gaming competition.



Amer Atoui

News in brief

Road maintenance firm prosecuted after deadly crash

KUWAIT: Minister of Public Works Dr Rana Al-Fares yesterday ordered referring the company responsible for the Fahheel Highway maintenance to the public prosecution in the wake of a tragic accident in which a motorist died after a manhole cover moved from its place and crashed into the windshield of his vehicle. The minister also gave orders to suspend and terminate the general director of the Public Authority for Roads and Transportation and suspend the director of the authority's highways maintenance department.

Kuwait highlights pan-Gulf drills

KUWAIT: Kuwait's interior ministry said that joint military drills among Gulf Arab states are key to deal with security challenges facing the region. Such exercises also provide a platform for the exchange of military knowhow, Interior Ministry Undersecretary Sheikh Faisal Nawaf Al-Sabah was cited as saying in a statement, ahead of pan-Gulf military drills in Saudi Arabia. He expressed his satisfaction over the level of military cooperation between Gulf Cooperation Council member states, saying more frequent joint drills would lead to even greater military coordination.

Kuwait, Italy sports cooperation

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Ambassador to Italy Sheikh Azzam Mubarak Al-Sabah held yesterday a meeting with the President of the Italian Football Federation Gabriele Gravina. During the meeting, the two sides discussed and agreed on having friendly football matches between Kuwaiti and Italian teams during Kuwaiti national festivals, said the Kuwaiti Embassy in a press release.

NCCAL and Indian Embassy sign cultural cooperation agreement

Celebrations to mark 60th anniversary of Kuwait-India relations



KUWAIT: NCCAL Secretary General Kamel Abdul Jalil and Indian Ambassador to Kuwait Sibi George shake hands after signing a cultural agreement at Kuwait National Library yesterday. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Kamel Abdul Jalil presents a memento to Sibi George.

By Sajeev K Peter

KUWAIT: The National Council of Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) and the Embassy of India yesterday signed an agreement on cultural cooperation on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Kuwait and India. NCCAL Secretary General Kamel Abdul Jalil and Indian Ambassador to Kuwait Sibi George signed the agreement at a ceremony held at the Kuwait National Library.

Announcing the yearlong celebrations, Abdul Jalil said a series of joint events have been scheduled, covering the entire spectrum of culture, art and letters to mark the milestone year. "This anniversary year is very important for both countries and the joint celebrations are to mark an important milestone in the shared history of the bilateral relations of our two countries," he said. He also highlighted the excellent bilateral relations between Kuwait and

India, especially the age-old people-to-people connection, civilizational affinities and mutual aims. He expressed his desire to bolster cultural exchanges between the two countries.

In his remarks, George said India-Kuwait relations are time-tested. "They have been built over strong foundations by our peoples over centuries based on mutual trust and respect. Over time, the partnership has blossomed into a forward-looking dynamic partnership," he said, adding the new India-Kuwait partnership will connect the visions of the leaderships of the two countries for mutual development and progress of the peoples of the two countries.

"The leadership of India has given us a roadmap to rekindle the India-Kuwait relationship and take it to a new level of partnership. Every step that we undertake, including this joint collaborative year-long celebration by NCCAL and the embassy, is part of this roadmap," the ambassador said.

The series of celebrations will commence with a joint musical program on Dec 2, 2021. This will be followed by a cultural week, when a seminar on historical relations between India and Kuwait will be presented by well-known writer Hind Al-Harbi and an Indian resident-writer. The cultural week will also witness events such as screening of Indian movies, stage performances, seminar on wellness tourism opportunities, joint musical evenings, joint activities on antiquities and maritime trade routes, clothing exhibition, pottery exhibition, symposium on the connect between Indian and Kuwaiti cuisines, and currency and jewelry exhibitions, among others. A closing ceremony will be held on July 3, 2022.

George said more details of the celebrations will be announced in the coming weeks. "Our objective is to involve all our Kuwaiti friends and the Indian community in these celebrations and make it a memorable year in our relationship," he affirmed.

Views on gender equality

This year's survey observes a notable shift in sentiment on gender equality. Last year, 64 percent of female respondents said they had the same rights as men. However, this year, just over half (51 percent) believe so. Young women in Lebanon appear particularly disadvantaged compared to men, with only 44 percent saying they have the same rights as men, down from 60 percent in 2020.

Female progress within the workplace has also stalled, with only 46 percent of young Arab women saying they have the same professional opportunities as men, compared to 52 percent last year. Worryingly, 44 percent of young females also said that men have better access to professional opportunities nowadays, up from just over a third (35 percent) last year.

Fewer consider emigration

Lack of economic opportunity continues to be the main driver of emigration, with a third of young Arabs (33 percent) saying they were either considering or had tried to leave their home country. However, this is a substantial drop from the 42 percent of Arab youth who said they wanted to migrate in 2020. The desire to emigrate is lowest among Kuwaiti youth with just 8 percent saying they have considered moving out of their home-country.

Hope for the future

"As one of the region's largest communications consultancies, with a rich heritage stretching back 21 years, ASDA' A BCW has been committed to giving young Arab men and women in MENA a voice through our annual Arab Youth Survey," said Sunil John, President, MENA, BCW and Founder of ASDA' A BCW. "That voice has become more emphatic as we have expanded our research over the years, from nine countries in 2008 when we launched the survey, to 17 Arab states and territories today, charting along the way youth insights in the wake of the global economic downturn, before and after the Arab Spring, and during the COVID-19 pandemic."

"Inevitably, this year's research has illustrated many of the pandemic's extremely damaging effects, as well as the work required to meet the future hopes of Arab youth. However, at the same time, it has shone new light on the deep reserves of optimism and pragmatism among our young people. Such positivity is hugely encouraging and a strong platform on which policymakers can build a better and prosperous future," John concluded.

Kuwaiti youth most optimistic of future in Arab world, survey says

KUWAIT: Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, ongoing conflicts and record economic decline, most young Arabs in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) believe their best days lie ahead of them, but they look up to their governments to tackle nepotism and corruption, and provide more support in starting their own businesses. This optimism is highest among Kuwaiti youth, with an overwhelming 92 percent stating 'our best days are ahead of us.'

These are some of the top findings of the 13th Annual ASDA' A BCW Arab Youth Survey, released yesterday by ASDA' A BCW, the leading public relations consultancy in MENA, which revealed the astonishing resilience and hopefulness of young Arab men and women across the region, but also their growing frustrations about increasing unemployment, access to quality higher education and rising living expenses.

Now in its 13th year, the largest study of MENA's largest demographic, its 200 million plus youth, polled 3,400 Arab citizens aged between 18 and 24 in 50 cities and territories in 17 countries from June 6-30, 2021. The survey was conducted for ASDA' A BCW by PSB Insights, the global strategic research and analytics specialist, amongst a cohort equally split between men and women.

Optimism for a better life

The pandemic cost MENA economies an estimated \$227 billion last year, pushing some countries to the brink of bankruptcy. However, when asked whether they believed their best days were either ahead of them or behind them, an astonishing 60 percent of young Arabs, expressed optimism in the future - the highest level of positivity in five years.

The survey report, themed 'Hope for the Future', based on the findings, further highlight the optimism of young Arabs with nearly half (48 percent) also saying they 'will lead a better life than their parents,' the highest percentage in



Sunil John

three years. In addition, half of respondents said their country's economy was heading in the right direction and most expected a full economic recovery by 2022.

The encouraging findings do not diminish the scale of the challenge facing regional policymakers, with 89 percent of young Arabs saying they are very concerned about the rising cost of living. More than eight in 10 were also concerned about unemployment and the quality of higher education, while over a third (37 percent) said they were struggling to meet their expenses. Another one-third (33 percent) said either they or a family member had lost their job due to COVID-19.

Young Arabs identify three strategies to boost job creation, saying their top priorities include: Tackling corruption and nepotism, providing more information on the job opportunities available, and education reform. They also say they expect governments to help them start their own businesses by providing more access to affordable financing and reducing red tape.

Increased trust in government

Today, more young Arabs trust their government to address their priorities, according to the survey. Nearly three-quarters (72 percent) of young Arabs said their voice matters to their country's leadership - a view held by an overwhelming 90 percent of Kuwaiti youth. Even in North Africa and the Levant region, which witnessed significant social unrest in recent years, many young Arabs now believe their opinions matter to their governments.

US has most influence

In other key findings, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the UAE are widely considered to be the region's strongest allies, with more than eight out of 10 young Arabs describing them as a strong ally or somewhat of an ally of their country. China and Russia are the region's fourth and fifth strongest allies, according to Arab youth, while the UK and the US rank eighth and ninth, respectively. Arab youth continue to feel the presence of the US in regional affairs, with over two-thirds (69 percent) of Kuwaiti youth saying that the country has the most influence over the Arab world.

Cabinet visit to tennis complex 'source of pride'

KUWAIT: Kuwait Tennis Federation President Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah expressed appreciation to the Cabinet for its recent visit to the Jaber International Tennis Complex, reiterating that the facility stands an example of successful cooperation between the public and private sectors.

"Kuwait sports and Kuwait Tennis Federation were honored by a unique and unprecedented event, when Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

International Tennis Complex hosted the extraordinary meeting of the Cabinet, chaired by H.H. the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah," Sheikh Ahmad said in a statement yesterday. "This is considered a matter of pride for Kuwait sport in general and Kuwait Tennis Federation in particular, especially after receiving the confidence of the political leadership."

"Maybe what distinguishes this meeting from others, and away from what was discussed on the agenda, is the presence of the entire Cabinet inside a sports facility that matches and competes with international facilities," he indicated. "It also proved beyond any shadow of doubt the true success of partnership between the government and private sectors in managing sports projects, in a way that serves the public interest of the state."

"Many details of this sports complex were seen, as it is one of many sports facilities that were constructed in support of sport and athletes, as well as in contribution to the advancement of Kuwait sport," he pointed out. "As much as we were pleased with this honor, we find ourselves facing a challenge that compels us all to continue working and exerting extra efforts to achieve the sought-after goal to take Kuwait sport to a higher level and win championships in the name of Kuwait at the continental and international levels."



Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah



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Zionist, UAE ministers in US as Biden seeks to expand normalization

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Mass graves reveal 25 more bodies

Women, kids in Libya detention centers 'at immediate risk'



TRIPOLI: African migrants gather at a makeshift shelter in the capital Tripoli's suburb of Ain Zara. Libya is a key departure point for tens of thousands of migrants, mainly from sub-Saharan Africa, hoping to reach Europe. — AFP

TRIPOLI: A further 25 unidentified bodies have been found in mass graves in the Libyan town of Tarhuna, Libyan authorities said, following years of brutal militia rule. The farming town was controlled for years by the Kaniyat militia, run by six brothers who imposed their dominance by slaughtering opponents and their entire families. Around 200 bodies have so far been found, according to the department for uncovering the remains, which said another "five graves were discovered" containing another 25 corpses.

The latest grim finds come after another 10 bodies were uncovered on October 4. On the same day, a UN fact-finding mission found that all parties to Libya's decade-long conflict have violated international humanitarian law since 2016, with some possibly guilty of war crimes. Mass graves were initially discovered in Tarhuna in June 2020 following the withdrawal of forces of Khalifa Haftar, an eastern Libya-based military chief who had spent a year trying to seize Tripoli.

The Kaniyat, members of the Kani family, had after seizing control of the town in 2015 then allied with Haftar, providing him with a rear base for his Tripoli operation which he launched in 2019. The group "often abducted, detained, tortured, killed, and disappeared people who opposed them or who were suspected of doing so", according to resi-

dents' testimonies cited by Human Rights Watch. Members of the Kaniyat have been sanctioned by the United States and Britain.

Their chief Mohamed Al-Kani was shot dead in the eastern city of Benghazi in July and others are rumored to have fled east or abroad, reports that are not possible to verify. Libya has seen a decade of violence since the fall in 2011 of dictator Muammar Gaddafi in a NATO-backed rebellion, with a myriad of militias and foreign forces becoming involved. A ceasefire between eastern and western powers after Haftar's defeat last year paved the way for a UN-led political transition, with a unity government taking power this year to lead Libya to elections.



200 bodies found so far

caught up in recent mass arrests" in Tripoli this month, UNICEF said in a statement. "Five unaccompanied children and at least 30 infants" were among those detained, it said.

The women and children's "safety and well-being... is at immediate risk", the statement warned. Libyan authorities carried out sweeping raids in Tripoli, mostly targeting irregular migrants, earlier this month. Doctors without Borders said at least 5,000 migrants and refugees were swept up in the "violent mass arrests" and detained in squalid conditions.

The operation, which authorities said targeted organized crime and drug trafficking, left at least one person dead and 15 wounded, according to the UN Support Mission in Libya. "Migrant and refugee children in Libya continue to face grave child rights violations including arbitrary detention," acting UNICEF special representative to Libya Cristina Brugiolo said. "Children are held under devastating and inhumane conditions in these detention centers," she said in a statement. "We can assume the actual

number of children held may be much higher as many boys are reportedly placed in cells with adult males," she added.

Following the raids, the International Organization for Migration said last week that guards shot dead six migrants at the Al-Mabani detention facility in the Libyan capital, while at least 24 others were wounded. Libyan officials said some 2,000 migrants escaped in the chaos. UNICEF said the Al-Mabani detention centre, which it identified as Libya's largest, "is holding more than 5,000 people-four times its official capacity-including 100 children and 300 women". The statement urged the Libyan authorities "to protect children and prevent their separation from their parents, caregivers and families".

Hundreds of migrants and asylum-seekers, accompanied by young children, have been holding a sit-in in front of the office of the UN refugee agency (UNHCR) near Tripoli for several days. The UNHCR on Tuesday said it was "extremely worried about the continued suffering of migrants and asylum seekers in Libya". Libya is a key departure point for tens of thousands of migrants, mainly from sub-Saharan Africa, hoping to reach Europe. Human traffickers have profited from Libya's decade of chaos following the 2011 revolution to carve out a lucrative but brutal trade.— AFP

Ugandan teachers turn coffin-makers after schools shut

BUGOBI: As a COVID-19 surge overwhelmed Uganda earlier this year, Livingstone Musaala, who was forced to quit his teaching job following school closures, turned to coffin-making to pay the bills and help his community. But few welcomed his initiative at first. Family members criticized him for capitalizing on a pandemic-fueled boom in his densely-populated hometown of Bugobi, 140 kilometers east of Kampala. "Of all the business ideas you start selling coffins as if you wish people death?" Musaala recounted a relative asking him.

But the former mathematics teacher realized that he could make and sell coffins for a lot less than the exorbitant prices charged by other carpenters after demand surged due to COVID-19 deaths. "It was a tough decision but people now appreciate it," the 28-year-old told AFP, with Bugobi residents no longer compelled to travel long distances to find affordable coffins. "At the height of the pandemic, we did brisk business, we sold between four to 10 coffins daily," he said, earning between 150,000 to 450,000 shillings (\$42 to \$125) per coffin.

His success prompted some 30 teachers to join him, many of whom were left frustrated and penniless by the ongoing school shutdown. Although coffins have proven to be their biggest seller, the teachers have also taken on other joinery jobs. Some had already been trained in carpentry, but



NAMUTUMBA: A coffin is on display to sell at a workshop owned by private teachers who work as coffin makers now at their workshop in Namutumba, Uganda. — AFP

most have simply learned on the job. Today, many say they have no intention to return to school, even if classes resume—something that spells even worse news for the East African nation's rickety education system.

'Life beyond teaching'

Some 15 million students have been out of school since the government sent them home in March 2020, and activists fear a surge in teen pregnancies and child labor as a result. With no income to speak of, some schools have shut down for good, rebranding themselves as hotels or restaurants. Others have defaulted on loans as interest piles up, putting their future in doubt and adding to the uncertainty faced by out-of-work teachers.

"If I was given an option between

teaching and carpentry, I would take the latter because it is ready cash," Godfrey Mutyaba told AFP as his colleagues shuffled around for pieces of timber to put the final touches on a coffin. "I liked teaching but due to poor pay, I won't go back," the father-of-two said. On average, teachers working at private schools in Bugobi earn between \$100 to \$250 per month.

Despite strong sales, the newly-minted coffin makers have struggled to raise capital to buy equipment like electric saws, and are now confronting a new challenge as the pandemic begins to ease after death rates soared in June and July. Nevertheless, even as coffin sales fall, Musaala has no plans to return to his old job and is turning his attention to making furniture instead. "COVID-19 has taught me there is life beyond teaching," the father-of-two said.— AFP

Widely used chemical linked to 100,000 US deaths per year

NEW YORK: Daily exposure to phthalates, a group of chemicals used in everything from plastic containers to makeup, may lead to approximately 100,000 deaths in older Americans annually, a study from New York University warned Tuesday. The chemicals, which can be found in hundreds of products such as toys, clothing and shampoo, have been known for decades to be "hormone disruptors," affecting a person's endocrine system.

The toxins can enter the body through such items and are linked to obesity, diabetes and heart disease, said the study published in the journal Environmental Pollution. The research, which was carried out by New York University's Grossman School of Medicine and includes some 5,000 adults aged 55 to 64, shows that those with higher concentrations of phthalates in their urine were more likely to die of heart disease.

However, higher concentrations did not appear to increase the risk of death by cancer. "Our findings reveal that increased phthalate exposure is linked to early death, particularly due to heart disease,"

said study lead author Leonardo Trasande. "Until now, we have understood that the chemicals connect to heart disease, and heart disease in turn is a leading cause of death, but we had not yet tied the chemicals themselves to death." Trasande cautioned, however, that the study does not establish a direct cause and effect relationship between phthalate exposure and death, in part because the specific biological mechanisms of that relationship are unclear.

"Our research suggests that the toll of this chemical on society is much greater than we first thought," Trasande said, adding that it "is undeniably clear that limiting exposure to toxic phthalates can help safeguard Americans' physical and financial wellbeing." Other studies have already linked phthalates to more than 10,000 deaths per year associated with reduced testosterone levels in adult men. The study added that the economic loss due to phthalates is between \$40 billion and \$47 billion - more than four times what was previously estimated.— AFP

International

Fears of 'chaos': Italy adopts tough COVID-19 pass regime

All workers required to show coronavirus health pass

ROME: Italy from Friday will require all workers to show a coronavirus health pass, one of the world's toughest anti-COVID regimes that has already sparked riots and which many fear will cause "chaos". More than 85 percent of Italians over the age of 12 have received at least one shot of a COVID-19 vaccine, making them eligible for the so-called Green Pass certificate.



Fines ranges from 600 to 1,500 euros

But according to various estimates, about 2.5 million workers, out of 23 million in total, are unvaccinated, and risk being denied access to the workplace from October 15. "You have no idea of the chaos that we will have in firms," the president of the heavily industrialized northern Veneto region, Luca Zaia, said recently. Unvaccinated workers can still get a Green Pass by getting tested for coronavirus or with a certificate of recovery, if they contracted the virus within the past six months.

But if they opt for tests, they have to take them at their own expense, and repeat them every 48 hours. Zaia suggested there was not enough testing capacity to meet potential demand, raising the prospect of mass absenteeism from work. "The entrepreneurs I talk to are very worried," he said. Green passes are already required for teachers and other school workers, and also for other activities such as eating indoors in bars and restaurants, or going to the cinema, museums and football games.

In eastern DR Congo, business battles with violence, uncertainty

BENI: Roger Muhindo is proud of his chocolate factory - an emblem of entrepreneurial courage in one of the world's most troubled regions. "We are pioneers!" Muhindo proclaims at the entrance to his plant, where 10 employees make a locally sourced product, Virunga Origins chocolate. Here in the troubled east of the Democratic Republic of Congo, threats from armed groups and lack of infrastructure are mighty, ever-present challenges to doing business. Rebels in the region have killed nearly 1,000 people over the past year. Barbed wire and armed guards patrolling the grounds are a reminder that the front line is not far away.

In June, the UN's expert group for DR Congo reported that on top of the attacks and kidnappings by the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), government troops had harvested cacao pods in abandoned fields, hawking the beans illegally in neighboring Uganda. Despite the many problems, the Virunga National Park manages to keep the chocolate factory running. The famed wildlife park launched the plant in January 2020 in Mutwanga, in the violence-torn territory of Beni.

The goal is to process cocoa on the spot, creating value-added work in the Democratic Republic of Congo's agriculture-dependent economy. And by creating jobs,



BENI: Two workers at the Mutwanga hydroelectric plant look at the facility at the foot of the Rwenzori Mountains in Beni territory, northeastern Democratic Republic of Congo. — AFP

Nigeria's 'tax' spat fuels fierce debate about federalism

LAGOS: A legal battle between Nigeria's government and states over sales tax is fueling fierce debate about federalism in Africa's most populous country as politicians jockey for position before 2023 elections. The spat-whether federal or state governments have the right to collect value-added tax (VAT) - may be about money, and the sum at stake runs into billions of dollars.

But the squabble also reflects long-standing questions about how Nigeria is governed and how wealth is shared in the continent's top oil producer. How the dispute ends may open up more state autonomy, analysts say, as wealthier southern regions test federal management of issues from oil resources and security policing

Avoid lockdowns

But they are not popular, at least among a sizeable minority of Italians - as shown by last Saturday's riots in Rome, where an anti-pass demo degenerated into an assault on a trade union building led by the neo-fascist Forza Nuova party. Anyone caught in the workplace without a Green Pass risks fines ranging from 600 to 1,500 euros, and those who fail to turn up for work because they don't have one face suspension on no pay - but cannot be fired.

Meanwhile, employers can be fined 400-1,000 euros for not checking if their staff comply with the rules. Prime Minister Mario Draghi opted for compulsory COVID passes last month in a bid to prevent further lockdowns and support Italy's recovery from a record 8.9-percent recession last year. The measure, which follows a similar initiative introduced in Greece last month, was also intended to boost vaccination rates.

Business lobby Confindustria has been among the staunchest backers of the Green Pass in Italy, one of the European countries hardest hit by coronavirus with more than 130,000 deaths. The focus is on "creating workplaces that are as safe as possible... because it is the only way to ensure public health and economic recovery," vice president Maurizio Stirpe told the Corriere della Sera newspaper. Trade unions, on the other hand, have been sceptical. They first called for a blanket rule forcing all Italians to get jabbed, arguing that option would have avoided discrimination between vaccinated and unvaccinated workers.

Threats from dock workers

But the government has stopped short of that, partly because one of the members of Draghi's left-right coalition government, the nationalist League party of Matteo Salvini, opposed compulsory vaccines. Once

the enterprise also hopes to provide an alternative to joining one of the region's many armed groups. "There are other people who would like to invest here, but they're afraid, with the war and everything that happens here," said Muhindo, the plant's production manager.

Last December, a few months after the first chocolate bars were marketed, Mutwanga and neighboring communities - until then relatively spared from violence - were hit by deadly attacks blamed on ADF rebels. In less than a year, more than 200 civilians have been killed within a 20-kilometre radius of the chocolate factory, mainly in isolated villages near cocoa plantations. Since 2019, the Islamic State group (IS) has claimed responsibility for some of the attacks by the ADF against civilians and Congolese army positions. IS presents the ADF as its branch in central Africa (Islamic State Central Africa Province, or ISCAP).

"We deploy small teams everywhere to protect those who are in their fields but it still makes the work so hard for us," said Antony Mwalushayi, Congolese army spokesman for Operation Sokola 1 - the fight against the ADF in the Beni territory. But among their ranks, according to the manager of an agricultural cooperative which supplies Virunga Origins, are soldiers who steal cocoa for resale to smugglers. They swoop in "as soon as the planters leave the fields," he confirmed to AFP on condition of anonymity. But the managers of Virunga National Park, a World Heritage site famous for its mountain gorillas, are not discouraged. After a period of reduced production at the chocolate factory, the machines have been running at full speed for a few months. "We are going to increase production capacity tenfold to meet local and international demand," said Bastien Allard, a park official.—AFP

to cattle grazing rights. In August, a court in southern Rivers State, Nigeria's petroleum heartland, ruled states should be responsible for collecting VAT and not the Federal Inland Revenue Service or FIRS. Rivers State Governor Ezenwo Nyesom Wike, a staunch opposition Peoples Democratic Party leader, pushed through a law authorizing local collection of VAT, warning FIRS against any "sabotage." Southern Lagos State, the nation's economic powerhouse including the commercial capital Lagos, quickly followed with its own law to collect VAT. After a federal government appeal, the dispute is caught up in competing demands, with Abuja considering a Supreme Court challenge. Attorney General Abubakar Malami last week told reporters that only the national assembly could legislate on how VAT is levied.

"The federal government is looking at all options at its disposal, including the possibility of involving the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court," he said. Under Nigeria's system, FIRS collects VAT centrally and the resources are distributed across federal, state and local governments. VAT receipts in 2020 were 1.5 tril-



ROME: Riot police surround protesters during clashes following a protest against the mandatory sanitary pass called 'green pass' in the aim to limit the spread of the COVID-19, in central Rome. — AFP

lion government ignored the union's advice, they successfully requested that unvaccinated workers should get fired, but only suspended. But they did not manage to also obtain free COVID tests for workers, paid by the state or employees.

"Personally, I will get tested," Stefano, one of the people who protested in Rome last week, told AFP. But he complained that it was "absurd" for him to have to

pay to continue doing his job. So far, only dock workers in Trieste have managed to win the privilege of free COVID tests, after threatening to block all activities in their port, a major hub in the northeast, from October 15. Meanwhile, there are concerns violence could break out again next Saturday, when the no-pass movement is planning further protests and unions are preparing for a big anti-fascist rally in Rome. — AFP

Cattle in the front line in troubled eastern Congo

BUNIA: Cattle farmers in eastern DR Congo prize their fine long-horned animals-sturdy beasts which once gave their region the nickname the "land of meat". But for many herders, every day brings its ration of fear for the safety of their animals from armed groups. Bosco Ndaura, secretary of an association of cattle farmers in Bunia, the main town in troubled Ituri province, said cattle rustling and killing were rampant. "We are not safe here," he said. "Since 2017, 7,000 to 8,000 head of cattle have been stolen." Ndaura was speaking at a ceremony by the Congolese army to return about 100 stolen cows to their rightful owners.

Such events are out of the ordinary-rustled cattle usually disappear for good, or end up being butchered by their thieves. The situation is so bad that many herders have moved north with their cattle into the neighboring province of Haut-Uele, where security is better. The loss is tragic, said Ndaura, who himself raises cattle. "In the 1980s, Bunia was called the 'land of meat'. Today, it's no longer the case-the animals which used to produce the meat are no longer there."

Troubled province

More than 120 armed groups plague the eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of Congo, many of them a legacy of bloody regional wars a generation ago. Ituri and neighboring North Kivu are bearing the brunt of the violence. In May the government placed both under a "state of siege"-an emergency measure aimed at strengthening security, in which top civilian officials were replaced by senior army or police officers. Ituri itself has a long history of ethnic feuds, some of which are rooted in long-standing herder-farmer disputes over cattle.

Fighting between the Hema and Lendu communities between 1999 and 2003 claimed tens of thousands of lives, and was only quelled by the intervention of a European Union peacekeeping force, Artemis. The Hema are predominantly herders, while the Lendu are sedentary farmers-a rivalry that has a parallel with the Tutsi-Hutu divide which fuelled the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, although the scale of the bloodshed is not comparable.

After some years of calm, violence kicked off again in 2017, blamed on an armed group called the Cooperative for the Development of the Congo (CODECO), which claims to defend the interests of the Lendu. CODECO, which has since divided into splinter factions, is today blamed for cattle rustling by Hema herders, who also single out two armed groups. They are the Patriotic and Integrationist Force of Congo (FPIC), which claims to represent the Bira ethnic group, and the Ituri Popular Resistance group (FRPI), once the militia of the Ngiti group in the Lendu community.—AFP

lion naira or \$3.6 billion. Under the current system the federal government gets 15 percent, with the rest split between states and local governments.

But richer southern states like Lagos and Rivers-Lagos alone produces around half of Nigeria's VAT-have long complained they end up paying for poorer states mostly in the agricultural north but also some southern ones. They want more "fiscal federalism," meaning getting a bigger share of the VAT they collect and more responsibility to manage their own affairs. "What we are after is to ensure that this money is used for the people of Lagos State, and that is exactly what we have achieved," Setonji David, a Lagos assembly lawmaker, told Channels TV.

The "restructuring" debate often resurfaces during election times in Nigeria, which became a single entity under British colonial rule in 1914 when the mainly Muslim north was joined with the mostly Christian south. Regional identities for Nigeria's major ethnic groups are often fiercely guarded-sometimes with separatist rhetoric-even as the federal government promotes national unity.—AFP

News in brief

Queen Elizabeth in rare outing

LONDON: Queen Elizabeth II on Tuesday used a walking stick for the first time at a major public event, as she attended a church service at London's Westminster Abbey. The 95-year-old monarch stepped out of the car in which she was travelling with daughter Princess Anne holding a black stick-a rare sight for the record-breaking monarch. The last time she was photographed using a stick was after undergoing a knee operation in 2004. Her office did not give any reason why she was using the walking aid Tuesday. The Queen-Britain's longest-serving monarch-has generally enjoyed good health in her old age, and a brief hospital stay with a stomach bug in 2013 was her last known bout of illness. — AFP

Guinea strongman sacks 44

CONAKRY: Guinea's strongman Colonel Mamady Doumbouya, who seized power last month, has sacked 44 generals and admirals in an apparent purge of the military top brass. The authorities in the West African country announced late Tuesday that 42 generals and two admirals "are required to exercise their right to retirement." The reason for the decision was not given. Among the string of officers is General Sekouba Konate, who briefly ran a transition government before organizing elections in 2010. A former army chief of staff is also on the list, as is the senior commander of the gendarmerie, a police force that is under the control of the military. The forced retirements come less than a week after Doumbouya, 37, appointed Mohamed Beavogui as his interim prime minister. — AFP

Shooting at US post office

WASHINGTON: Two US Postal Service employees were shot dead Tuesday in a gun attack at a Tennessee post office, authorities said. The suspected shooter opened fire at the East Lamar Carrier Annex in Memphis and then died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound. US Postal Inspector Susan Link told reporters that both victims, as well as the shooter, were postal service employees. "There is no ongoing threat," she said. "The FBI is working the scene and can confirm that the shooter is one of the three employees deceased by an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound," said Lisa-Anne Culp, a spokeswoman for the FBI's Memphis field office, at the same press conference. An investigation has been launched, she said. Both Link and Culp declined to give further details about the shooting. — AFP

California's Alisal Fire burns

LOS ANGELES: California firefighters scrambled overnight yesterday to battle a fast-moving blaze that has scorched more than 13,400 acres and prompted evacuation orders since it started Monday, according to local authorities. Burning in a dry, scrub-filled canyon about 20 miles northwest of Santa Barbara, the Alisal Fire is just five percent contained, according to the US Forest Service. More than 765 firefighters have been assigned to the blaze, the latest in what has already been a devastating wildfire season. "The main constraint has been heavy winds that have limited safe access to suppress the fire and limited the use of aircraft to engage and support fire suppression," an incident report said. The cause of the fire, which began near the Alisal Reservoir on Monday afternoon, remains under investigation, the state's fire agency Cal Fire said.— AFP

International

N Korean army gives brutal show of 'strength, bravery and morale'

UN rights warns of North Korea 'starvation risk'

SEOUL: A shirtless soldier smashes two glass bottles together, adding to a pile of shards on the ground as North Korean leader Kim Jong Un looks on, grinning. The man lies down on the debris and a comrade puts a thick concrete block on his chest, before smashing it with a sledgehammer. The scene was part of a pain-defying display put on by the North Korean army for the opening of a defense exhibition this week that

showcased the nuclear-armed country's weapons. The soldiers—some in uniform, others topless—punched their way through layers of concrete bricks, or broke them with their heads. Others were hammered on their arm or hand, and one lay on a bed of nails to have a block broken on his chest. Leader Kim looked on clapping and smiling, surrounded by officers and with his sister and close adviser Kim Yo Jong at his side, footage on state broadcaster KCTV showed Tuesday.

bravery and morale of the Korean People's Army," newsreader Ri Chun-hee—the North's most famous presenter—said over the images. The arms exhibition—at which Kim blamed the United States for tensions on the peninsula and accused the South of hypocrisy—is part of the commemorations for the anniversary of the foundation of the ruling Workers' Party. Kim has overseen rapid progress in Pyongyang's banned nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs, which have earned it multiple international sanctions. And Ri did not forget to declare the source of the participants' strength. It was "bestowed upon them by our dear leader Kim Jong Un", she said.

'Starvation risk'

Meanwhile, North Korea's most vulnerable are "at risk of starvation" with the economy worsening due to a self-imposed coronavirus blockade, and UN sanctions imposed over the country's nuclear programs should be eased, a UN human rights expert said yesterday. The impoverished nation has been behind a rigid blockade since early last year to protect itself from the pandemic, with the economy suffering and trade with key partner China dwindling to a trickle. In June, state-run KCTV admitted North Korea was facing a "food crisis", sounding the alarm in a country with a moribund agricultural sector that has long struggled to feed the population.

The same month, leader Kim Jong Un said the food situation was "getting tense". Ordinary North Koreans are "struggling on a daily basis... to live a life of dignity", and the worsening humanitarian situation could "turn into a crisis", Tomas Ojea Quintana, UN special rapporteur on human rights, said in his latest report. Pyongyang is under multiple sets of international sanctions over its nuclear and ballistic missile programs, which have seen rapid progress under Kim.



PYONGYANG: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un (2nd right) watches a demonstration flight during the opening ceremony of the defense development exhibition 'Self-Defence-2021' in Pyongyang. — AFP

Quintana said such restrictions should be eased to protect the country's most vulnerable in the face of a severe food shortage. "The most vulnerable children and elderly are at risk of starvation," he said. "Sanctions imposed by the UN Security Council should be reviewed and eased when necessary to both facilitate humanitarian and lifesaving assistance." The report comes about three months after the UN's Food and Agricultural Organization said North Korea was facing a food shortage of around 860,000 tons this year, and could experience a "harsh lean period".

Pyongyang has stayed away from talks on its nuclear program since the collapse of a second summit between Kim and then US president Donald Trump in Hanoi and has rebuffed South Korean efforts to revive dialogue. Under President Joe Biden, the United States has repeatedly declared its willingness to meet North Korean representatives, while saying it will seek denuclearization. But this week Kim blamed Washington for tensions on the peninsula, and insisted Pyongyang's weapons were for self-defense and not aimed at any particular country. — AFP



Kim Jong Un blames US for tensions

Korea has a long tradition of martial arts, and breaking is part of its indigenous sport of taekwondo—developed by a South Korean general who later fell out with the South's military-backed dictator Park Chung-hee and became a frequent visitor to Pyongyang, where he died in 2002. It is now often used by the North to symbolize its military prowess. "These soldiers, embraced and raised by our party, have demonstrated to the whole world the strength,



KANDAHAR: Young shepherds lead their goats in Arghandab district in the central part of Kandahar Province. — AFP

Anxiety and fear for women in Taliban stronghold

KANDAHAR: Afghan student Fauzia used to make ends meet voicing ads on a radio station in the Taliban heartland of Kandahar, but that came to an abrupt end when the Islamists swept to power in August. Their order was clear: No female voices on the air. Afghanistan's new rulers have promised more moderate governance than their last stint in power, when women were all but barred from work and education, and prohibited from leaving the house unchaperoned.

But there is widespread mistrust in their women's rights pledge. Most girls around the country have been barred from attending secondary school, and most women have been unable to return to work. When AFP visited Kandahar last month, only a few women were visible in the dusty shopping streets of the southern city, hastily lugging bags from store to store while wearing the head-to-toe burqa. The Taliban "posted messages on Facebook saying they did not want to hear any more music or female (voices) on air," said Fauzia, who asked not to use her real name.

The 20-year-old medical student's situation has become increasingly desperate after losing her income from radio ads—Fauzia and her four younger siblings are orphans, and she is struggling to put food on the table. Despite Taliban promises of a softer rule this time around, women remain depressed and unclear about their place in society, while businesses that once employed them are wary of upsetting the Islamists. Fauzia's former boss said the radio station felt forced to stop airing ads with women's voices. She has been handing out our resumes all over Kandahar, without any luck. "I am told to wait," she said.

'Bad looks from Taliban'

Since taking power, the Islamists have repeatedly said they will respect women's rights in the confines of Islamic law, without elaborating. Women, with some exceptions, have been barred from returning to work or education, and told that they must hold off until arrangements have been made, including the segregation of men and women. So far, "we haven't banned anything for women", Mullah Noor Ahmad Saeed, a Taliban official in Kandahar province said. "If they don't feel secure or don't go back to work, it is their fault."

But many are skeptical. "In the streets, people don't say anything, but we noticed bad looks from the Taliban," said Fereshteh Nazari, who has been able to return to work as the head of a girls-only primary school. Women teachers and girls, however, have been excluded from returning to secondary school. "Before we used to be happy to come to school. Now we're under stress," Nazari told AFP at the school. On the day AFP visited, some 700 students were present, less than a third of the 2,500 girls enrolled.

"Most parents don't send their girls to school after the age of 10 because they don't feel secure," Nazari said. Zohra, a mathematics major in her 20s who asked not to use her real name, is among the students staying away, her fear compounded by rumors of a looming violent Taliban crackdown. "For me, life is more important than anything else," she told AFP by phone.

For many women, the ability to work is crucial now more than ever as Afghanistan suffers a worsening economic crisis. It has had a severe impact even on the few women still allowed to work—Nazari and her teacher colleagues have not received their salaries since the Western-backed government collapsed in August. "Before, we had a good life. Now we might have to go and beg at the bazaar," said the headmistress, who is in her 20s. "My husband is jobless, and we have to feed our two kids." — AFP

Zionist, UAE ministers in US as Biden seeks to expand normalization

WASHINGTON: The top diplomats from Zionist entity and the United Arab Emirates are set to hold three-way talks in Washington as President Joe Biden's administration embraces and looks to expand a normalization drive. Concerns about Iran—the specter of which helped bring together Zionists and Gulf states when they established relations last year as part of the Abraham Accords—are expected to be high on the agenda after Biden's early diplomatic overtures to Tehran bore little immediate fruit.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will meet separately and together with Zionist Foreign Minister Yair Lapid and his Emirati counterpart Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, following a similar virtual event last month. Former president Donald Trump considered the so-called Abraham Accords to be a crowning achievement for his administration as the United Arab Emirates, followed shortly afterward by Bahrain and Morocco, became the first Arab states to normalize relations with Zionist entity in decades.

Despite their myriad policy differences, the Biden team has given credit to the Trump administration over the Abraham Accords, dismissing criticism that normalization ignores the plight of the Palestinians. Trump's approach was also seen as transactional as he agreed to sell state-of-the-art fighter-jets to the UAE and recognize Morocco's controversial claim over Western Sahara—moves that Biden has not changed. A senior State Department official said that the Abraham Accords can "help to achieve a more peaceful and prosperous Middle East."

"It's not a substitute to a two-state solution. We hope that normalization can be leveraged to advance progress on the Zionist-Palestinian track," the official told reporters on condition of anonymity. He said the three nations will announce working groups to expand cooperation on energy and water—a scarce resource in the Middle East—as well as religious coexistence. Both Zionists and the United Arab Emirates have boasted of dividends since signing their accord in the presence of Trump at the White House in September 2020.

Zionist entity has made progress in its long-term goal of ending its isolation in its near neighborhood, while the United Arab Emirates has voiced hope at \$1 trillion in new economic activity over the next decade through trade. The US official said the Biden administration was "actively working to expand" normalization but declined to give specifics. Sudan, under heavy arm-twisting from Trump, said last year it would seek relations with Zionists but has balked amid heavy pressure on the country's fragile new civilian-backed government. — AFP

value the whole group at 3.5-3.75 billion euros. OVHcloud competes with dominant American tech groups Amazon Web Services and Google to offer cloud computing services, which enable companies to store data remotely rather than on their own servers.

The French group pitches itself as a safe European alternative to its American rivals and guarantees that data are stored in accordance with EU laws. It enjoys strong political backing in Paris, which sees it as part of efforts to reduce Europe's reliance on the United States for security and technology. OVHcloud offered its "most sincere apologies" to clients and promised "the utmost transparency on the causes and consequences" of the outage.

The IPO by the group will be the third major public share offering by a French tech star following the flotation of music streaming company Believe in June and cybersecurity specialist Exclusive Networks in September. OVHcloud suffered a major fire at one of its facilities in eastern France in March this year that caused problems and outages for 12,000-16,000 clients. — AFP



NORD: This photograph shows the building and logo of the French company OVHcloud, one of Europe's biggest cloud computing groups, in Roubaix, northern France. — AFP

IT outage hits one of Europe biggest cloud computing groups

PARIS: A "human error" took down the servers of one of Europe's biggest cloud computing groups yesterday, causing thousands of websites to crash for more than an hour, the company said. OVHcloud, a French tech success story which is set to launch an initial public offering tomorrow, attributed the problem to an intervention on a part of its network in the United States following persistent cyber-attacks.

Octave Klaba, the Polish-born founder of the group, said it was "a human error" in a message posted on Twitter. The timing of the outage is embarrassing for the group which is hoping to sell shares worth 350 million euros (\$400 million) tomorrow, which would

News in brief

28 killed in Nepal accident

KATHMANDU: At least 28 people were killed and more than a dozen injured Tuesday after a packed passenger bus plunged off a road in a hilly region in northwestern Nepal, officials said. The accident in the remote Mugu region happened at around 12.30pm local time after a puncture to one of the front tyres, district official Rom Bahadur Mahat said. The bus was driving from the southern Banke district to the Mugu area and was believed to have been carrying at least 45 people, many travelling to celebrate the Hindu festival of Dashain. "The accident has killed 28 people, we are trying to identify the bodies. The injured are being treated in hospitals," Mahat added. — AFP

Malian jihadist apologizes

THE HAGUE: A Malian jihadist apologized on Tuesday for his role in destroying the fabled shrines of Timbuktu as he asked judges at the International Criminal Court to release him from prison. Ahmad Al-Faqi al-Mahdi, who was sentenced to nine years imprisonment in 2016, was a changed man who had learned to play guitar and to sew while in jail, his lawyer told the ICC. "I stand before you today to express to the whole world my remorse, my sadness and my regret for all the crimes I have committed in the past and the damage resulting from these crimes," Al-Mahdi told the court. "I assure you that I have completely separated myself from the world of crime and I will never return," added al-Mahdi, who had cut his long curly hair short and shaved his beard for the hearing. — AFP

Political prisoner dies of COVID

CARACAS: An army general who aligned with Venezuela's late Hugo Chavez but later broke ranks with the socialist strongman and spent years as a prominent political prisoner has died of COVID-19 while in custody, officials said Tuesday. "We regret the death of Raul Isaias Baduel from cardiorespiratory arrest as a consequence of COVID-19," prosecutor general Tarek Saab posted on Twitter. Baduel, 66, had received an initial COVID-19 vaccination and "was receiving appropriate medical care," Saab added. Baduel's family said they learned of his death via Twitter. "I have not received a call from any person in the government," his wife Cruz Zambrano de Baduel told the ETV internet channel. — AFP

Fresh fighting in Ethiopia's Afar

ADDIS ABABA: Fighting has resumed in northern Ethiopia's Afar region after a month-long lull, humanitarian and rebel sources said yesterday, as the government appeared to be pressing a new offensive. There were reports of an armed clash Tuesday in the town of Awra, in Afar's Fenti zone, including use of heavy weapons by the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) that killed multiple civilians, the humanitarian sources said. The reports could not be independently verified and officials in Afar could not be reached for comment. TPLF spokesman Getachew Reda denied claims the rebels had used heavy weapons against civilians but confirmed there had been fresh hostilities in Afar. "Enemy forces are crumbling and in disarray in parts of Afar," he said, describing fighting along the border between Afar and Amhara regions. — AFP

Business

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2021

IMF warns supply snarls slowing global recovery

Subsidies not the right tool to deal with high energy prices

WASHINGTON: Worldwide supply chain disruptions are driving price increases and draining momentum out of economies recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic, the IMF warned.

The ongoing hit from the pandemic and the failure to distribute vaccines worldwide is worsening the economic divide and darkening prospects for developing nations, the IMF said in its latest World Economic Outlook. The global economy is expected to grow 5.9 percent this year, only slightly lower than projected in July, before slowing to 4.9 percent in 2022, the report said.

But the overall figures mask large downgrades and ongoing struggles for some countries, including the United States, Germany and Japan that are feeling the impact of supply bottlenecks, IMF chief economist Gita Gopinath said. "This recovery is really quite unique," she told AFP on the sidelines of the annual meetings of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank.

Despite a strong return in demand, "the supply side has not been able to come back as quickly," hampered in part by the spread of the Delta variant of COVID-19, which has made workers reluctant to return to their jobs. Those labor shortages are "feeding into price pressures" in major economies, she said, slowing growth expectations this year.

Energy prices have hit multi-year highs in recent days, with oil above \$80 a barrel, weighing on households. But Gopinath said she expects energy prices to begin to retreat by the end of the first quarter of 2022.

Darkening prospects

In low-income developing countries, the outlook "has darkened considerably due to worsening pandemic dynamics," she said in a blog post on the new forecasts. The setbacks, which she blamed on the "great vaccine divide," will impact the restoration of living standards, and a prolonged pandemic downturn "could reduce global GDP by a cumulative \$5.3 trillion over the next five years," she warned.

"The dangerous divergence in economic prospects across countries remains a major concern," Gopinath said. Advanced economies are expected to regain "pre-pandemic trend path in 2022 and exceed it by 0.9 percent in 2024," she said. However, in emerging market and developing economies, excluding China, output "is expected to remain 5.5 percent below the pre-pandemic forecast in 2024." Amid the danger of long-term scarring, "the foremost policy priority is therefore to vaccinate at least 40 percent of the population in every country by end-2021 and 70 percent by mid-

2022," she said.

Delicate US balancing act

The world's largest economy has benefitted from massive fiscal stimulus, but the Delta wave and the supply issues have undermined progress, prompting the IMF to slash the US growth forecast for this year to six percent, a full percentage point off the July figure. US growth is expected to slow to 5.2 percent next year, slightly faster than previously expected, but policymakers will face a delicate balancing act amid risks of rising inflation and lagging employment, the fund noted.

Wages also threaten to rise as employers compete for scarce workers, Gopinath noted. Governments should avoid using general subsidies as a way to soften the blow from recent high energy prices, the IMF said yesterday.

Broad subsidies are expensive, so policymakers instead should use targeted aid to help low income families most impacted from the recent surge, Paulo Medas, of the IMF's Fiscal Affairs Department said.

Generalized energy subsidies "benefit rich households who don't need the support," making them very costly, Medas told reporters.

In addition, "they are not friendly to the environment, in fact they lead to very negative incentives." The IMF recommends "using more targeted support to those that are more vulnerable, and the



WASHINGTON, US: IMF chief economist Gita Gopinath speaks during an interview with AFP at the International Monetary Fund headquarters in Washington DC. —AFP

hardest hit" including cash transfers or subsidizing electric bills for low income families.

After debt loads surged last year amid the pandemic, governments now must take care to "calibrate" spending, the IMF said yesterday. Global debt in 2020, including public and private borrowing, "jumped by 14 percent to a record high \$226 trillion," according to the IMF's Fiscal Monitor report.

"A significant number of countries are in debt distress, or at high risk of debt distress," said Vitor Gaspar, director of the IMF's Fiscal Affairs Department.

It is "urgent" to make progress on a framework to help those countries at risk, he told reporters, repeating the call from the International Monetary Fund and World Bank to take action before the debt service suspension initiative agreed by the Group of 20 expires at the end of

Texas businesses stuck between federal and state vaccine rules

WASHINGTON: American Airlines and Southwest Airlines said Tuesday they will continue requiring employees to be vaccinated against COVID-19, deferring to federal regulations as Texas and the White House square off over vaccine mandates. The clash comes as the Republican governor of Texas, Gregg Abbott, signed an order Monday banning all vaccine mandates in his state, including those coming from private companies.

But that state rule is in direct contradiction with a regulation announced by President Joe Biden last month, which would require all companies with more than 100 employees to ensure their workers are vaccinated against the coronavirus. White House spokeswoman Jen Psaki said Tuesday the new Texas law does not change the federal government's vaccine mandate plans, which could cover some 100 million US workers.

"We know that federal law overrides state law," Psaki said. But the Biden administration has yet to detail the practical applications of the federal order.

"There isn't a big historic precedent for this and



we want to get it right," Psaki said, assuring that plans for the federal order could be expected within "weeks."

Airlines defer

As federal contractors, major airlines must require their employees to be vaccinated by December 8, which could prove complicated for those based in Texas. American Airlines said it will defer to federal law over the state law. "We are reviewing the executive order issued by Gov. Abbott, but we believe the federal vaccine mandate supersedes any conflicting state laws, and this does not change anything for American," a spokesperson

for the carrier said in a statement to AFP.

Fellow Texas-based airline Southwest also said Tuesday it would continue requiring vaccines for employees, despite Abbott's order. "According to the president's executive order, federal action supersedes any state mandate or law, and we would be expected to comply with the president's order to remain compliant as a federal contractor," Southwest said in a statement.

And the Greater Houston Partnership, a Texas business group that includes Exxon Mobil, Chevron, BP, Shell and JP Morgan Chase, said in a statement Tuesday: "The governor's executive order does not support Texas businesses' ability and duty to create a safe workplace." Abbott said Monday he supported vaccination, but would not allow mandates for it in his state.

"I issued an Executive Order prohibiting vaccine mandates by ANY entity in Texas," the governor wrote on Twitter. "The COVID-19 vaccine is safe, effective & our best defense against the virus, but should always remain voluntary & never forced," said Abbott, who is also against mask mandates and tested positive for the virus in August. Psaki slammed the Texas order during a press briefing Tuesday. "I think it's pretty clear when you make a choice that's against all public health information and data out there that it's not based on what is in the interest of the people you are governing," she said. "It's perhaps in the interest of your own politics." —AFP

US Congress averts default with stop-gap debt limit hike

WASHINGTON: US lawmakers rubber-stamped a short-term bill to lift the nation's borrowing authority Tuesday, averting the threat of a first-ever debt default — but only for a few weeks. The Democratic-controlled House of Representatives voted along party lines to pass the stop-gap \$480 billion hike, which advanced from the Senate last Thursday after weeks of heated debate.

"It's about the kitchen table, it's about our economy, the global economy, but it's also about our constitution which says the full faith and credit of the United States shall not be in doubt," Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi told reporters ahead of the vote. Democratic leaders had spent weeks underlining the havoc that a default would have wrought, including the loss of six million jobs and \$15 trillion in household wealth as well as increased costs for mortgages and other borrowing.

Republicans refused to offer any of their own votes to avert the crisis, and even blocked Democrats who control Congress from lifting the limit on their own, via a simple majority. But the party dropped its blockade in the Senate last week, ending for now an impasse that risked leaving the federal government incapable of securing and servicing loans after October 18.

The new arrangement merely kicks the can down the road, possibly to complicate another major funding deadline — a shutdown that would begin from December 3 when the government's coffers theoretically run out. — **'Full faith and credit'**

The borrowing cap may yet turn out to be less pressing, however. Economists estimate that the nation will reach the new, revised debt limit some-



WASHINGTON, US: A person jogs past the US Capitol in Washington, DC. US lawmakers rubber-stamped a short-term bill to lift the nation's borrowing authority Tuesday, averting the threat of a first-ever debt default — but only for a few weeks. —AFP

time in mid-December or early January — slightly later than the December 3 date that Congress originally projected. The United States spends more money than it collects through taxation so it borrows money via the issuing of government bonds, seen as among the world's most reliable investments. Around 80 years ago lawmakers introduced a limit on how much federal debt could be accrued.

The ceiling has been lifted dozens of times to allow the government to meet its spending commitments — usually without drama and with the support of both parties — and stands at around \$28 trillion. But Republicans in both chambers of Congress have this time objected, saying they refuse to support Biden's "reckless" taxing and spending plans. In reality, raising the debt ceiling doesn't authorize new spending — it merely pays for expenses that both Republican and Democratic administrations have already committed to. —AFP

India's Infosys reports strong quarter earnings

MUMBAI: Indian software giant Infosys said yesterday it expects to grow faster than previously projected after reporting quarterly earnings that beat analyst estimates. The company reported revenues of 296 billion rupees (\$3.9 billion) in the three months ending September 30, an increase of 20.5 percent compared to the same quarter last year.

"On a year-on-year basis, our growth was the fastest in 11 years," chief executive officer and managing director Salil Parekh said in a media briefing. "Given this continued momentum we have further increased our revenue growth guidance to 16.5 to 17.5 percent." Revenues from digital services grew 43 percent year-on-year, contributing more than 56 percent of its total revenues, up from 54 percent in the previous quarter. At the same time, revenues from the firm's legacy consulting and technology business grew only 0.7 percent in the three-month period.

Net profit at India's second-largest IT company rose to 54.21 billion rupees, 11.9 percent higher than the same quarter last year. The company maintained its operating margins at 23.6 percent, compared to 23.7 percent in the previous quarter despite absorbing the impact of wage hikes in the period. However, Infosys left its forecast for operating margins at 22-24 percent for the current financial year 2021-22. The company signed deals worth \$2.15 billion in the quarter, down from \$2.6 billion in the previous quarter ended June 30. Infosys said it will expand its graduate hiring program to 45,000 recruits this year to meet increased demand for digital services, even as its attrition rate—a key metric for IT companies—spiked to 20.1 percent from 13.9 percent in the previous quarter. —AFP



US biggest bitcoin miner after China crackdown: Study

LONDON: The United States has overtaken China as the biggest miner of bitcoin following Beijing's crackdown on the method used to unearth the world's major cryptocurrency, a study showed yesterday.

Figures released by the University of Cambridge showed that activity in the US more than doubled in the four months to the end of August, increasing the market share held by the world's biggest economy to 35.4 percent. Kazakhstan, in second place, also more than doubled its activity to 18.1 percent, followed by Russia with 11 percent, said Michel Rauchs at the university's centre for alternative finance.

China banned the mining of bitcoin in June, as authorities have said for a long time that there were strong links between the cryptocurrency and money laundering. Mining for bitcoin requires powerful computers to solve complex puzzles, resulting in the consumption of huge amounts of electricity.

According to the Cambridge Bitcoin Electricity Consumption Index, mining of the cryptocurrency uses an amount of electricity equivalent to 0.45 percent of global output, or the same amount produced by the Philippines. Rauchs said that with China's ban, global mining of bitcoin immediately slumped by more than one third, but has since rebounded. "That initial 38 percent drop... in June was partially offset by a 20 percent bounce-back over July and August, suggesting that some Chinese mining equipment has been successfully redeployed overseas," the expert said.

"Further, as of early October, the trajectory is indicating that all, or nearly all, of that June downturn would be fully recovered soon," Rauchs added. —AFP

Business

NBK Economic Report

Private consumption in Kuwait has led the economic rebound

OPEC+ cuts unwinding, refining gains to boost growth

KUWAIT: Kuwait's economy is slowly recovering from last year's pandemic, a year that was characterized by severe curtailments in private consumption and government investment spending, business closures, expatriate layoffs and a sharp fall in oil prices. GDP contracted by 8.9 percent, the steepest decline since 2009, with the oil and non-oil sectors both shrinking by about 8.9 percent amid deep OPEC+ oil output cuts, curfews and limited fiscal policy support.

Growth prospects have improved, however, underpinned by higher oil prices and a successful vaccine rollout. Domestic demand has led the recovery, with the most recent data releases showing robust growth in consumer spending (Knet: +23 percent y/y) and household credit (+11 percent y/y). Project activity is also slated to accelerate as the government prioritizes major road, hospital and airport infrastructure projects.

Private sector business activity

Table 1: Key economic indicators

	2020e	2021f	2022f	2023f	2024f	
Nominal GDP	\$ bn	106	129	134	140	145
Real GDP	% y/y	-8.9	1.0	5.1	3.8	2.6
- Oil sector	% y/y	-8.9	-1.0	7.2	4.2	1.9
- Non-oil sector*	% y/y	-8.8	3.2	2.8	3.3	3.5
Budget balance (FY)	% of GDP	-33.2	-10.3	-14.2	-11.4	-9.5
Current acc. balance	% of GDP	21.1	26.3	23.4	22.5	23.1
Inflation	% y/y	2.1	2.6	2.1	3.8	1.9

Corporate activity has lagged, though, weighed down by the uncertain business, regulatory and political environment. Reflecting the challenging landscape, credit growth to businesses in 2021 has been lackluster (+0.3 percent y/y in August). The labor market has also been in flux, following the departure of thousands of mainly low-skilled expatriates during the pandemic, while the employment of nationals in the private sector has retreated from 2019 levels (-2.7 percent to 62,296 in IH21). The authorities will be keen to reverse this trend; they also envisage greater business participation in the development plan.

NBK has the largest NFC-enabled POS network in Kuwait

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) is keen to provide the latest and most advanced payment solutions to ensure quicker and easier banking experience for its customers. In this context, the bank provides the largest NFC-enabled POS network in Kuwait.

NBK increased its market share of the advanced NFC-enabled POS terminals to more than 15,000 POS terminals, representing the largest market share among banks in Kuwait. NFC services rely on executing payments by enabling the bank card to communicate with POS terminals or ATMs by waving the card, without inserting it into the device.

The NFC-enabled POS support advanced contactless payments in which customers do not use credit cards, such as smartwatch and smartphone payments, the service that NBK was the first to introduce in Kuwait. NBK had launched Fitbit Pay and Garmin Pay last year, using Fitbit and Garmin smartwatches, as well as Samsung Pay, which link NBK Credit Cards with compatible Samsung smartphones.

On this occasion, Prasad Srinivasa, Head of Payment Acceptance and Customer Loyalty, Consumer Banking Group, National Bank of Kuwait, said: "We strive to provide advanced payment methods that offer customers and merchants quick and convenient service. To this end, we seek to increase the coverage of our POS network, which is the largest NFC-enabled network in Kuwait, given its many advantages, as well as our commitment to ensure its security as a payment solution."

"We are always in touch with our customers to identify their needs, which we seek to meet by providing the latest technology in the banking industry that are on par with most advanced international levels. This comes in line with our digital transformation strategy and within our efforts to maintain our leadership in providing top-notch digital banking services in Kuwait and the region," he added. Srinivasa stressed that advanced payment solutions are a key part in our endeavors to enrich customers' banking experience, noting that NBK seeks to introduce more advanced services and continuous improvements for all the distinguished digital banking services provided to our customers.

NBK continues to enhance its leading position in the banking sector through the largest domestic banking network in Kuwait, with 68 branches all over the Country, as well as a large POS network exceeding 15,000 terminals, all NFC-enabled. In addition, NBK has the largest owned ATM network all over Kuwait.

Furthermore, NBK Customers can choose from a wide range of NBK Credit Cards providing them with the first and largest rewards program in Kuwait with up to 900 participating outlets. In addition to the bank's widespread branch network all over Kuwait and across 15 countries worldwide, and its large ATM/GDM network, as the bank always provides customers with the best, highly advanced and secure banking experience.

OPEC+ cuts

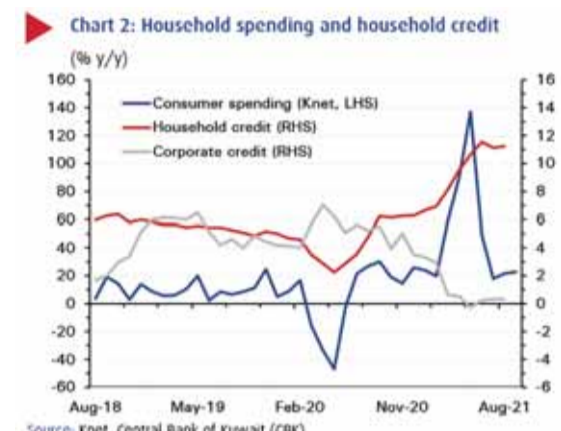
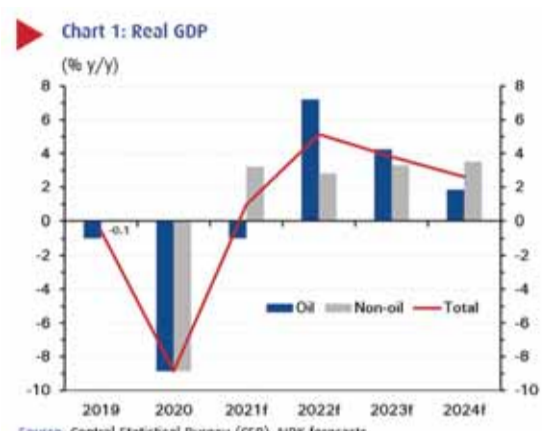
The OPEC+ decision to ease output cuts to satisfy rising global oil demand will allow Kuwait to lift crude production and boost oil sector GDP, probably by about 4.4 percent y/y on average in 2022-24. Oil producers will be mindful of oversupplying the market, so output gains will be moderate. The full commissioning of the Clean Fuels and Al-Zour refinery projects, which will have effectively doubled Kuwait's refining capacity, will lead to incrementally higher output of more valuable refined products over the forecast period-boosting non-oil GDP (under which they are recorded in the national accounts) by about 0.9 percent pts to 3.2 percent on average. Headline GDP growth should average 3.9 percent.

Inflation up on supply chain woes

Inflation nearly doubled to 2.1 percent in 2020 on the back of supply-chain pressures, higher international food prices and pent-up consumer demand. Inflation could average 2.6 percent this year before slowing in 2022. A VAT of 5 percent could be introduced in 2023, which will lead to a spike in prices that year. Monetary policy will remain accommodative but tighten slightly over the forecast period as the US Fed slowly lifts interest rates.

A record fiscal deficit

The twin shocks of COVID-19 and low oil prices caused Kuwait's fiscal deficit, its 6th in a row, to swell to a record KD10.8 billion (33 percent of GDP) in FY20/21. Revenues declined sharply (-39 percent to KD10.5 billion), while expenditures grew marginally (+0.7 percent to KD21.2 billion). Cutbacks in capital spending helped offset some other outlay increases-mainly COVID-related. Looking ahead, while the FY21/22 budget is expansionary, we see spending restraint as more probable. The government appears serious in looking for cost-efficiencies, with a flurry of reports on deliberations over ministry budget cuts, fee increases, and even subsidy cuts. A large restructuring of the public sector was also recently proposed. Our base case view sees the most politically sensitive reforms taking time to materialize, but some non-oil revenue augmentation, limited initially to excise duties and VAT (worth up to 1.5 percent of GDP), is project-



ed by 2023. We expect the fiscal deficit to halve this year to around KD 4.2bn (10.3 percent of GDP), before narrowing further to 9.5 percent of GDP by 2024.

Higher liquidity risk

In an era of fiscal deficits, financing has become the critical issue for policymakers, especially given the near depletion of the General Reserve Fund (GRF) and the absence of debt issuance (due to legislative impasse). Near-term liquidity risks have risen and so has the imperative of a comprehensive deficit-financing strategy, as cited by S&P in its July downgrade of Kuwait's credit rating to A+ (still solid investment grade). Asset swaps with the massive Future

Generations Fund and accrued dividends restructuring with KPC have, along with higher oil prices, helped inject liquidity to the GRF. These are only stop-gaps, though. Kuwait also has a \$3.5bn Eurobond maturing in early 2022. Ultimately, we do expect a new debt law to be approved over the coming months.

With around \$700bn in SWF assets (KIA) and very low public debt (12 percent of GDP), Kuwait easily has the financial resources needed to meet its obligations, but also, it is hoped, the space to gradually phase-in the structural reforms needed to reconfigure the economy, boost the role of the private sector and navigate the global energy transition away from fossil fuels.

Kuwait's economy is gradually emerging from the pandemic, with consumption leading the rebound amid markedly higher oil prices. Oil production is increasing steadily as per the OPEC+ schedule, providing a welcome boost to oil GDP. Corporate activity and employment growth is a notable soft spot, though. Following a succession of fiscal deficits, the near-depletion of liquid assets in the GRF has heightened liquidity risks, but also focused policymakers' minds on fiscal sustainability and macroeconomic reforms.

Etoile eyes overseas expansion with top skincare and cosmetics brands

We are looking to access new markets in Europe, N America: Boresli

KUWAIT: Etoile is a Kuwaiti company, established in 2016 with its own line of perfumes as well as partnering with international suppliers to include high end skincare, cosmetics and haircare products from countries such as South Korea, Italy, France, Singapore and Spain.

In an interview, Etoile founder & CEO Nasser Boresli said: "Our recent meetings with many commercial offices at embassies in Kuwait focused on establishing new partnerships with distinguished brands in cosmetics from those countries."

He added: "The meetings discussed ways to expand the scale of cooperation based on a regional business expansion plan to cover more areas." "Etoile has taken great strides to expand its business beyond the Gulf and to introduce new distinguished brands to their clients," Boresli added. Excerpts from the interview:

Question: Can you tell us about your company, how did you start it?

Boresli: We are a Kuwaiti-based company established in 2016 focused on the beauty sector (cosmetics, skincare, perfumes, etc). In light of our successful strategy, we are working towards expanding our partnership with new brands and suppliers to satisfy our trusting customer base in the GCC.

Q: What products are you focusing on selling, and who are your customers?

Boresli: Since the beauty market is increasingly growing, we are working to expand our portfolio of products in skincare, haircare, makeup and perfume brands from many countries. Also we are planning to acquire more brands from North America and Australia alongside our current partners.

Q: What is the Kuwaiti market's appetite and potential growth in your sector?

Boresli: Etoile had a strategy to work in all the GCC countries (Kuwait, KSA, UAE, Bahrain, Qatar and Oman) as a one entity and our operations are focused on reaching many clients there since we are the exclusive distributors for many of the international brands we represent. Since we started back in 2016 and with the help of e-commerce, we saw a

steady but gradual increase in sales. However, after the COVID-19 hit the globe, and with lockdowns effecting physical store sales, we took a huge and unprecedented leap in sales that continue till today.



Q: Many have faced issues during the COVID-19 lockdown. How did that effect your business?

Boresli: As the COVID had many negative impacts on many industries, we in Etoile have had as I mentioned a positive effect since more customers started shifting to e-commerce platforms which generate a higher revenue per sale than usual physical stores. Also the abundance of cash at people's disposal due to the lack of travel, shopping malls and other venues, made more people buy more than before, and if they liked the product as well as the service they will continue. I do believe that you have to have a great product and a great quality customer service to match. You need them both to continue your success.

Nasser Boresli has more than 12 years of experience in supervision, auditing, compliance and governance with CBK & CMA. They include:

- Founder & CEO Etoile Kuwait
- Governance and Audit researcher at Reconnaissance Research.
- Master of Business Administration (MBA) (Concentration: Finance)
- Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST)
- Higher diploma in Islamic Finance
- Bachelor's degree in Finance from Kuwait University's College of Business and Administration.



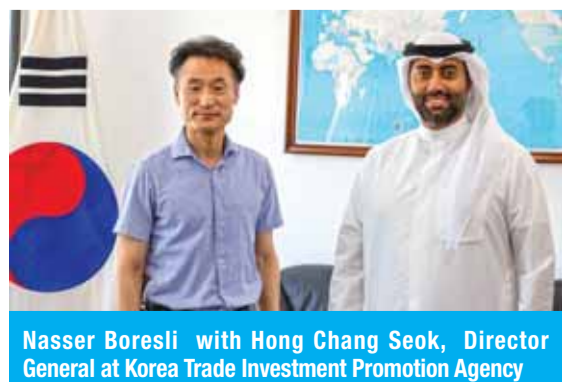
ABK inks strategic partnership with IUK

KUWAIT: Following its efforts to foster education and provide cutting-edge digital financial solutions, Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK), announced its strategic partnership with The International University of Science & Technology (IUK). The signing ceremony took place on the university's new campus, and was attended by Dr Barakat Al-Hudaiban, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, at IUK and Loai Mukames, CEO-Kuwait of ABK, Yasmine Salamah, General Manager - Corporate Banking at ABK, Johair Marafi, General Manager - Retail Banking and their respective teams.

The collaboration unites the two institutions' shared values of excellence, leadership, service and trust to drive impact for IUK's students, faculty and staff. ABK will support IUK students with a suite of services, including on-campus services during the registration period, exclusive salary transfers through ABK, an ATM on campus, and multiple other services.

Loai Mukames, Chief Executive Officer at ABK-Kuwait, said, "We are very pleased to sign this agreement with The International University of Science & Technology (IUK). The symbiotic relationship between ABK and IUK is significant in fostering the economic development of Kuwait. This is also the perfect opportunity for us to enhance the diffusion of knowledge, share innovative ideas, and ultimately employ from a wonderful pool of talent in the future. By supporting students leaning towards a career in the financial industry, we want to provide them with the required information so that they can make an informed decision about the direction they want to take once they graduate. Our teams are excited to be able to support the University with their corporate banking needs, as well as guide the students with their personal banking requirements."

Dr Barakat Al-Hudaiban, Chairman of the Board of Trustees at IUK said, "We are extremely happy to partner with a steadfast financial institution such as ABK. We are also very confident that this collaboration will reaffirm our commitment to offering students an innovative learning opportunity to enhance their finance knowledge while also supporting them with their banking needs. Together, we look forward to building a strong pipeline of talent who will lead the transformation of the country into an economic and trade hub, in line with Kuwait's 2035 vision."



KAMCO World Economic Outlook

IMF: Real GDP forecast revisions for GCC states remain mixed for 2021

Global economic growth forecast trimmed on rising risks

KUWAIT: The latest update to the IMF's World Economic Outlook showed scars of the COVID-19 pandemic affecting the pace of growth in 2021, with the effects of the Delta variant mainly affecting output in low income countries. The revisions also reflected the impact of access of vaccine and the pace of vaccination with countries with higher rates of vaccination expected to grow faster than countries that are still struggling to vaccinate the bulk of the population.

GDP forecasts for the MENA region was unchanged for 2021 at 4.1 percent and was raised for 2022 by 40 bps to a constant growth rate of 4.1 percent. The unchanged forecast for 2021 reflected better growth in some commodity exporters offset by the impact of pandemic. Growth prospects for some oil exporters in the region were lowered for 2021, which resulted in a 10 bps downward revision for the oil exporting group to a growth of 4.5 percent. For the oil importers, growth was raised by 120 bps to a growth of 3.6 percent in 2021.

Real GDP forecast revisions for the GCC countries were remained mixed for 2021 and largely positive for 2022. Growth rates for Oman, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait witnessed upward revisions of 70 bps, 40 bps and 20 bps, respectively, and was slashed by 90 bps for Bahrain and UAE and by 50 bps for Qatar. Bahrain is expected to see the fastest growth in the region in 2021 at 3.3 percent closely followed by UAE at 3.1 percent and Saudi Arabia and Qatar at 2.4 percent each. For 2022, Oman's GDP growth underwent a steep downward revision of 450 bps to 2.9 percent while average growth for the overall region is expected to be around 3.7 percent.

Moreover, the lasting impact of the pandemic also led to supply chain disruption that is reflected in the rising inflation rates and commodity prices. The IMF highlighted that although the aggregate World GDP forecast underwent a marginal revision, the changes

in growth forecasts for some countries were significant. World GDP is now expected to clock a growth of 5.9 percent in 2021 vs. previous expectation of 6.0 percent growth, whereas the growth in 2022 was unchanged at 4.9 percent. Revisions by the IMF largely showed downgrades for 2021 mainly for Advanced Economies and upward revisions for 2022.

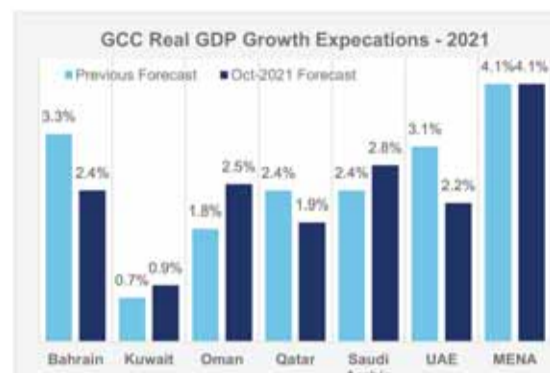
Advanced economies

According to the IMF, only Advanced Economies are expected to reach or exceed pre-pandemic levels in 2022, although supply disruptions would affect near-term growth. Growth in the rest of the regions are expected to remain below 2019 levels even next year. Low-income developing economies are expected to see the biggest output gap of 6.7 percent next year vs. pre-pandemic levels followed by Emerging markets and developing economies (excluding China) with a gap of 5.5 percent. Supply disruptions remains one of the key policy concerns that is led by a combination of:

1) lower output due to the pandemic and weather related disruptions and 2) higher pent-up demand post pandemic. This has resulted in shortages of key components and rising food prices have both led to inflation concerns.

The IMF believes that the vaccinations should be the foremost policy priority for governments globally to safeguard against new variants of the virus. This would require adequate and uninterrupted supply of vaccines as well as further investments to fund research, testing, therapeutics and genomic surveillance. In terms of monetary policy, the IMF said that central banks should wait for more clarity on underlying price dynamics before increasing rates.

The downward revision to growth forecast for 2021 mainly reflected a curtailed growth in Advanced Economies that was partially offset by positive revisions in commodity-exporting



Source: IMF WEO Oct-2021



Emerging Market and Developing Economies. Growth in Advanced economies was slashed by 40 bps for 2021 and increased by 10 bps for 2022. On the other hand, growth for Emerging Market and Developing Economies was raised by 10 bps for 2021 and lowered 10 bps for 2022. GDP growth for the US was slashed by 100 bps, the biggest downward revision in Advanced Economies, to 6.0 percent in 2021, whereas 2022 growth was raised by 30 bps to 5.2 percent.

Inflation to remain a concern

Consumer prices are expected to remain elevated in the near-term, at least till the end of 2021 and are expected to decline to pre-pandemic levels of around 2 percent by mid-2022, according to the IMF. Moreover, the release of excess savings that was accumulated during the pandemic can also result in higher private spending, that would further support inflation. The higher inflation numbers are contributed by both core inflation and headline inflation constituents, but food and energy prices are main reasons for the increase.

Burgan Bank receives three ISO certificates

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced that it has received three certificates from the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) in recognition of its consistent efforts to deliver exceptional performance across all departments. The Bank was granted the Quality Management System certificate- ISO 9001:2015, the Information Security Management System certificate-ISO 27001:2013, and the Information Technology Service Management System Certificate- ISO 20000:2018.

The three certifications testify of Burgan's consistent compliance with the highest international standards and firm commitment to improve the quality of its banking services and enhance its overall customers' experience. The Quality Management System certificate and the Information Security Management System certificate attest to the Bank's efforts in applying quality management standards to all its operations as well as the highest IT service standards to guarantee quality, continuity, and security of all the banking processes and services. The Information Technology Service Management System Certificate reflects the Bank's team dedication to protecting customer data by incorporating the latest and most efficient cybersecurity technology to prevent any information breach.

Raed Abdullah Al-Haqhaq, Deputy Group Chief



Executive Officer and Chief Executive Officer - Kuwait commented on this accomplishment saying, "Receiving the three ISO certificates after being vetted under the rigid quality standards outlined by ISO is an achievement, we are proud of. It demonstrates the Bank's efficiency in terms of professional commitment and operations excellence."

"All our teams are keen on implementing the best international strategies to deliver our promise of excellence in banking experience to our customers through higher quality services and a more secure digital banking environment. We have successfully implemented these strategies and have gained therefore the international recognition by ISO. These achievements will motivate and drive us to maintain excellence in all areas of our operations to further strengthen our leading position in the banking sector and to speed up our digital transformation. I would like to restate my deep gratitude to all Burgan Bank employees, who are the Bank's true

wealth and the main supporter of success and excellence at all levels," concluded Al-Haqhaq.

Hussain Ali, Head of Organization and Methods at Burgan Bank Kuwait, also commented on this new achievement, saying, "Burgan Bank is committed to keep improving its quality management systems across all aspects of banking services and products. Receiving the integrated ISO standards certificates in the fields of Quality Management Systems, Information Technology Service Management and Information Security Management System is evidence of the Bank's strategic commitment towards meeting its customers' requirements and guaranteeing their satisfaction." Burgan's adoption of the highest international quality and security banking standards reflects its sound engagement to pursue its strategic digital transformation while ensuring sustainability across all financial and banking operations to consolidate and maintain its steady growth and leading position in the banking sector.

stc brings full 5G experience with 5G standalone, Sub-3Ghz services in Kuwait

KUWAIT: 2019 ushered in a new era for Kuwait with the launch of 5G by giving experience of ultra-fast speed, big capacity per site (wireless tower), and low latency competing with fixed network. Kuwait is considered one of the global leading countries for the data consumption in the 4G era due to high penetration of mobile broadband and smartphones, HD video streaming, social media exploration, e-commerce services, online gaming, and other mobile applications which become part of consumers' daily routine.

Subscriber behaviors have introduced new challenges related to high growth in data demand, seamless experience everywhere making 4G network congested and difficult to match the market demand growth. stc has become one of the global leaders by launching nationwide 5G network in Kuwait to provide the state of art services to its subscribers. Through the 5G network, stc plans to pave the road to launch new services and products to its consumers, and explore new use cases to wide-range of enterprise customers. stc's well-timed 5G service launch helped it to serve its subscriber consumption of high data growth due to sudden lockdown of offices, schools and commercial areas during the COVID-19 pandemic. stc's 5G network has been supporting the seamless transformation of work and study from home by providing 5G packages at 4G rates, and also providing new services like 5G Dedicated Line, 5G LIVEBUS, and cloud based services using the key 5G technology as a platform. stc being the digital leader has committed to provide innovative services and

platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announced the successful commercialization step of implementing end-to-end 5G Stand Alone network (5G SA) as the 2nd most disruptive development of the comprehensive 3GPP 5G compliant standard network and successfully accomplished the widest network coverage using 5G Sub-3GHz which is the 1st of its kind in the Middle East region.

The new 5G features provide full 5G experience by enhancing the 5G coverage to higher floors as compare to 4G network, and to deeper indoor 5G coverage. The features provide enhanced experience to delay sensitive applications like gaming, CCTV, and enable to launch new emerging services, such as VR, AR, connected drones, and so on. The 5G SA enabled with Sub-3Ghz technology allows 5G signaling to pass through buildings to provide better 5G coverage both indoors and outdoors, and lets consumers enjoy better constant 5G broadband experience and deeper 5G indoor coverage. 5G Sub-3Ghz has the potential to change consumer expectations making internet download and upload speed less of a problem. The 5G Sub-3Ghz technology is already supported and consumers can get its full benefits by new smartphones such as the latest iPhone or Galaxy.

5G SA technology enables different verticals to get advantages of stc's 5G network by creating end-to-end isolated logical networks that share resources in a secured, isolated and efficient way - so called Network Slicing. The technology allows consumer to encounter emerging applications such as cloud games or AR/VR applications with high-end speed and latency experience tailored to their service needs. 5G SA adds further enhancements to the current coverage capabilities. stc has already build by allowing consumers to enjoy continuous 5G high-speed and low-latency experience even in challenging indoor environment scenarios, such as top floors of high-rise buildings.

Both 5G Sub-3Ghz and Stand-Alone Services realize improved coverage experience to delight

consumer broadband hungry application requirements, such as online gaming, social media and residential mobile broadband services. Compared to the legacy 4G technologies, 5G brings massive latency improvements to the gaming experience enables quick response interactions. Nowadays, stationary or on-the-go online gamers can feel performance different whether they are playing online or lively streaming their gaming, thanks to 5G low latency and enhanced uplink data speeds. Mobile Consumers enjoy wider 5G coverage connectivity which allows more "headroom" for higher-definition images and video, and faster upload speeds saving their time and effort to quickly reach their social communities.

Social consumers who have 5G logo displayed on their smartphone screen become more intimate and offer interactions that are more fluid, more personalized, and highly contextual. 5G advanced technologies facilitate subscribers to quickly consume and produce more and more high-quality visual contents - photographs, memes, GIFs, and videos with the most famous YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, and more platforms. stc's 5G Sub-3Ghz and Stand-Alone network brings new coverage, capacity and speed levels that make it feasible to a family member in a single house to stream multiple 4K HDR movies and show on their preferred smartphones, smart TVs, laptops, and tablets simultaneously, without worrying about data or bandwidth! stc's 5G subscription plans offer unlimited maximum data-rates rather than being throttled to (say) 10Mbps or 100Mbps. Consumers can also experience a 5G internet at uninterrupted 5G speed using state-of-the-art technology (stc Baity) that gives them the best possible 5G signal for the best internet speeds across their home with unlimited data usage which provides them with consistent, and reliable online gaming and 4K/8K video streaming experience.

5G advanced Sub-3Ghz and SA enhanced coverage solutions will act as a bridge towards valuable new opportunities in industrial business. As with con-

sumer 5G or enterprise owner, there is also scope for Business-to-Business (B2B) Fixed Wireless Access (FWA) applications using 5G. Existing WAN networks for stores' branches can utilize 5G fixed, reliable and stable internet as his main connectivity solution or as a backup in case of wireline outages. Temporary sites such as construction projects, mobile cash points, or major broadcast venues can benefit from greater 5G downlink and uplink speeds. Schools, universities, retail malls or hospitals can greatly get benefits from the reliable and high-speed internet connectivity 5G can offer.

In Kuwait market, Solutions by stc was the 1st service provider has been targeting different industries in different 5G B2B segments by launching connectivity solutions (i.e. 5G Dedicated Access), AI services (i.e. Unified Communications and VaaS), Cloud (i.e. CCTVAAS) and cybersecurity solutions (i.e. DDOS), and has strategic plan to create public cloud market place. stc plans tie in building new opportunities by kicking off enterprise market interest with new rich forms of digital applications that require guaranteed Service Level Agreements (SLAs) enabling the radical transformation of the telecom industry into an as-a-Service model. stc has been creating a footprint with government sectors, and has been executing its strategic plan to continuously evolve its 5G SA network to gradually support enterprise innovative solutions like managed campus, cloud, and other industrial applications.

5G technologies have been designed to expand the scope of mobile technology beyond the capabilities of LTE. It will fuel innovation across every industry and transform every aspect of our lives. 5G will continue to play a critical role in empowering emerging technologies such as AR/VR, robotics, autonomous vehicles (AVs), industrial IoT and smart home applications. Over time, 5G technology will change the way people live, work, and play for the better, and achieve smart and secure cities in line with Kuwait 2035 Vision.

KFH announces winners of 'Win with Hesabi' draw

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) announced the winners of the 10th draw of "Win with Hesabi" campaign that offers three Jeep Wrangler Sport cars and cash prizes worth KD 250 for 10 winners each month. The draw was held at KFH Headquarters under the supervision of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

The winners are: Hanan Al-Sulaili, Shaikha Al-Sulaiten, Fatima Al-Hajri, Muneera Al-Sharaf, Aydah Al-Saqer, Fajer Al-Muhjan, Amal Nasser, Abdulrahman Al-Kandari, Amnah Al-Hajri and Abdulrahman Al-Fadli.

This campaign comes as part of KFH continuing efforts to add value to Hesabi customers including advantages, discounts, prizes, and exclusive rewards. Once the social allowance is transferred to Hesabi program, customers enter the monthly draw on 10 prizes of KD 250 each, in addition to three special draws on Jeep Wrangler Sport cars.

KFH offers "Hesabi for Youth" with a variety of privileges as part of its continued endeavor to provide adequate customer care, innovate new products and services and fulfill the needs of all customers of various age categories and interests. Services and products are tailored to suit customers' needs and provide distinguished service as per global standards regarding quality, accuracy and speed.

Hesabi program has been designed to meet the needs of youth and aspire for their active lifestyle. This program presents for youth many exclusive offers and a wide range of privileges including Hesabi ATM card with a unique design, eligibility to issue Hesabi prepaid card (as per credit regulations of KFH), distinguished offers and discounts etc.

KFH continues to launch marketing campaigns to reward youth customers. Hesabi for Youth represents the ambitions and expectations of youth category and copes with KFH aspirations to attract the largest portion of youth who represents a major part of Kuwaiti society. Also, the account represents KFH initiative to diversify banking services and products.

Lifestyle | Gossip



Blaze hits Egypt film festival site day before opening

A fire erupted yesterday at the site of a film festival on Egypt's Red Sea coast, briefly threatening its cancellation before being brought under control, officials said. The blaze "damaged a small part of the main pavilion" of El Gouna Film Festival just a day before its scheduled opening. Fifteen people who

suffered smoke inhalation were rushed to hospital for treatment, a civil defense force official said.

The brainchild of property mogul Samih Sawiris, one of Africa's richest men, the festival has attracted Hollywood stars including Forest Whitaker and Owen Wilson in previous

editions. "By tomorrow night everything will be ready to go," Sawiris said in a statement, adding that he suspected the fire had been caused by an electrical short circuit.

"We're all still in shock but thankfully we're fine," Ola El-Shafei, one of the festival's organizers, told AFP. The

organizers said in a statement that an investigation would be launched into the cause of the fire. The fifth edition of the festival is set to run until October 22, boasting a roster of 80 Arab and international films. — AFP

Sting jokes 'vanity' keeps him looking youthful

Sting has joked that "vanity" is the key to his youthful appearance. The 70-year-old singer was complimented on his appearance by TV host Lorraine Kelly during an interview on her ITV show, and Sting subsequently opened up about how he's managed to retain his good looks. Lorraine asked: "You look great - what is it down to?" Sting replied: "Vanity. And a bit of discipline." The chart-topping star - whose real name is Gordon Sumner - is a long-time yoga enthusiast, and he also thinks that regular exercise has helped him to stay in good shape. He said: "I studied yoga for 30 years. But everything becomes yoga after a while." Sting celebrated his 70th birthday on October 2, but he still exercises and sings regularly. He shared: "I swim every day, I like to walk, and I sing." Sting previously admitted that despite being in good shape for so many years, he actually loves to indulge his taste buds from time to time. Asked if he's strict about what



he eats, he said: "Officially yes. Unofficially: it's ice cream, chocolate, wine." The singer also suggested that he likes to hear what people think of him - regardless of whether it's positive or negative. The 'Every Breath You Take' hitmaker - who shot to fame as part of the Police - explained: "In some ways I consider it an advantage to know how other people view you. You're under no illusions about how you're thought of. "You have to strike a balance: there's people who can't stand the sight of you, there's people who really love you and obviously the truth is somewhere in the middle. That's the passage I'm navigating ... I don't get unduly hurt. I might get a bit crazy..."

Sir Patrick Stewart laughed off acting idea

Sir Patrick Stewart laughed off the idea of becoming an actor during his teens. The 81-year-old star was encouraged to consider acting as a career option by a teacher called Cecil Dormand - but Patrick originally thought that the suggestion was a "ridiculous idea". He explained: "A few days before I left school, at the age of 15, Cec asked me if I had ever thought of taking up acting as a career. It made me laugh, because it was a ridiculous idea, but two years later I was offered a place at Bristol Old Vic Theatre School, paid for by a scholarship. "Usually the recipients were exclusively Oxbridge students, but they believed I had something that, perhaps, fitted in with other young people they encountered - although from a very different background. "It took me years to find a way to thank Cecil Dormand, but, when I did, I was in my first of 12 years as chancellor of the University of Huddersfield, where I presented him with an honorary



degree. "A few years later, I made him a second thank-you when I invited him to the luncheon celebrating my knighthood, presented by the Queen that same morning. The host invited everyone to say a few words. Cec said: 'What the heck am I going to call him now? For decades he called me Sir!'" Patrick admits his teacher "saved" his life and he'll always remain grateful for what he did for him. The actor told the Guardian newspaper: "Cec passed away a few weeks ago, at the age of 96. He saved me when I was a boy and my education was failing - and has without doubt been the most significant person in my life. If I had not met Cec, what would have happened to me? I am so grateful for his belief in me."

Zendaya finds her business dealings fascinating

Zendaya is fascinated by the business side of her career. The 25-year-old actress became a star during her childhood, and over time, she's developed a passion for business, too. Asked how she manages her life on and off screen, Zendaya replied: "It's interesting because with our profession, there's no real blueprint for how it works. "When you have more of a corporate structure, there are promotions and you move up in the ranks. In this avenue, it's kind of like, 'I don't know what I'm doing now'. "What I urge a lot



of people to understand about this business is that it also is a business. It's the entertainment industry, and it's important to remember that money and contracts are involved. I try to be prepared

and understand as much as I can about that too." Zendaya admitted to adopting a more hands-on approach to her business dealings over recent years. She told InStyle magazine: "I find the business fascinating and important. When I was younger, I wasn't hugely into it. My parents would have to make me read contracts. "But as an adult, having been through ups and downs with different things not working out, I started wanting to read contracts on my own." The Hollywood star has retained an optimistic outlook, despite becoming more aware of how her industry works. And Zendaya still likes to believe that "anything is possible". She said: "I don't know if I've put myself in many situations to be told no. I think with a lot of things you need to get resistance. Maybe it is foolish to believe that anything is possible, but I do kind of believe that. "Just because you haven't done something before doesn't mean it can't be done."

Nanjiani admits to becoming 'obsessed' with his weight

Kumail Nanjiani became "obsessed" with his weight after getting in shape to shoot 'Eternals'. The 43-year-old actor worked out relentlessly as he prepared for his role in the Marvel movie, and Kumail admits that the focus on his weight ultimately became unhealthy for him. He told Vulture: "I'll tell you, man, it's very easy to get obsessed with that number on the scale. "It's a tough thing. It's deceiving. You become obsessed with it. I certainly have, and for me, it's not great to weigh myself every day. I could tell you what I weigh today." A photo of Kumail's ripped physique went viral in 2019, and he's confessed that his appearance became "too important" to him at one stage. He said: "The way I look has been way too important to me, and so to hear a bunch of people reaffirming my own darkest thoughts about myself was very difficult." Kumail recently admitted that he feels "less and less comfortable" talking about his body. The actor revealed he hasn't enjoyed the scrutiny that's come his way over recent years. He said: "I've found out over the last year and a half, since I did that picture, that I am very uncomfortable talking about my body, and it's become less and less and less comfortable." The 'Silicon Valley' actor thought that gaining muscle would improve his career prospects and create new "opportunities" within the acting industry. He explained: "I wanted different types of opportunities. I wanted the industry to see me differently. "With brown people, there are very specific roles that we used to get. Either we're terrified or we're causing terror. Those are the only two options we had. Either I'm fixing your computer, or I'm, like, planning something at the stock exchange."



Stanley Tucci hasn't seen his family due to COVID

Stanley Tucci hasn't seen his family "for almost a year" because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The 60-year-old actor has recently been living in London and because of the pandemic, he hasn't been able to spend time with his family in the US. Asked about living in London, Stanley replied: "I miss my family. I miss my parents. I haven't seen them for almost a year because of the pandemic. "My parents were still living in the house I grew up in and I moved from Westchester, New York, and I was living 10 minutes away. I used to see them all the time." Asked whether his family dynamic was the result of his Italian roots, Stanley told 'Table Manners with Jessie & Lennie Ware': "My parents never lived too far away from them (grandparents) and I ended up not living too far away from my parents." 'Stanley Tucci: Searching for Italy' - the actor's travel and food show - has been renewed for a second season by CNN. And the Hollywood star has



explained how the series was created. He said: "CNN came to me about two and a half years ago and said, 'Do you have any ideas for a show?' I said yes, I had three ideas. "One was about cancer and I saw their eyes glaze over. One was about refugees and food, and then there was this one. This was an idea I had for a really long time, which was breaking down Italy region by region, and the food and why that food is the way it is. "In a way, it's a hope of clarifying what Italian food is ... which is it can't really be clarified. The only thing that can be clarified is that it's from really simple ingredients. It's all poor food but the influences over centuries and millennia are profound because of where we're situated geographically."

BRADY RECALLS PARTYING WITH SNOOP DOGG AFTER SUPER BOWL SUCCESS

Tom Brady and his son had the "time of [their lives]" with Snoop Dogg at a Super Bowl afterparty. The 44-year-old NFL star has recalled taking his 14-year-old son Jack to a party after the New England Patriots beat the Los Angeles Rams at the Super Bowl in 2019. Speaking on 'Let's Go!' with Tom Brady, Larry Fitzgerald and Jim Gray, he shared: "It was midnight. It was in our hotel. So, we had this special spot on the stage. Snoop had a pole up and there was some girls, they were clothed. "But, at the same time, there was a pole and my son ... he had his eyes open and he was listening to music. And I said, 'Jack, cover your eyes.'" However, Jack - who was just 11 at the time - reassured his dad that he didn't need to worry. Tom - who has Jack with Bridget Moynahan, as well as Benjamin, 11, and Vivian, eight, with his wife Gisele Bundchen - recalled: "He goes, 'Dad, I'm good. I'm good.'" So, it's two in the morning. And we are having the time of our life [sic], and I'm like, 'Holy cow. If he tells his mother, I ain't going to see this kid for a long time.'" Tom was joined on the podcast by Snoop, and the rapper explained that their friendship goes back years. He said: "Every Super Bowl that you was a part of in New England, I was at the party. I partied with you. Every one - despite being a Steelers fan - I showed up for my Patriots. "I showed up [for] TB and Mr Kraft [the team owner] and them, and I was performing. I was hanging out. I was doing everything [I] needed to be a part of the Patriot family."



BTS' Louis Vuitton Grammys suits to be sold at MusiCares Charity Relief Auction

BTS' Louis Vuitton suits from the 2021 Grammys are expected to fetch between \$30,000 and \$50,000 at auction. The 'My Universe' group - comprising Jin, Suga, J-Hope, RM, Jimin, V and Jungkook - dressed head-to-toe in the luxury French fashion house's designer gear at the prestigious awards show in March. And the suits, along with three rings worn by J-Hope, will go under the hammer at the upcoming MusiCares Charity Relief Auction hosted by Julien's Auctions early next year. The accessories could rake in between \$2,000 and \$4,000. Established in 1989 by the Recording Academy, the goal of MusiCares is to offer services to members of the music community, including financial assistance for basic living expenses, medical expenses, and treatment for critical illnesses like HIV/AIDS and Parkinson's disease. The major charity sale is also set to include a rhinestone-embellished gown donated by country music legend Dolly Parton, who was named the 2019

MusiCares Person of the Year. The likes of Katy Perry, Lady Gaga, Demi Lovato, Harry Styles, and Lionel Richie have also donated items to help raise funds. Fans can bid on the memorabilia when the auction takes place on January 30, 2022. BTS is affiliated with Louis Vuitton, having showcased its fall 2021 menswear collection in a fashion film in July. The K-Pop boy band chose from 34 new pieces to wear in the film by Korean director Jeon Go-woon. A statement read: "The film stages a conversation between space, movement and global connectivity central to our moment in time, and explores the city of Seoul through the lens of diversity." Artistic director, Virgil Abloh added: "Seoul has such a unique energy and BTS embody this vibe completely. They add their spin to the collection, make it their own and take it to new heights." The 'Butter' hitmakers were named brand ambassadors of Louis Vuitton in April. — Bang Showbiz

Lifestyle | Features

What a blast! The rush of amateur astronauts



In this file photo William Shatner speaks onstage during the World Premiere of *Batman vs Two Face* at the 2017 New York Comic Con - Day 4 in New York City. — AFP

With veteran actor William Shatner-Captain Kirk of "Star Trek" fame-becoming the latest celebrity to go into space Wednesday, we look at the recent rush of amateur astronauts.

Beam me up, Bezos

Shatner is going where no 90-year-old has gone before aboard Amazon founder Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin rocket. The Canadian will become the oldest person ever to go into space on the flight, beating pioneering female pilot, Wally Funk, 82, who also flew with Bezos in July. Shatner will experience a few minutes of weightlessness 60 miles (100 kilometers) from Earth, before returning in the reusable rocket. Bezos

and his brother Mark were also on Blue Origin's maiden mission in July.

Russian first

Last week Russian actress Yulia Peresild blasted off to the International Space Station with a film director to try to pip the United States in making the first feature film in orbit. They want to best "Mission Impossible" star Tom Cruise who announced his own movie project with NASA and Elon Musk's SpaceX last year. They hope to wrap their story about a female surgeon who is dispatched to save a cosmonaut by the time they touch down on Sunday.

Three-day trip

SpaceX sent US billionaire Jared

Isaacman and three of his guests into orbit for three days last month. It was the first time Musk's outfit blasted non-professionals into space.

Space Station holiday

Axiom Space are sending three businessmen to the International Space Station for a 10-day stay in January in the first of three trips aboard SpaceX rockets. Musk is also handling an orbital voyage organized by Space Adventures for four paying clients next year.

Fly me to the Moon

Japanese billionaire Yusaku Maezawa is due to take a trip around the Moon, possibly in 2023, aboard another SpaceX rocket in a mission called

dearMoon. He hopes to take eight amateurs with him on the first civilian lunar mission and has already invited "La La Land" and "First Man" film director Damien Chazelle. Chazelle says he will have to ask his wife.

Virgin troubles

Virgin Galactic founder Richard Branson took part in a test flight of its rocket-powered spaceplane in July. But it has since been grounded over a "mishap" and the company that made the early running in space tourism hopes to resume flights next year. — AFP

'Lupin' star Omar Sy signs multi-year Netflix deal

Omar Sy, the star of Netflix global smash hit "Lupin" about a French gentleman thief, has signed a multi-year deal to develop films for the streaming giant, the company said Tuesday. The debut of the French-language TV mystery is Netflix's third most-watched season ever after "Squid Game" and "Bridgerton," earning 76 million views in its first month, according to internal figures. A second batch of episodes was released in June, with more eagerly awaited adventures based on the early 20th-century cat-and-mouse novels of Maurice Leblanc to follow.



In this file photo French actor Omar Sy performs on stage during a reading of 'Frere d'ame' by David Diop, as part of the Avignon Theatre festival, in Avignon, southern France. — AFP

The deal announced by Netflix did not specify any financial terms or specific projects for the deal with the actor-comedian who is set to star in and executive produce multiple feature films. It is the first such Netflix deal with a French talent or filmmaker, according to Variety. Sy said he was "very happy to have the opportunity to extend the relationship" with Netflix, praising the streamer's "collaboration with artists and their passion to bring unique and diverse stories to homes all over the world." "We look forward to working together with Omar and his team as he grows as a producer and brings more unique stories and voices to Netflix," said Netflix France's Gaëlle Mareschi in the statement. — AFP



A tourist swims in a swimming pool at a hotel in Tunisia's resort town of Hammamet, about 66 kilometers south of the capital Tunis. — AFP photos



This picture shows a view of empty sunbeds and shades along a beach in Tunisia's resort town of Hammamet.

Tunisia, Morocco hoteliers eye an end to COVID downturn

The October sun warms the sands of Hammamet beach on Tunisia's east coast, but the coronavirus pandemic still casts a shadow and visitor numbers are yet to bounce back. After two ruined seasons in a row, operators in Tunisia and Morocco are licking their wounds and hoping the lifting of travel restrictions will spell better days. This year was better than the last, "which was really a terrible season. But (2021) was still only half as good as 2019," said Haykel Akrouf of the Bel Azur hotel.

The luxury facility, with swimming pools overlooking rows of deckchairs along the shore, had to halve its capacity of 1,000 beds in July as a spike in coronavirus cases battered Tunisia. The country found itself on European nations' red lists, making it virtually impossible for holidaymakers from major markets including France, Germany and Italy to visit. But as restrictions have begun to ease, some have managed to reach the North African country. Elena Bakurova flew in from Vladivostok in the east of Russia to celebrate her 44th birthday and "discover Africa".

Yanis Merabti, from France's Lyon,

said he had chosen a holiday in Tunisia for the price and the weather. "France isn't like this in October. You can't get to the beach or enjoy the sun, it's cold," he said. "It's so nice here." Akrouf said the hotel was at around 30 percent capacity, with Russians making up roughly half that number. "We are talking about survival-it's nowhere near profitable," he said.

'Catastrophic'

Dora Milad, head of the FTH hoteliers' association, said the "catastrophic" 2020 season had battered the sector, with hotel stays down by 80 percent. This year saw an 11 percent uptick, she said. "That's very slightly better... but it's still far from normal." In a good year like 2019, Tunisia registers about nine million hotel stays, and the tourism sector accounts for up to 14 percent of gross domestic product-providing livelihoods to around two million Tunisians. Nearby Morocco also depends heavily on visitors to its coastal resorts and historic inland cities.

This season saw a modest influx of tourists when the country reopened its

borders in June following months of closure. Roughly 3.5 million visitors had entered the country by the end of August-up from 2.2 million the year before. But that is still far short of the 13 million registered in the same period of 2019. Facing its own spiking COVID-19 caseload, Morocco was forced to impose new restrictions, such as limiting travel to the tourist hot spots of Marrakech and Agadir. "The recovery has been focused on the coastal cities, but it has been slowed down by the restrictions imposed in August," said Hamid Bentahar, the president of the country's tourism federation. In neighboring Algeria, the sector depends largely on domestic tourism, also hit hard by the pandemic. National Hoteliers' Federation chief Ahmed Oulbachir said facilities were operating at just a quarter of their normal rate.

'Unexploited' sites

Tunisia has seen its coronavirus cases tumble since their mid-year peak, and finally has had some good news on the tourism front too. Key markets the UK and France have both removed the country-along with Morocco and Algeria-

from their travel red lists. For the Bel Azur, "it's already too late," said Akrouf. "But at least it lets us save the 2022 season, as we can sign contracts with tour operators." Hotels in Hammamet are now preparing for a recovery. But Akrouf says it is time to rethink the sector beyond the cliches of "camels and the beaches". "Mass tourism has shown its limits. It's time to make use of magnificent sites that are totally unexploited," he said. Milad of the Tunisian hoteliers' association agreed.

The sector has "sat on its laurels" since the 1960s and failed to fully exploit country's desert south, spectacular interior and the ancient ruins of Carthage, near Tunis, she said. She also pitched the capital Tunis as a destination for weekend city escapes. Since the start of the last century, "Tunisia has been a destination for winter breaks in the sun, and to treat lung conditions," she added. "That could be an opportunity, after COVID, to regenerate and get out in the fresh air." — AFP



In this photo a large digital screen on a building displays the logo of Netflix, producers of the South Korean hit series 'Squid Game', beyond a South Korean flag hoisted above a pavement in Seoul. — AFP photos



This handout image Courtesy of Netflix shows a scene of South Korea's 'Squid Game' Season one.



Participants take part in an event where they play the games of Netflix smash hit "Squid Game" at the Korean Cultural Centre in Abu Dhabi.

'Squid Game' becomes Netflix's biggest-ever launch hit

Dystopian South Korean drama "Squid Game" has become Netflix's most popular series launch ever, drawing 111 million fans since its debut less than four weeks ago, the streaming service said Tuesday. The unprecedented global viral hit imagines a macabre world in which marginalized people are pitted

against one another in traditional children's games. While the victor can earn millions in cash, losing players are killed. Spreading around the world by word of mouth, especially via social media, "Squid Game" has topped Netflix charts in more than 80 countries.

"Squid Game has officially reached 111

million fans-making it our biggest series launch ever!" tweeted Netflix. By comparison, Regency romp "Bridgerton" reached 82 million households on debut, using Netflix's internal metric which includes any account that watched an episode for at least two minutes. The success of "Squid Game" amplifies South Korea's increas-

ingly outsized influence on global popular culture, following the likes of K-pop band BTS and Oscar-winning movie "Parasite." It is also the latest success for Netflix's bid to produce more international and non-English language content. The streamer's third most-watched series debut for France is French-language "Lupin."

Netflix offers "Squid Game" in both dubbed and subtitled versions in multiple languages, expanding its potential audience. In February, the world's most popular streaming platform announced plans to spend \$500 million this year alone on series and films produced in South Korea. — AFP



Participants take part in an event where they play the games of Netflix smash hit "Squid Game".



Participants take part in an event where they play the games of Netflix smash hit "Squid Game".



Participants take part in an event where they play the games of Netflix smash hit "Squid Game" at the Korean Cultural Centre in Abu Dhabi.



The facade of a former casino is decorated with a mural by German graffiti artist Boogie reading "Game Over" in Berlin. — AFP photos



A work featuring a likeness of former US president Donald Trump by the "Drink and Draw Berlin" art collective is pictured.

IN BERLIN, A STREET ART SHOW BEFORE IT'S 'GAME OVER' FOR SITE

From an image of Hulk who suddenly leaps over your head to a painting that changes its colors, one Berlin street art exhibition offers visitors a chance to experience paintings in 3D. Called "Game Over", the exhibition inspired by videogames is housed in a former casino stretching over 2,000 square meters (21,500 square feet) which is due to be torn down. Eighty artists are showcasing their work here, with a dedicated app enhancing the experience. "After all these dry months with the coronavirus and this, yes, dark world, we have finally created a bit of color, not only in our lives, but hopefully also in the lives of the visitors and admirers,"

said Joern Reiners, a member of art group The Dixons and one of the curators of the exhibition. "We try to bring together the right artists who will continue to develop and evolve creatively and ultimately create completely new layers and processes here." The Dixons organized a similar pop-up exhibition in 2017, with artists plastering the walls of an old bank with their paintings before the demolition crew moved in. This time the works stand out against a minimalist background. But the special app allows visitors to point their phones at the images to discover what lies beyond the analogue painting. For painter Gita Kurdpoor, the show "which

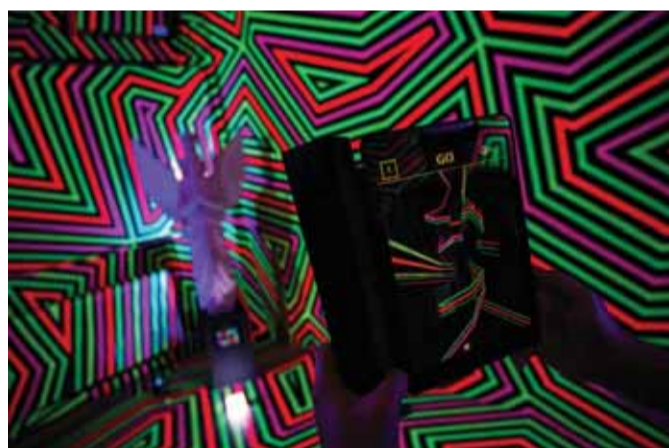
we have created here, together, is like a bit of a school trip feeling." Berlin is a hub for urban culture and its particularly vibrant street art scene has left its mark on many of the capital's facades. Tours are organized regularly for visitors to check out the most iconic images. Most famously, the longest remaining stretch of the Berlin Wall is covered with murals, first painted in 1990 and later restored. — AFP



View of the lobby for the "Game Over" exhibition in Berlin.



A guide (center) presents work by artist Slava at the "Game Over" exhibition.



A visitor watches digital animation by A Muse Vision on a tablet in a room designed by the "Tape That" art collective featuring a sculpture by German sculptor Andreas Hoferick at the "Game Over" exhibition in Berlin.



A guide presents the work "Imagine You Could See All the Colors" by Berlin-based illustrator and street artist Herr von Bias at the "Game Over" exhibition.



A visitor holds up a tablet featuring digital enhancements by VR4content in front of a portrait by German artist Anne Bengard at the "Game Over" exhibition in Berlin.



A stairwell decorated by Kazakhstan-born Berlin-based artist Xuli is seen at the "Game Over" exhibition in Berlin.



A comic by artists Gogoplata and Deedeekid explains the meaning of NFTs (Non-fungible token), digital assets related to the purchase of digital art, at the "Game Over" exhibition in Berlin.

Danish artist hires lawyers to reclaim Hong Kong Tiananmen statue

The Danish artist behind a Hong Kong sculpture mourning those killed in Tiananmen Square has instructed a lawyer to secure his work and bring it overseas after the city's flagship university ordered its sudden removal. The eight-meter (26-feet) high "Pillar of Shame" by Jens Galschiot has sat on the University of Hong Kong's (HKU) campus since 1997, the year the city was handed back to China. It features 50 anguished faces and tortured bodies piled on one another and commemorates democracy protesters killed by Chinese troops around Beijing's Tiananmen Square in 1989. Last week Hong Kong's oldest university ordered it to be removed by 5pm on Wednesday citing "legal advice" as authorities crack down on dissent. Galschiot told AFP he had hired a local

lawyer and requested a hearing with the university over the future of the pillar. "I hope that my ownership of the sculpture will be respected and that I will be able to transport the sculpture out of Hong Kong under orderly conditions and without it having suffered from any damage," he told AFP via email. The University of Hong Kong said it was "still seeking legal advice and working with related parties to handle matters in a legal and reasonable manner"—and as the 5pm deadline passed authorities made no move on the sculpture.

Galschiot said he would prefer the statue to have stayed in the city. If it was destroyed by authorities, he said, Hong Kongers should collect "as many pieces of the Pillar of Shame as possible". "These pieces may be used to make some symbolic manifestation that 'Empires pass away - but art persists,'" the artist said. Galschiot said he had also been in contact with people in Hong Kong who were making 3D scans of the sculpture to produce miniature versions.

Crackdown on dissent
HKU's removal order was penned by global law firm Mayer Brown and addressed to the Hong Kong Alliance, a now disbanded organization that used to organize the city's annual Tiananmen remembrance vigils. Mayer Brown said

the university was a longstanding client who was being helped to "understand and comply with current law." "Our legal advice is not intended as commentary on current or historical events," a spokesperson told AFP. Hong Kong used to be the one place in China where mass remembrance of Tiananmen's dead was still tolerated.

But the city is being remolded in the mainland's own authoritarian image in the wake of huge and often violent democra-

cy protests two years ago. Scores of opposition figures have been jailed or fled overseas and authorities have also embarked on a mission to rewrite history and make Hong Kong more "patriotic". Many of the alliance's leaders have been arrested over the last year and the last two vigils have been banned with officials citing the coronavirus. Authorities have also warned that commemorating Tiananmen could constitute subversion under a new national security law that

Beijing imposed on the city last year. A museum run by the alliance was also raided and shuttered, its exhibits carted away in police vans. Hong Kong boasts some of Asia's finest universities and long billed itself as a bastion of academic freedom. But university management teams have become key enforcers of the state's new push for political orthodoxy. Many academics critical of the government have found their contracts terminated while multiple universities, including HKU, have also severed ties with their student unions. In recent days, students and residents flocked to the Pillar of Shame to take photos and selfies. "Nowadays I have become more careful in daily life on campus," an art student visiting the pillar, who gave just his first name Vincent, told AFP on Wednesday. "At the back of my head I am always thinking about what things at the university are no longer allowed." — AFP



In this file photo a member (center) of the University of Hong Kong student union speaks to the media before cleaning the 'Pillar of Shame', a monument that commemorates the victims of the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown, at the University of Hong Kong. — AFP

Sports

Freeman blasts Braves past Brewers, Dodgers stay alive

Astros eliminate White Sox, face Red Sox in American League Championship Series

LOS ANGELES: Freddie Freeman crushed the winning home run as the Atlanta Braves defeated the Milwaukee Brewers 5-4 to book their place in Major League Baseball's National League Championship Series on Tuesday. After a roller-coaster battle at Truist Park, veteran first baseman Freeman slammed a two-out homer into centerfield in the bottom of the eighth inning off Brewers closer Josh Hader.



Braves to face Dodgers or Giants in NLCS

Braves reliever Will Smith then had Kolten Wong caught by catcher Travis D'Arnaud after a bunt pop out to start the ninth before striking out Willy Adames with an 82mph slider. Smith then dismissed Brewers star Christian Yelich with three strikes to spark wild celebrations and send the Braves back to the NLCS for a second straight year. "I just tried to get a good swing on it," Freeman said afterward of his winning blast against Hader, one of the best closers in baseball who had not conceded a home run since July 28.

"There's no rhyme or reason to it," Freeman said. "I was feeling good all game, worked on some stuff before the game and it worked out." The Braves will face either the San Francisco Giants or the Los Angeles Dodgers for a place in the World Series.



ATLANTA: The Atlanta Braves pose for a photo after defeating the Milwaukee Brewers 5-4 in game four of the National League Division Series at Truist Park on Tuesday in Atlanta, Georgia. — AFP

Dodgers force decider

The Dodgers forced a decisive game five in San Francisco on Thursday after Mookie Betts and Will Smith homered to set up a series-levelling 7-2 victory at Dodger Stadium on Tuesday. The Dodgers bats had been scoreless in a 1-0 defeat in game three on Monday, but came alive in game four.

Trea Turner and Chris Taylor got early hits to put the Dodgers 2-0 ahead before Betts drilled a two-run shot off Jarlin Garcia in the bottom of the fourth for a 4-0 lead. The Giants pulled one back when Darin Ruf ground out to score Evan Longoria in the top of the fifth, but Betts' sacfly allowed Bellinger to come home in the fifth inning to make it 5-1.

After the Giants closed to 5-2 in the eighth, Dodgers catcher Smith made the game safe with deep fly ball to center field to seal victory. Dodgers ace Walker Buehler, coming off short rest, bottled up the Giants offense early on, striking out four in 4.1 innings. "I felt great, probably the best the second half of the year," Buehler said afterwards. "We'll see how I feel tomorrow, but tonight I felt pretty good."

In other playoff games Tuesday, Jose Altuve blasted a three-run home run as the Houston Astros routed the Chicago White Sox 10-1 on Tuesday to reach the American League Championship Series for a fifth straight season.

The game four win sealed a 3-1 series victory and sends the Astros into a best-of-seven ALCS against the Boston Red Sox, with game one set for Friday. It is repeat of the 2018 ALCS where the Red Sox won 4-1 before going on to win the World Series.

In a game four postponed from Monday due to bad weather, Gavin Sheets raised hopes for the White Sox in the bottom of the second inning, lashing a home run into center-field off Houston ace Lance McCullers to put the hosts 1-0 up. But the Astros took the lead at the top of the third after Carlos Correa doubled into left field to score Jose Altuve and Alex Bregman to make it 2-1 and the visitors never looked back.

Martin Maldonado, Bregman and Michael Brantley all kept the scoreboard ticking over before Altuve pounded a fly ball into the left field stands to score Kyle Tucker and Chas McCormick to complete the scoring. Astros starter McCullers meanwhile struck out five through four innings with the only blemish Sheets' early home run. — AFP

Toyota celebrates sixth win in WRC season at Rally Finland

JYVASKYLA: The GAZOO Racing (GR) World Rally Team (WRT) recently achieved Toyota's sixth win during the 2021 FIA World Rally Championship (WRC) at Rally Finland, thanks to an outstanding performance from Elfyn Evans and his co-driver Scott Martin in the No 33 Toyota Yaris WRC. The duo is now the only crew who can challenge teammates Sebastian Ogier and Julien Ingrassia in the battle for the championship with two rounds remaining, meaning a Toyota driver is now guaranteed to win the title for the third year in a row. The team has also taken a step closer to clinching the manufacturers' championship for Toyota.

In the first Rally Finland to be held for over two years, the team faced tough competition on the high-speed gravel roads. Evans, in the No 33 Toyota Yaris WRC, was GR's best-placed driver at the end of the opening day in third overall, having produced a strong performance despite running second on the road. On the second day, he surged into the lead with four stage

wins out of four and took an advantage of 9.1 seconds into the third and final day where he sealed the win in style with the fastest time in the rally-ending Power Stage, claiming the maximum five bonus points.

The result means that the Toyota Yaris WRC - built in the rally's home city of Jyväskylä - maintains its unbeaten record on its home roads since its debut in 2017. It is the vehicle's 25th WRC victory in total and the 200th WRC podium for Toyota, becoming only the third manufacturer to reach the achievement. With his second win of the season, Evans has reduced the gap with championship leader Ogier to 24 points. In the manufacturers' championship, Toyota's lead has increased to 61 points. Rally de Espana, set to be held in Salou in the south of Barcelona from 14-17 October, will be the penultimate round of the season. The event is returning to the calendar after a year away and will be held on fast and smooth asphalt roads, after several years as a mixed-surface challenge.



Morgan, Kohli target T20 World Cup title legacy

DUBAI: Five years after losing a heart-stopping T20 World Cup final to the West Indies, Eoin Morgan's England start as narrow favorites in their bid to become double world champions despite the absence of Ben Stokes. Not far behind though are Virat Kohli's India, an ever-lethal West Indies and World Test champions New Zealand — not to mention South Africa, Australia, former winners Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and fairytale outsiders Afghanistan.

Postponed and moved twice because of the pandemic, the tournament's seventh edition kicks off on October 17 with Oman — joint hosts with the United Arab Emirates — taking on Papua New Guinea in a first qualifying round. The top nations will join the event — played in stadiums 70-percent full — on October 23 with Australia and South Africa playing the opener of the Super 12 stage and England up against holders West Indies. England, ranked as the world number one nation in T20 cricket, beat New Zealand to win the 50-over title at Lord's in 2019 and victory in the shortest format's showpiece event will further

cement their white-ball dominance.

Morgan's team will, however, be without Stokes and Jofra Archer, who played a key part in their one-day World Cup triumph, but vice-captain Jos Buttler insists the team is "certainly one of the favorite teams." "I know we are missing Ben and Jofra, who are two superstars of the game, but I still look down that list and see some real match-winners in our side."

War horses

England had to defend 19 runs in the last over of the 2016 final at Kolkata's Eden Gardens but Carlos Brathwaite hit Stokes for four straight sixes, giving the Caribbeans their second world T20 title. Many of that winning team will be back, led by Kieron Pollard and old war horses Dwayne Bravo, 38, and 42-year-old Chris Gayle. Asian giants India will begin their campaign against arch rivals Pakistan on October 24 with Kohli looking to go out with a bang before stepping down as captain of the T20 side after the tournament. Kohli will look to repeat India's triumph in the inaugural tournament in 2007 with the then skipper MS Dhoni joining the team as mentor.

Swashbuckling opener Rohit Sharma is widely tipped to be Kohli's successor and will be key to the team's chances along with yorker king Jasprit Bumrah. KL Rahul, meanwhile, hit the most sixes — 30 — in the Indian Premier League, which wraps up just before the T20 World Cup and which has allowed many stars the chance to get used to the UAE pitches.



LAS VEGAS: Robin Lehner #90 of the Vegas Golden Knights defends the net against Alex Wennberg #21 of the Seattle Kraken in the first period of the Kraken's inaugural regular-season game at T-Mobile Arena on Tuesday in Las Vegas, Nevada. — AFP

Knights spoil Seattle debut, Donato scores first Kraken goal

LOS ANGELES: The Seattle Kraken embarked on their first season in the National Hockey League on Tuesday, losing a hard-fought contest 4-3 to the Vegas Golden Knights, the second youngest team after joining the league four years ago. The Kraken stumbled out of the gate Tuesday giving up the first three goals of the game but then clawed their way back to tie it before Vegas' Chandler Stephenson scored the go-ahead goal on a controversial play in the third period.

Despite the one-goal loss, Seattle sent a message to the rest of the NHL that they expect to be competitive. The Kraken contest was one of two NHL games on tap on the opening night of the 2021-22 season. In the other game, the Pittsburgh Penguins put a damper on the Tampa Bay's Stanley Cup festivities by routing the Lightning 6-2. When it came to brand new teams in the NHL, losing used to be the norm. That is until the Golden Knights rewrote the playbook for expansion teams and made it all the way to the Stanley Cup finals in their inaugural 2017-18 season. The Kraken are the

NHL's 32nd team and will compete in the Pacific Division. They play their first five games on the road before hosting the Vancouver Canucks in their first home game on October 23. Ryan Donato scored the first goal in Kraken history halfway through the second period from directly in front of the Vegas net. Donato took a couple of swipes at a loose puck, eventually jamming it past Golden Knights goaltender Robin Lehner.

That sparked a rally as Jared McCann scored 72 seconds later to cut the Vegas lead to 3-2. Morgan Geekie tied it 3-3 with a high sharp angle shot in the third period, setting the stage for Stephenson's controversial winner with 11:27 left in the third. Stephenson skated around a Kraken defender then cut to the net allowing the pass across from a teammate to deflect off the outside of his skate and in. The play went to video review which showed Stephenson pushed the puck in with the outside of his skate but didn't deliberately kick it.

In Tampa, Danton Heinen and Brian Boyle scored second-period goals for the Penguins, who had a dozen players record at least one point. Pittsburgh beat the defending Stanley Cup champion Lightning despite playing without all-stars Sidney Crosby and Evgeni Malkin. Standout Tampa goalie Andrei Vasilevskiy allowed three goals on 32 shots, while Penguin netminder Tristan Jarry made 26 saves. Tampa Bay got third period goals from Anthony Cirelli and Alex Killorn as the Lightning lost for the first time in eight season openers. — AFP

'Six, seven contenders'

Trans-Tasman neighbors New Zealand, led by Kane Williamson, will also be eyeing two successive world crowns after they won the inaugural Test championship, beating India in the final in June. "We're in a tough pool, I genuinely think there are six, seven teams that could win this tournament and I guess that's good for world cricket as well," said Kiwi coach Gary Stead.

New Zealand are clubbed with India, Pakistan and Afghanistan in Group 1. England, Australia, South Africa and West Indies make up Group 2. South Africa and former champions Pakistan remain underdogs while Sri Lanka and Bangladesh need to fight it out with associate nations to join the heavyweights in the Super 12s. A few weeks after the country's takeover by the Taliban, the dream winners would be outsiders Afghanistan, all of whose players are based abroad. Their South African coach Lance Klusener recently boasted of his team's "best spin attack in the world" comprising Rashid Khan, Mujeeb Ur Rahman and Mohammad Nabi. The tournament was originally meant to take place in Australia at the end of 2020 but was called off because of the pandemic. Then it was slated to happen in India and was finally moved to the Gulf, but with the Indian cricket board, the BCCI, still hosts. The matches will be held across four venues — the Dubai International Stadium, the Sheikh Zayed Stadium in Abu Dhabi, the Sharjah Stadium, and the Oman Cricket Academy Ground — with the final scheduled for Dubai on November 14. — AFP



KOLKATA: In this file photo taken on April 03, 2016 England's captain Eoin Morgan walks back to the pavilion after his dismissal during the World T20 cricket tournament final match between England and West Indies at The Eden Gardens Cricket Stadium in Kolkata. — AFP

Sports

Hungary fans clash with police during England World Cup qualifier

Southgate brands incident 'unacceptable'; Rossi refuses to comment

LONDON: Hungary supporters clashed with police at Wembley as a fan was arrested for racist abuse of a steward during Tuesday's World Cup qualifier against England. England manager Gareth Southgate branded the ugly clashes "unacceptable", while England defender Tyrone Mings called for harsher punishments for racism in football.

Just moments after kick-off, trouble flared among the pocket of around 1,000 Hungarians in one corner of Wembley. Dozens of Hungary supporters charged at stewards, who were forced to retreat before police wielding batons arrived. The fighting continued for several minutes before riot police finally restored order in the stands and the stadium concourse. The incident occurred when police moved in to arrest one Hungary fan for a racist comment to a steward.

Hungary's supporters also booed when England players took the knee before kick-off and held up a banner protesting against the anti-racism gesture. "I was aware of a disturbance. It sounds like it was not acceptable but I haven't seen the detail," Southgate said. Mings added: "Every time we speak on racial abuse the punishments that follow never seem in line with what has happened. I sincerely hope that if that is the case, the punishments fall in line with what happened this time."

Hungary manager Marco Rossi refused to condemn the fans, saying: "I don't want to comment about this situation. It is not my task. Everything I could say could be interpreted in a different way, so I prefer no comment."

The Metropolitan Police confirmed the arrest on

their Twitter account. "Shortly after the start of tonight's match at Wembley, officers entered the stand to arrest a spectator for a racially aggravated public order offence following comments made towards a steward," a statement said. "As the officers made the arrest, minor disorder broke out involving other spectators. Order was quickly restored and there have been no further incidents at this stage."

The English Football Association said they would report the incident to FIFA and launch an investigation of their own. "We will be investigating and will



Fan arrested for racist abuse

report the incident to FIFA," an FA statement said. It was not the first time Hungary fans had caused problems during their meetings with England in the qualifying campaign. England's 4-0 win in Budapest in September was marred by racist chants from Hungarians aimed at Raheem Sterling and Jude Bellingham. Missiles were also thrown at England's players at the Puskas Arena.

Hungary were ordered to play two home FIFA



LONDON: England's midfielder Raheem Sterling (left) and defender John Stones take the knee in support of the No Room For Racism campaign, ahead of the FIFA World Cup 2022 qualifying match between England and Hungary at Wembley Stadium in London on Tuesday. — AFP

competition matches behind closed doors, one suspended for two years, following the racist behavior. UEFA had already told Hungary to play one game behind closed doors following racist abuse from supporters and homophobic banners in the stands during their Euro 2020 matches in Budapest.

Wembley had also been the scene of crowd disorder

just months ago when England's defeat against Italy in the final of Euro 2020 was marred by ticketless fans storming the gates to gain entry. Thousands of fans managed to break through Wembley's understaffed security cordon before the final, while drunken supporters caused havoc outside the stadium hours before kick-off. — AFP

Denmark's 2022 World Cup berth completes 'almost perfect' year

COPENHAGEN: With their qualification for the 2022 World Cup, Denmark not only showed their remarkable resilience in the wake of Christian Eriksen's near-fatal cardiac arrest but served warning of their ambitions in Qatar. A 1-0 win over Austria at a sold-out Parken Stadium on Tuesday clinched Denmark's place at next year's finals, a day after Germany became the first country to qualify.

"The almost perfect year for the national team has had an almost perfect end," wrote Danish daily Politiken, as Denmark made it eight wins from eight in Group F. Few could have predicted

Denmark's sharp rise four months ago when Eriksen, the team's playmaker, collapsed on the same Copenhagen pitch, with medics rushing to administer life-saving treatment.

The traumatic incident strengthened Denmark's resolve, a nation united behind its football team that rode a wave of emotion to the semi-finals of Euro 2020, narrowly losing out to England at Wembley. "It's as if Denmark and the national team have fallen in love again," Andreas Kraul, commentator for public broadcaster DR, told AFP.

Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen offered her congratulations on Instagram, posting a photo of herself and the sports minister dressed in red and white from inside the stadium. Denmark coach Kasper Hjulmand, who would not have been in charge at Euro 2020 if not for the delay caused by the pandemic, will have a year to prepare his team for the World Cup.

"You can only dream about things like this," said midfielder Pierre-Emile



COPENHAGEN: Danish fans cheer during the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 qualification Group F football match between Denmark and Austria in Copenhagen on Tuesday. — AFP

Højbjerg. "It's crazy. This is huge for me, it's huge for the team, for Danish football and for Denmark. With the age and quality we have, we will only keep growing. It's about staying humble and keeping

our minds in the right place."

Denmark overcame stubborn resistance from Austria to maintain the only 100 percent record in European qualifying. Joakim Maehle's second-half goal

made it 27 without reply for the Danes in their group, giving them an unassailable seven-point lead over Scotland with two games to play. "It means a lot," Maehle told Danish television. "It's one of the best nights in Parken in a very long time. It's amazing."

'More than just a team'

Players again dedicated their victory to Eriksen, whose close friend Simon Kjær received widespread praise for his handling of the harrowing events on June 12. For Kraul, "the incident was clearly constitutive for the group, which has become more than just a team." "It made them grow up," he added. A disputed penalty ended Denmark's Euro dreams, but rather than linger on what could have been, the team has its sights set on a deep run in Qatar. "The last time, we were in the semi-finals (at the Euro). I want more, we want more. Now we're going to play at the World Cup and we want more," said Denmark captain Kjær, among the 30 nominees for the Ballon d'Or. — AFP

Red Bull Neymar Jr's Five returns to Kuwait

KUWAIT: Red Bull Neymar Jr's Five, the global sensation, has returned to cities worldwide in 2021. Several major countries have recently concluded their finals, and this month Kuwait will undergo its qualifiers and finals as well.

Red Bull Neymar Jr's Five is a cross-continent five-a-side football tournament. Participating countries conclude with a country final, where the winners qualify for the Red Bull Neymar Jr's World Final appearance. This is their chance to win the tournament proper and bring back the championship trophy to their home country.

The global tournament will return to

Kuwait in October 2021. Both fans and players have been eagerly awaiting the opportunity to show the world what they have to offer. The Red Bull Neymar Jr's Five 2021 Kuwait Qualifiers will take place over two sets of three-day events. The first will be on October 18, and 19. The Kuwait qualifiers second round will be the following week of October, on 25, 26.

These will lead up to the Red Bull Neymar Jr's Five Kuwait Country Final, which will be on November 4, 2021. The best of Kuwait will go on to the World Final. This year, and for the first time ever, the Red Bull Neymar Jr's Final will be hosted by the Gulf country of Qatar. More information regarding the World Finals will arrive at a later date.

The event in Kuwait is held in partnership with Puma Middle East, Acqua Eva and Kuwait Times.

Registration is currency open for all teams looking to sign up in Kuwait.

Interested athletes are kindly directed to the official country website: redbull.com/mea-en/events/red-bull-ney-mar-jrs-five-kuwait-2021.

The rules of the game are unchanged from previous years. They are as follows:

- Players must be aged 16 and over at the time of the tournament
- Seven player teams
- Five players per team on the pitch
- No goalkeepers
- Stepping inside the box results in a penalty for the other team
- When you score a goal, the other side loses a player for the duration of the match
- The match lasts 10 minutes or until a team runs out of players
- Any games ending in a draw will result in a 1-on-1 battle

The simplicity of the rules belies the intensity of the matches. At 10 minutes, they are extremely satisfying to watch



and play. There is no time to waste, and teams must go into their matchups with a strategy that's been practiced to achieve any success. Every goal scored places the other team in a precarious position, which further fuels their team to take chances to score and even out the playing field.

More than 30 countries are participating in this year's tournament, and as pre-

viously stated, many have concluded their country finals, like the United Kingdom, and the United Arab Emirates. This month, the focus will be on the Kuwait tournament, which has always proven to be competitive and memorable. All interested teams are encouraged to sign up today and look forward to a superb return of Red Bull Neymar Jr's Five.

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		
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9	22532265	
		Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
		Shaab	22518752
		Qibla	22459381
		Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
		Mirqab	22456536
		Sharq	22465401
		Salmiya	25746401

Clinics

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www.bhasinuniforms.com
Timing: 8:30 am to 1:00 pm & from 4:30 pm to 8:30 pm

Denmark book World Cup ticket, England held

Ronaldo completes 10th int'l hat-trick as Portugal cruise past Luxembourg



LOULE: Portugal's forward Cristiano Ronaldo celebrates after scoring a goal during the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 qualification Group A football match between Portugal and Luxembourg at the Estadio Algarve in Loule, near Faro, south of Portugal, on Tuesday. — AFP

PARIS: Denmark became the second team to qualify for the 2022 World Cup finals when they beat Austria by a single goal on Tuesday as England were frustrated by Hungary at Wembley. Joakim Maehle scored in the 53rd minute to send the Danes to Qatar as they build on their surprise run at Euro 2020 this summer when they reached the semi-finals.

"You can only dream about things like this," said Denmark midfielder Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg. "It's crazy. This is huge for me, it's huge for the team, for Danish football and for Denmark. With the age and quality we have, we will only keep growing."

The Danes join Germany, who qualified on Monday, in the finals. Host nation Qatar qualify automatically. England sputtered as a combative Hungarian side held them to a 1-1 draw. The match was marred by ugly scenes at Wembley as Hungarian supporters clashed with stewards and police.

Garth Southgate's side fell behind to Roland Sallai's disputed first-half penalty before John Stones stuck out a boot to score the equaliser in the 37th minute from Phil Foden's cross. Harry Kane

failed to score in a qualifier for the first time in 16 games and was substituted as Hungary's resolute defence kept a disjointed England side at bay.

"We did not play at the level we need to, simple as that," said Southgate. England defender Tyrone Mings called for harsher punishments for racism in football after it emerged the trouble at Wembley had flared after police had moved in to arrest a Hungarian supporter for what police called a "racially aggravated public order offence".

Mings said: "Every time we speak on racial abuse the punishments that follow never seem in line with what has happened. I sincerely hope that if that is the case, the punishments fall in line with what happened this time." England will be sure of reaching next year's finals if they take four points from their final qualifiers against Albania and San Marino in November.

Ronaldo hat-trick

Poland are second behind England in Group I after a stormy win in Albania. Play was halted and the teams left the pitch as fans threw bottles after Karol Swiderski scored the winning goal in the 77th minute. The teams later returned to complete the game.

Cristiano Ronaldo scored two penalties in six minutes and completed the 10th international hat-trick of his career in the 87th minute as Portugal thrashed Luxembourg 5-0. Bruno Fernandes and Joao Fernandes were the other scorers in the romp, but Portugal remain a point behind Serbia in Group A after the Serbs beat Azerbaijan 3-1 at home.

Dusan Vlahovic, the 21-year-old Fiorentina player who is starting to attract the interest of Europe's biggest clubs, scored twice and Dusan Tadic hit Serbia's third goal. Sweden stayed two points

ahead of Spain in Group B thanks to a 2-0 win against Greece.

Scotland got a desperately-needed 1-0 win over the Faroe Islands, meaning they need one more victory from their last two games to secure a playoff spot as they seek to reach a World Cup finals for the first time since 1998.

Lyndon Dykes scored for the Scots for the fourth game running, as he connected untidily with a Nathan Patterson cross to finally break the resistance of the minnows. Switzerland stayed in contention for Qatar when they eased to a 4-0 win in Lithuania with Breel Embolo scoring twice.

The Swiss are equal with Italy on 14 points in Group C, but second on goal difference. Ukraine were held to a goalless draw by Bosnia-Herzegovina and lie second in World Cup holders France's Group D, just a point ahead of Finland.

Teemu Pukki scored twice as the Finns beat Kazakhstan 2-0 to become his country's all-time leading international goalscorer with 33 goals, overtaking Jari Litmanen. France, who won the Nations League on Sunday by beating Spain, will not be in action again until November. — AFP



Scotland needs win to secure playoff spot

Fans return to Soweto stadium as restrictions ease

SOWETO: "Welcome back," speakers blasted from the entrance of South Africa's main sports stadium in Soweto as excited football fans — vaccination cards in hand — arrived for the first time in 18 months. "Please make sure you sanitize your hands," the metallic voice reminded the 2,000 spectators lucky enough to get their hands on the first tickets sold since coronavirus hit.

The match, a World Cup qualifier between South Africa and Ethiopia, sold out in two hours. "It has been a long journey, we have all been waiting for this for a long time," said Bafana Bafana supporter Paul Nkosi, 49, in a blue hard hat mounted with a crown of metallic multi-colored South African miniature flags. "When I managed to grab a ticket I thought: Jesus, I'm so lucky," he exclaimed, clutching a gold papier-mache trophy, eyes tearing with emotion.

Inside the stadium rules are strict: no booze, no hugging. Keep a seat between your neighbor and a face mask on at all times. Vuvuzela horns, a hallmark of the 2010 World Cup in South Africa, were also banned to avoid droplets spraying. "I'm not so happy about that," admitted law student Anita Gwente, 26, the South African flag draped over her shoulders, matching the red in her hair. She is relieved that at least singing is allowed.

A group of Ethiopia supporters sulked nearby. Unable to buy tickets online, they arrived four hours early in the hope of finding a way in. "We haven't even had lunch because we want to watch," said Adisse Tagsse, 41, a Johannesburg-based Ethiopian businessman.



JOHANNESBURG: South African national football team supporters react in the stands during the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 qualifying round Group G football match between South Africa and Ethiopia at the FNB Stadium in Johannesburg on Tuesday. — AFP

Scuffles broke out later as they tried to force their way through, breaking through a barrier before being stopped by security.

South Africa eased coronavirus restrictions this month, allowing fans back into stadiums. Stadiums opened just days after the rollout of electronic COVID-19 vaccine certificates, although most people still only had paper proof. The country, grappling with vaccine hesitancy, particularly among men, hopes the requirement will spur more people to get jabbed. Around a quarter of the targeted population has been vaccinated so far.

"This is a pilot project," head of Stadium Management South Africa, Bertie Grobbelaar. If successful, it will pave the way for stadiums to gradually resume full capacity. South Africa is continent's hardest-hit by the pandemic, recording over 2.9 million coronavirus cases, of which more than 88,300 have been fatal.

Inside the colossal 95,000-capacity FNB Stadium in Soweto, which hosted the 2010 World Cup final, fans cheered loudly as the teams walked in, shouting the national anthem at the top of their lungs, lyrics muffled behind masks.

Ushers glancing over their shoulders at the match reminded spectators to keep their distance and faces covered. "It is empty but I still feel so overwhelmed," said student Sakhile Ngoni, 30, sharing a packet of crisps with friends before kick-off.

"We are not going to be able to enjoy it like we normally do but it's better than nothing," he said. Live sport was cancelled in March 2020 as the nation went into a hard lockdown. Play resumed five months later in empty stadiums, dealing a severe financial blow to the most popular sports — cricket, football and rugby. — AFP

Kenyan athlete Tirop found dead with stab wounds

NAIROBI: Record-breaking Kenyan distance runner Agnes Tirop was found dead yesterday with stab wounds to her stomach in a suspected homicide, athletics officials said. Tirop, 25, was a fast-rising athlete — a double world 10,000m bronze medallist and 2015 world cross country champion who also finished fourth in the 5,000m at the Tokyo Olympics this year. Only last month, she smashed the women-only 10 km world record at the Road to Records Event in Germany, with a time of 30:01, slicing 28 seconds off the previous record, Athletics Kenya said.

Tirop also made history in 2015 when she became the second-youngest ever gold medalist in the women's cross country championships after South Africa's Zola Budd. She was found dead at her home in the high altitude training town of Iten in western Kenya. "Kenya has lost a jewel who was one of the fastest rising athletics giants on the international stage, thanks to her eye-catching performances on the track," Athletics Kenya said in a statement. "We are still working to unearth more details about her demise."

'A Kenyan hero'

Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta paid tribute to the young athlete and urged the police to track down those

behind her death. "It is unsettling, utterly unfortunate and very sad that we've lost a young and promising athlete who, at a young age of 25 years, she had brought our country so much glory through her exploits on the global athletics stage," he said in a statement.

"It is even more painful that Agnes, a Kenyan hero by all measures, painfully lost her young life through a criminal act perpetrated by selfish and cowardly people," he said. On Saturday, another Kenyan long-distance athlete Hosea Mwok Machariyang, a member of the country's record-breaking world cross country team, died of what Kenyan athletics officials said was suicide.

Machariyang, 35, was found in his home in West Pokot in western Kenya. "He was such a brilliant athlete, committed to the sport where he competed for Kenya for many years in both cross country and the 5,000m and 10,000m races," Jackson Pkemoi, the West Pokot representative of Athletics Kenya, told AFP.

Machariyang made a record eight appearances, and won three consecutive titles for Kenya in the World Cross Country Championships from 2006 to 2008. Kenya is the most successful country in the cross-country championships, having won 49 team and 27 individual titles. — AFP