



6 26 killed in Kerala as rain triggers landslides, floods



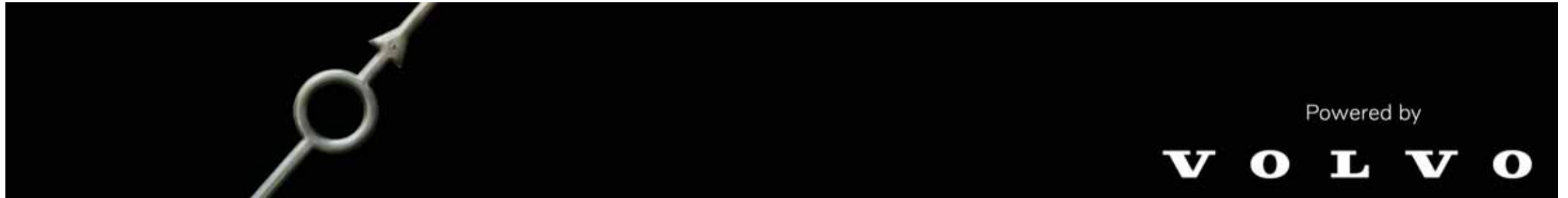
8 Frustrated and weary over long hours, more US workers striking



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16 Oman crush PNG as T20 World Cup gets underway



Climate change a double blow for oil-rich Mideast

Region hit by drought, wildfires • Temperatures rising in Kuwait, Gulf

Al-Kharafi: ZainTech unifies Group's ICT assets to offer extensive digital solutions

DUBAI/KUWAIT: Zain Group, a leading telecom pioneer in seven markets across the Middle East and Africa, announces the establishment of ZainTech, a new operating regional entity that unifies the Group's ICT assets to offer a unique value proposition, centered on a one-stop provision of comprehensive enterprise digital solutions and transformation services all under one roof. ZainTech will also incorporate NXX and Zain Data Park (ZDP) providing premium customer experience, local presence and support to enterprises and government clients across the region.



Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO Bader Al-Kharafi

The launch of ZainTech, a first among Middle East operators, was made during a ceremony held at GITEX 2021 in Dubai that was attended by Zain Group Chief Technology Officer, Nawaf

Algharabally; Zain Saudi Arabia Chief Business and Wholesale Officer, Saad Al-Sadhan; and the newly appointed ZainTech CEO, Andrew Hanna and other distinguished business and telecom figures from across the region.

Bader Al-Kharafi, Zain Vice-Chairman & Group CEO, said: "ZainTech is a major step in Zain's '4Sight' strategy, signifying a vital development in our determination to transform Zain into a multi-core digital business. The new entity, a first among telecom operators in the

Middle East unifies the Group's ICT assets to offer comprehensive digital solutions and transformation services under one roof, also incorporating NXX and ZDP, both specialized ICT establishments in their respective fields." (See Page 8)

PAPHOS, Cyprus: The climate crisis threatens a double blow for the Middle East, experts say, by destroying its oil income as the world shifts to renewables and by raising temperatures to unlivable extremes. Little has been done to address the challenge in a region long plagued by civil strife, war and refugee flows, even as global warming looks likely to accelerate these trends, a conference heard last week.

"Our region is classified as a global climate change hotspot," Cyprus President Nicos Anastasiades told the International Conference on Climate Change in the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East. Home to half a billion people, the already sunbaked region has been designated as especially vulnerable by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the UN's World Meteorological Organization.

Yet it is also home to several of the last countries that have not ratified the 2015 Paris Agreement - Iran, Iraq, Libya and Yemen - weeks before the UN's COP26 climate conference starts in Glasgow. When it comes to climate change and the Middle East, "there are terrible problems," said Jeffrey Sachs, who heads the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network.

Laurent Fabius, the former French foreign



KUWAIT: A man cools himself during a heatwave in this recent file photo. — KUNA

minister who oversaw the Paris Agreement, pointed out that in this year's blistering summer, "we had catastrophic wildfires in Cyprus, Greece, Turkey, (the Zionist entity), Lebanon". "There were temperatures over 50 degrees Celsius in Kuwait, Oman, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran. We have drought in Turkey, water stress in different countries, particularly Jordan. These tragic events are not from a disaster movie, they are real and present." (See Page 3)

News in brief

Record virus cases in Russia

MOSCOW: Russia yesterday reported a new record for coronavirus infections for a fourth day in a row, a day after the worst-affected country in Europe set a new death toll high. There were 34,303 new infections and 997 deaths registered in the country over 24 hours, according to the official toll. On Saturday, Russia recorded 1,002 deaths - the first time daily deaths hit the one thousand mark - and 33,208 new infections. The climbing COVID-19 statistics come as the nation's vaccination drive is at a standstill and with few restrictions in place. — AFP

Turkey in talks to buy F-16s

ISTANBUL: President Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday said Turkey was in talks with the United States to buy F-16 fighters after it was kicked off the F-35 program for purchasing a Russian missile defense system. Turkey is now seeking compensation for its ouster from the US-led program, including for a \$1.4 billion payment it had made before its removal. Turkey's purchase of F-16 jets from America is "of course linked to the F-35s issue", Erdogan told reporters at an Istanbul airport before embarking on an Africa tour. — AFP

Iran repulses pirate attack

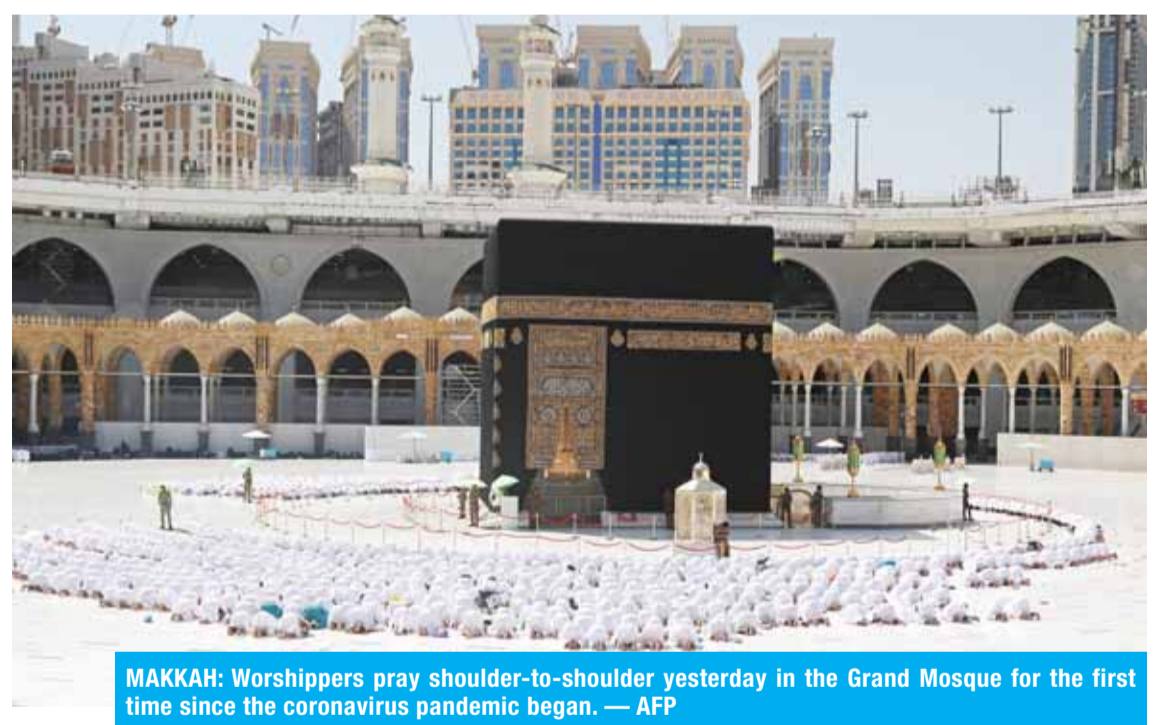
TEHRAN: An Iranian warship on Saturday repulsed an attack by pirates against two oil tankers that it was escorting in the Gulf of Aden, the country's naval chief said. "Navy commandoes were successful in repulsing this morning the attack by pirates against an Iranian commercial convoy in the Gulf of Aden," said navy commander Admiral Shahrām Irāni, quoted on Saturday by the official IRNA news agency. "The destroyer Alborz was escorting two oil tankers when they were attacked by five pirate ships," he said, noting that Iranian shots were fired, forcing "the attackers to leave the area". — AFP

Makkah Grand Mosque drops social distancing

MAKKAH: The Grand Mosque in the holy city of Makkah in Saudi Arabia operated at full capacity yesterday, with worshippers praying shoulder-to-shoulder for the first time since the coronavirus pandemic began. Workers removed floor markings that guide people to social distance in and around the Grand Mosque, which is built around the Kaaba, the black cubic structure towards which Muslims around the world pray.

"This is in line with the decision to ease precautionary measures and to allow pilgrims and visitors to the Grand Mosque at full capacity," reported the official Saudi Press Agency. Pictures and footage yesterday morning showed people praying side by side, making straight rows of worshippers that are formations revered in performing Muslim prayers, for

Continued on Page 2



MAKKAH: Worshippers pray shoulder-to-shoulder yesterday in the Grand Mosque for the first time since the coronavirus pandemic began. — AFP

'Deradicalization' offers prisoners route to freedom

RABAT: Saleh has been languishing in Moroccan jails for 19 years on terrorism charges, but he hopes to be freed soon thanks to a deradicalization program. The former hardline Islamist, today a bearded prisoner in his 50s, said he once held beliefs that justified violence. "I believed Muslims had a duty to fight oppressive rulers who don't apply Islamic law, and to attack states that fight Muslims," he told AFP in the library of Kenitra prison, near Rabat.

But those ideas were based on a literal reading of the Holy Quran and sayings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) "that I wasn't qualified to understand", he says. Today, after passing through the North African kingdom's Moussalaha ("Reconciliation") program, he is hoping for a reprieve. The program, launched in 2015 and led by Morocco's DGAPR prison service with several partner organizations, aims to help terror detainees who are willing to question their beliefs.

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KENITRA, Morocco: Saleh, a prisoner who has been languishing in Moroccan jails for 19 years on terrorism charges, sits in the library inside the prison of Kenitra on Aug 31, 2021. — AFP

Saleh said his journey into radical Islam began after he emigrated in the 1990s to Italy, where he met an imam at a Turin mosque who belonged to Jamaa Islamiya, the Egyptian jihadist group that assassinated president Anwar Sadat in 1981. In 2001, he left what he used to call "the country of the infidels" and moved with his family to Afghanistan under Taleban rule. But the Sept 11 attacks in the United States forced him to change his plans.

Sadat's nephew negotiates way out for prisoners

CAIRO: The fate of dissidents languishing in Egypt's prisons has long been under scrutiny, but one veteran is leveraging his political prowess in a bid to have them released. Mohamed Al-Sadat, 66, nephew of former president Anwar Al-Sadat, the first Arab leader to strike peace with the Zionist entity, has long been a fixture of Egypt's political scene.

Now, he has become an unofficial negotiator advocating on behalf of figures imprisoned under the uncompromising administration of President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi. "Dialogue with the state's institutions isn't just a one-man job, there are many



Mohamed Al-Sadat

Continued on Page 2

Local

Kuwait inches closer to return to normal life

Cabinet mulls no masks outdoors; large gatherings for vaccinated

KUWAIT: Kuwait could soon take another big step towards returning to normal life as the government mulls lifting mask mandates outdoors and re-allowing large gatherings for fully vaccinated individuals while the health situation in the country continues its drastic improvement since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Kuwait's Cabinet is expected to discuss a report on returning to normal life during its weekly meeting today, a local daily reported yesterday, noting that opening up some activities that are still closed could be on the table for discussion. Activities expected to resume are multipurpose halls, allowing gatherings and standing closer in mosques during prayers, in addition to allowing people to not wear masks in open places. Al-Qabas Arabic newspaper reported quoting sources familiar with the government's internal discussions. The report will touch on the coronavirus situation in Kuwait, drop in cases and deaths and ICU admittance. The ministers are also expected to deliberate a report on cases in schools and indicators of the spread of infection, whose numbers indicate they are not a cause for worry, said the sources who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Meanwhile, the Cabinet could also discuss a recommendation for issuing entry visas for foreigners from Nov 1 for all commercial activities. The same newspaper quoted a government source in a separate

report who said that health authorities "were expected to accept this recommendation due to the stable health situation and the drop in the number of COVID cases in Kuwait." The coronavirus emergency committee had previously agreed to allow granting visas for all activities related to food security.

Booster shots

In the meantime, Kuwait is expected to receive the first shipments of the Moderna and Johnson and Johnson COVID-19 vaccine doses by late 2021 or early 2022, Al-Jarida Arabic newspaper reported yesterday quoting informed sources. The doses will also be used to administer booster shots to people fully vaccinated in Kuwait after they have been approved by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for that purpose, the anonymous sources added.

The number of new coronavirus cases reported by the Ministry of Health has dropped to below 100 for well over a month with the number of cases under 50 for more than two weeks, while health authorities have managed to vaccinate over 80 percent of the population. The health ministry has reported on Saturday that only eight patients were being treated at intensive care units and just 20 are admitted at hospitals. The ministry reported only 39 new COVID-19 cases detected from 14,688 swab tests taken, in addition to a single coronavirus-related death on the same day.



KUWAIT: This file photo taken on September 26, 2021 shows students arriving to school after in-person classes resumed in Kuwait. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Several countries in the region have recently taken measures to ease COVID-19 restrictions after recording sharp drop in daily infections and a considerable development in vaccinations. Saudi Arabia began yesterday easing COVID-19 curbs that include lifting social distancing and

allowing full-capacity attendance at the Holy Mosques in Makkah and Madinah for those who have taken the full dose of vaccines. Authorities also canceled curbs on fully vaccinated people at closed venues, gatherings, transportation, restaurants and cinemas. Furthermore, masks are no longer mandatory at public open places while still imposed at closed venues.

Two dead in Kuwait after consuming spurious alcohol

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: Two Filipino women reportedly died after allegedly consuming suspected Russian vodka in Kuwait. The two were rushed to Mubarak Hospital along with two male companions, who were also heavily intoxicated when brought to the hospital. According to a source who spoke to Kuwait Times on the condition of anonymity, the two men survived, although one is in critical condition.

"Five of them participated in a drinking session on Thursday evening - two died and one is in critical condition. The other two are okay but are now in

the custody of Hawally police," the source said. When asked for confirmation, a Philippine Embassy official said it has received no such report so far, but added it will verify the incident.

There were similar reports of deaths after allegedly consuming bootleg alcohol in Russia in recent weeks. Russian authorities said on Saturday they had arrested two people as part of an investigation into the death of 18 people. At the beginning of October, at least 36 people died in the region of Orenburg after drinking bootleg alcohol containing methanol, which is highly toxic.

There was no confirmation whether the alcohol allegedly consumed here in Kuwait by this group of Filipinos was similar to that consumed in Russia. Alcohol is strictly prohibited in Kuwait, and any foreign resident caught selling or consuming alcohol is sent to jail and eventually deported. Although the import and sale of alcohol is banned in Kuwait, police frequently arrest people in possession of alcoholic drinks they say they obtained illegally on the black market.

have not influenced Egypt's willingness to improve its often condemned record on human rights. "I don't agree that it (reform efforts) all stems from international pressures or a new US administration, that's not really appropriate to say," he maintained.

Sisi enjoyed a close working relationship with former US president Donald Trump who said the Egyptian leader was doing "a fantastic job in a very difficult situation", in reference to counterterrorism and regional instability. But Biden kicked off his term this year by vowing no more "blank checks" to Sisi. However, with Cairo's critical role in brokering a ceasefire between the Palestinian Islamist movement Hamas and the Zionist entity after fighting broke out in May, ties with Washington have significantly warmed.

Leading an "International Dialogue" delegation comprised of lawmakers and media personalities to Washington last week, Sadat went on a "charm offensive", according to one attendee of the meetings. The dialogue included meetings with State Department officials, think tanks, policymakers and Egyptian activists. "Sadat's not the boss. He is there as a figurehead or elder statesman," the source, who preferred to remain anonymous, told AFP. "Maybe Sisi wants to get his DC invitation and this is the way," the participant added.

Sadat, who once mullied a presidential run in 2018 against Sisi, describes himself as an "honest broker" and "messenger" but not the decision-maker. "We're told by judicial officials that some inmates will be released after looking over their case files again. We then tell their families. That's the process in a nutshell," Sadat said. — AFP

those who express a need for guidance", he said. It also includes studies on law and the economy, as well as a three-month psychological accompaniment. It has so far reached 207 detainees, including eight women. Around 116 have received royal pardons and been freed, while 15 have had their terms reduced.

Mohamed Damir, another ex-detainee who had been sentenced to death in 2003 on terror charges, said many radicalized people "only realize they need to leave their extremist ideas once they find themselves alone" in a prison cell. The 47-year-old said he reached that point after seven years of prison. That began a long process to convince the authorities to help out convicts in a similar situation.

In 2011, his sentence was commuted to 30 years in jail. Then he was released in 2017 after taking part in the first round of Moussalaha. Part of his re-education involved reading the works of philosophers Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Voltaire, some of whose ideas "are not far from the spirit of Islam". "I discovered the concept of the social contract, which allows everyone to live in peace, as we are obviously all different," he said.

After leaving prison, Damir joined an Islamic scholars' association in the town of Mohammadia that oversees the religious aspect of Moussalaha. Today, he is helping guide detainees through the program. "It's not always easy," he said. "Most of them don't know much about the Islamic religion," he said, adding that he uses religious texts to change their views. "I try to persuade them that they will not earn God's favor by following the path (of violence)." — AFP

Kuwait allowing army roles for women constitutional: Minister



KUWAIT: Kuwait's Defense Minister Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah chairs a meeting with senior defense ministry officials yesterday. — KUNA

KUWAIT: Kuwait's decision to integrate women into its military fully complies with constitutional law, which does not discriminate based on gender, the country's Defense Minister Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah said yesterday. Kuwaiti women will be allowed to take up support roles that "befit their

capabilities," including healthcare services and other miscellaneous positions, the minister said amid talks with senior defense ministry officials. Kuwait last week said women will be allowed to enlist for military service, starting with non-combat roles, a move hailed as a tangible step towards gender parity. — KUNA

Sadat's nephew negotiates way...

Continued from Page 1

others in close contact... but lately we've been successful in using a language that is being listened to," he told AFP in his plush office in an upscale Cairo suburb. "This has been effective in some cases (of political prisoners) being re-examined," he said.

Forty-six prisoners were freed in July, including prominent activists such as rights lawyer Mahienour El-Massry. But as many as 60,000 political prisoners are serving time in Egyptian jails, according to human rights defenders. Sisi, a former army chief, became president in 2014 after leading the military ouster of Islamist president Mohamed Morsi a year earlier. Those jailed for criticizing the political status quo have included academics, journalists, lawyers, activists, comedians, Islamists, presidential candidates and MPs.

But Sadat is less concerned about the conditions that led to their arrest than with securing their release. "There's a lot of work that goes on behind the scenes in these security agencies where they undertake an examination of specific cases that we've raised, whether from a humanitarian or legal perspective," he explained.

With a portrait of his uncle, a Nobel laureate for the 1979 Egypt-Zionist peace treaty, gazing down on him, Sadat was careful not to appear too critical of Sisi's human rights record. He insisted that on-off pressures imposed by US President Joe Biden's administration

'Deradicalization' offers prisoners...

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With the US threatening to invade and topple the Taliban, he fled home to Morocco - and was promptly arrested. He says he does not have blood on his hands, but he has been in detention ever since. Morocco has had painful experiences with jihadism at home and abroad. In 2003, five suicide attacks killed 33 people and wounded scores more in the economic capital Casablanca. Fifteen years later, two Scandinavian tourists were murdered by IS-linked militants during a hiking trip in the High Atlas mountains.

The security services have dismantled more than 2,000 extremist cells and made over 3,500 arrests linked to terrorism since 2002, according to official figures published in February. Many cells busted in recent years have been linked to the Islamic State group, which seized a swathe of territory in Syria and Iraq and proclaimed a "caliphate" there in 2014. More than 1,500 Moroccan fighters are known to have travelled to the area over the past decade, a security source said.

But in 2015, Moroccan authorities launched Moussalaha as part of "a new approach" to detainees, said DGAPR official Moulay Idriss Agoulmam. The program "includes monitoring the participants and helping

Man hurt in Ghazali Expressway accident

KUWAIT: A motorist was injured in a traffic accident on Ghazali Expressway yesterday morning. Farwaniya firemen responded and freed the injured man from his vehicle and handed him to paramedics.

In other news, firemen fought two separate fires, one in a building for small projects in Siddiq Saturday evening, and the other in a small room at Sulaibiya Co-op. The fires were limited and no injuries were reported. Also, firemen put out a fire in a vehicle on Airport Road. The driver suffered minor burns and was handed to paramedics, Kuwait Fire Force said in a press statement.



KUWAIT: This handout photo shows two vehicles involved in an accident reported on Ghazali Expressway yesterday.

Makkah Grand Mosque drops...

Continued from Page 1

the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic took hold last year.

While social distancing measures were lifted, the authorities said visitors must be fully vaccinated against coronavirus and must continue to wear masks on mosque grounds. Also, the Kaaba remained cordoned off and out of reach. Saudi Arabia announced in August it will begin accepting vaccinated foreigners wanting to make the umrah pilgrimage. The umrah can be undertaken at any time and usually draws millions from around the globe, as does the annual hajj, which abled-bodied Muslims who have the means must perform at least once in their lifetime.

In July, only around 60,000 inoculated residents were allowed to take part in a vastly scaled down

form of the annual hajj. The COVID-19 pandemic hugely disrupted both Muslim pilgrimages, which are usually key revenue earners for the kingdom that rake in a combined \$12 billion annually. Hosting the pilgrimages is a matter of prestige for Saudi rulers, for whom the custodianship of Islam's holiest sites is their most powerful source of political legitimacy.

The once-reclusive kingdom began issuing tourist visas permitting foreign visitors to undertake more than just the pilgrimages for the first time in 2019 as part of an ambitious push to revamp its global image and diversify income. Between Sept 2019 and March 2020, it issued 400,000 of them - only for the pandemic to crush that momentum as borders were closed.

But the kingdom is slowly opening up, and has started welcoming vaccinated foreign tourists since Aug 1. Saudi Arabia also announced that fully-inoculated sports fans will from yesterday be allowed to attend events at all stadiums and other sports facilities, reported SPA. It has also said that masks in most open spaces are no longer mandatory. Saudi Arabia has registered over 547,000 coronavirus cases and 8,760 deaths. — AFP

Local

Drought, 'ultra-extreme heatwaves' threaten oil-dependent Middle East

Temperatures over 50 degrees Celsius in Kuwait, its neighbors



KUWAIT: This file photo taken on August 5, 2021 shows a group of people taking shade under trees at a location in Salmiya, Kuwait. Temperatures in Kuwait peak between July and August, exceeding 50 degrees Celsius on some days. —Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh



In this file photo taken on August 7, 2021, a track separates burnt trees in a forest in Mugla district as Turkey struggled against its deadliest wildfires in decades.

PAPHOS, Cyprus: The climate crisis threatens a double blow for the Middle East, experts say, by destroying its oil income as the world shifts to renewables and by raising temperatures to unlivable extremes. Little has been done to address the challenge in a region long plagued by civil strife, war and refugee flows, even as global warming looks likely to accelerate these trends, a conference heard last week.

"Our region is classified as a global climate change hotspot," Cyprus President Nicos Anastasiades told the International Conference on Climate Change in the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East. Home to half a billion people, the already sunbaked region has been designated as especially vulnerable by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the UN's World Meteorological Organization.

Yet it is also home to several of the last countries that have not ratified the 2015 Paris Agreement - Iran, Iraq, Libya and Yemen - weeks before the UN's COP26 climate conference starts in Glasgow. When it comes to climate change and the Middle East, "there are terrible problems," said Jeffrey Sachs, who heads the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network.

"First, this is the center of world hydrocarbons, so a lot of the economies of this region depend on a fuel that is basically anachronistic, that we have to stop," said Sachs of New York's Columbia University. "Second, obviously, this is a dry region getting drier, so everywhere one looks, there is water insecurity, water stress, dislocation of populations," he told AFP.

Sachs argued that "there needs to be a massive transformation in the region. Yet this is a politically fraught region, a divided region, a region that has been beset by a lot of war and conflict, often related to oil." The good news, he said, is that there is "so much sunshine that the solution is staring the region in the face. They must just look up to the sky. The solar radiation provides the basis for the new clean, green economy."

Laurent Fabius, the former French



In this file photo taken on June 24, 2021, a boy walks through a dried-up agricultural field in the Saadiya area north of Diyala in eastern Iraq. — AFP photos



In this file photo taken on August 8, 2021, a woman holds a dog in her arms as forest fires approach the village of Pefki on Evia (Euboea) island, Greece's second largest island.

foreign minister who oversaw the Paris Agreement, pointed out that in this year's blistering summer, "we had catastrophic wildfires in Cyprus, Greece, Turkey, (the Zionist entity), Lebanon". "There were temperatures over 50 degrees Celsius in Kuwait, Oman, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran. We have drought in Turkey, water stress in different countries, particularly Jordan. These

Twice global average
Already extremely water-scarce, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) has been warming at twice the global average rate, at about 0.45 degrees Celsius per decade, since the 1980s, scientists say. Deserts are expanding and dust storms intensifying as the region's rare mountain snow caps slowly diminish, impacting river systems that supply water to millions. By the end of the century, on a business-as-usual emissions trajectory, temperatures could rise by six degrees Celsius - and by more during summertime in "super- or ultra-extreme heatwaves" - said Dutch atmospheric chemist Jos Leueveld.

"It's not just about averages, but about the extremes. It will be quite devastating," Leueveld of Germany's Max Planck Institute for Chemistry told AFP. Peak temperatures in cities, so-called 'heat islands' that are darker than surrounding deserts, could exceed 60 degrees Celsius, he said. "In heat waves, people die, of heat strokes and heart attacks. It's like with corona, the vulnerable people will be suffering - the elderly, younger people, pregnant women."

Fabius, like other speakers, warned that as farmlands turn to dust and tensions rise over shrinking resources, climate change can be "the root of future



In this file photo taken on April 20, 2021 from Jordan shows a partial view of the Dead Sea, which is dropping dramatically in height because of severe drought.

conflicts and violence". The region is already often torn over freshwater from the Nile, Jordan, Euphrates and Tigris river systems that all sustained ancient civilizations but have faced pressure as human populations have massively expanded.

Sachs pointed to the much-debated theory that climate change was one of the drivers behind Syria's civil war, because a 2006-2009 record drought sent more than a million farmers into

cities, heightening social stress before the uprising of 2011. "We saw in Syria a decade ago how those dislocations of the massive drought spill over, partially triggered and certainly exacerbated massive violence," he said. Some of the MENA region's highest use of solar power is now seen in Syria's last rebel-held area, the Idlib region, which has long been cut off from the state power grid and where photovoltaic panels have become ubiquitous. — AFP

Global climate change hotspot

tragic events are not from a disaster movie, they are real and present."

Cyprus, the EU member closest to the Middle East, is leading an international push involving 240 scientists to develop a 10-year regional action plan, to be presented at a summit a year from now. The two-day conference last week heard some of the initial findings - including that the greenhouse gas emissions from the region have overtaken those of the European Union.



KUWAIT: The United Nations Office in Kuwait and the Trash Hero volunteer team recently participated in a campaign to clean up the Mishref desert and raise environmental awareness. Several other voluntary groups and individuals participated in the event. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Local

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The First Daily in The Arabian Gulf

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KRCS shares experience in Expo Dubai

DUBAI: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) shared its humanitarian and relief aid experiences worldwide during its participation in the Expo 2020 Dubai. "Our contribution in this international event is of a great opportunity to communicate with people of the world," KRCS Director General Abdulrahman Al-Oun said yesterday on the sidelines of the event. He added that KRCS was keen on reflecting Kuwait's positive image through its projects all over the globe, under the guidance of the wise leadership of Kuwait, and the distinguished contribution of its youth. KRCS, established in 1965, received great appreciation by the Expo visitors for its charitable activities locally and abroad.

Separately, the Palestinian Charitable Organization for Development and Relief announced yesterday delivering a house to a Palestinian family in need supported and financed by Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, located in Kuwait. The hand-over ceremony kicked off with lifting the curtain from a commemorative portrait of the project. The house is comprised of two floors where three Palestinian families live in the central governorate. Head of the organization Musab Tanbura and several notable figures in Gaza attended the ceremony. Tanbura expressed sincere gratitude and appreciation to His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Kuwaiti government, and the Kuwaiti people. He also extended his thanks to local charity institutions for their generous donations to the Palestinian Charitable Organization for Development and Relief. — KUNA

Al-Kout Mall opens largest indoor go-kart track in Middle East

KUWAIT: Tamdeen Group, Kuwait's leading mixed-use property developer, announced Q8 Karting, the largest indoor multi-storey go-karting track in the Middle East. Tamdeen has been a pioneer in driving the family entertainment sector forward by fulfilling the aspirations of young generations with innovative and thrilling challenges.



Khaled Al-Marzooq

Open at Al-Kout Mall now, Q8 Karting simulates professional racing experience, and designed to be suitable for different age groups. Visitors are guaranteed a unique professional racing experience by providing them with helmets, suits, and all necessary safety instructions for a safe and thrilling racing experience.

Q8 Karting, with its various modern facilities, covers 5,380 sqm. The largest indoor multi-storey racing track in the Middle East includes two tracks: one for adults, and one for junior racers, with the tracks designed to be merged on special grand events. The adult track, for ages starting from 13, is designed to hold 16 karts, whereas the juniors track, for children between 7 and 12, can accommodate 5 karts.

SodiKart, the world leader in the karting



industry, provided Q8 Karting track with two models: SODI LRX for juniors and SODI RSX for adults. The two models provide excellent safety features that meet the highest international safety standards. They also offer visitors a wide variety of options such as seat and steering wheel adjustment and electric racing pedals that can ensure the highest levels of comfort. The steering wheels have been designed to resemble the ones used in Formula 1 to offer racers an exceptional experience. The karts are also equipped with the latest industry technologies, including environmentally friendly lithium batteries.

Q8 Karting is one of the "Sodi World Series" venues for international karting races, offering

visitors the opportunity to join Sodi's list of professional racers, based on their performances and points gained in each race. In addition to the main racetrack, Q8 Karting includes a cafe to grab a quick bite or refreshing drink.

Khaled Issam Al-Marzooq, Business Development Manager at Tamdeen Group, said: "October 2021 is an exceptional time in Kuwait with the anticipated opening of a remarkable tourist and leisure destination in Al-Kout Mall. The revolutionary leisure attraction offers thrill seekers an exceptional experience full of fascinating challenges. Q8 Karting is well-designed to meet all drivers' needs."

Al-Kout Mall, after the completion of the

expansion phase in April 2018, became one of the most attractive destinations for tourists and shoppers who are looking for a unique experience from Kuwait and beyond. The Mall homes many remarkable outlets for shopping enthusiasts, and a selection of international restaurants which cater to every taste. The Mall also includes Cinescape, the leading cinema in Kuwait that screens most recent films using cutting edge technology, in addition to Infinity Sea which is considered the latest interactive family entertainment center in Kuwait. The opening of Q8 Karting promotes the Mall's position as one of the most attractive entertainment destinations for all.

KFH signs strategic partnership deal with PAAAFR

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has partnered with the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR), to support the campaign for afforestation and greening areas of Kuwait for the 2021/22 agricultural season.

The partnership and the campaign of afforestation and greening areas of Kuwait are part of KFH's efforts to enhance awareness of the importance of preserving and protecting the environment. It also stems from the bank's social responsibility and within the 'KFH is Green' initiative. General Director of PAAAFR Sheikh Mohammad Al-Yousef praised the effective role of KFH and its initiative in supporting and participating in the

'Kuwait Afforestation' campaign.

The strategic partnerships that KFH signs with government bodies reflect the vital role that the private sector in serving the community, and the great importance KFH attaches to environmental issues. KFH has previously supported and participated in many activities related to the environment in cooperation with several other parties, and organized beach cleaning campaigns with the aim of deepening environmental culture and creating a state of awareness of the importance of maintaining a clean environment. The bank has also participated in efforts to encourage community members to green the environment and preserve it from pollution.

It is worth mentioning that the campaign of afforestation and greening areas of Kuwait is divided into two main areas. An external area includes planting trees and covering the borders with green belts. The second area, which is internal, includes agriculture and afforestation in the interior areas and the streets of the country.

Freestyle tournament at Kuwait motor racing club



KUWAIT: Drivers perform during a freestyle championship at Basel Al-Salem Al-Sabah Motor Racing Club Saturday night. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



KUWAIT: KFH and PAAAFR officials pose for a group photo after signing the agreement.



Japanese PM sends offering to shrine

Turkey's philanthropist awaits his fate under Erdogan's wrath

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KHARTOUM: Sudanese protesters take part in the second day of a sit-in demanding the dissolution of the transitional government, in the capital Khartoum yesterday. — AFP

Sudan's pro-army protesters rally

Protesters demand the dissolution of interim government

KHARTOUM: Hundreds of pro-military Sudanese protesters rallied for a second day yesterday, aggravating what Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok called the "worst and most dangerous crisis" of the country's precarious transition. The protesters rallying in Khartoum are demanding the dissolution of Sudan's post-dictatorship interim government, saying it has "failed" them politically and economically. "The sit-in continues, we will not leave until the government is dismissed," Ali Askouri, one of the organizers, told AFP.

"We have officially asked the Sovereign Council," the military-civilian body that oversees the transition, "not to interact with this government anymore," he added. The protests come as Sudanese politics reels from divisions among the factions steering the rocky transition from three decades of iron-fisted rule by Omar Al-Bashir. Bashir was ousted by the army in April 2019 in the face of mass protests driven by the Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC), a civilian alliance that became a key plank of the transition.

The latest demonstrations, left undisturbed by security forces, have been organized by a splinter faction of the FFC. Critics allege that these protests are being driven by members of the military and security forces, and involve counter-revolutionary sympathizers with the former regime. The protesters have converged on the presidential palace

where the transitional authorities are based, shouting "One army, one people" and demanding "a military government".

Poverty stricken Sudan has undergone dramatic changes since the ouster of Bashir, who is wanted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) on charges of genocide, war crimes and crimes against

“Worst and most dangerous crisis”

humanity in Darfur, where a conflict that began in 2003 killed 300,000 people. The United States removed Sudan from its state sponsors of terrorism blacklist in December 2020, eliminating a major hurdle to much-needed aid and investment.

'Scenario of a coup'

But domestic support for the transitional government has waned in recent months amid a tough

package of IMF-backed economic reforms, including the slashing of fuel subsidies and a managed float of the Sudanese pound. The latest developments come after the government said on September 21 it had thwarted a coup attempt which it blamed on both military officers and civilians linked to Bashir's regime.

On Friday, Hamdok warned that the transition is facing its "worst and most dangerous" crisis. Hamdok's Minister of Finance Jibril Ibrahim on Saturday addressed the crowd demanding the resignation of the government. The mainstream faction of the FFC said the crisis "is engineered by some parties to overthrow the revolutionary forces... paving the way for the return of remnants of the previous regime". Jaafar Hassan, spokesman for the FFC, called the pro-military sit-in "an episode in the scenario of a coup d'etat".

Its aim, he told AFP, was "to block the road to democracy because the participants in this sit-in are supporters of the former regime and foreign parties whose interests have been affected by the revolution". The demonstration heightens tensions ahead of a rival rally planned for Thursday by the opposite side, to demand a full transfer of power to civilians. Hassan said the FFC organizers aim for "a demonstration of one million people ... to show the world the position of the Sudanese people". — AFP



BEIRUT: A Member of Lebanon's Hezbollah movement carries his gun during the funeral of some of their members who were killed during clashes in the Tayouneh neighborhood of the capital Beirut's southern suburbs. — AFP

Beirut blast activist resigns, many fear intimidation

BEIRUT: The spokesman for relatives of those killed in last year's Beirut port blast quit on Saturday, following fears he had been intimidated into urging the dismissal of the lead investigator in the case. Shiite movement Hezbollah and allies have accused judge Tarek Bitar of political bias in his probe into the August 4, 2020 explosion that killed more than 210 people.

Tensions came to a boil Thursday when seven people were killed in violence following a rally organized by Hezbollah and its ally Amal demanding Bitar's dismissal. The shootout in central Beirut kept many residents trapped indoors for hours, reviving memories of Lebanon's 1975-1990 civil war. In a complete U-turn from his previous support for the investigator, Ibrahim Hoteit, a spokesman for the families of the victims, called in a video circulated Friday night for the judge to step down.

Many social media users worried that Hoteit, whose brother was killed in the port explosion, had been threatened. In the video, he is seen glancing off camera as he speaks, in what some charge could be a sign of him speaking under duress. But Hoteit told AFP he had spoken only for himself and denied having recorded the video under any pressure. "The only pressure I came under were the events of Thursday and the fear of sliding into civil war," he said. "I therefore decided to step down as spokesman" for the families.

'180-degree turn'

Other victims' relatives, who still support Bitar, said in a statement: "This position... does not represent us at all." William Noun, whose firefighter brother died in the blast, told AFP that he remained firm in his support and that Hoteit "was without doubt pressured". Lina Khatib, a senior analyst at the Chatham House think-tank, said the video was "alarming because it is a sudden 180-degree turn from earlier statements... in support of the port probe".

"In the video he appears to be under duress," she said, and the wording of the statement was unlike his usual language. "All this suggests that Hoteit issued the video statement because he felt pressured to do so." Top politicians subpoenaed in the blast investigation have launched various legal challenges against Bitar. But the latest court rulings have allowed him to resume the probe, which has been suspended multiple times. Bitar's predecessor, Fadi Sawan, was removed by a court in February. — AFP

UK to beef up MPs' security

LEIGH-ON-SEA: Britain's interior minister yesterday said MPs' security would be beefed up, after a lawmaker was stabbed to death as he held a public meeting with constituents, in the second such attack in five years. Veteran Conservative MP David Amess, 69, was talking with voters at a church in the small town of Leigh-on-Sea, east of London, when he was killed on Friday.

The attack has spread fear among MPs, coming just over five years after the similar killing of Labor MP Jo Cox in the febrile run-up to the Brexit referendum. Police have said they are investigating "a potential motivation linked to Islamist extremism". The investigation is being led by Scotland Yard's Counter Terrorism Command.

Home Secretary Priti Patel has ordered a review of security measures for lawmakers and told Sky News that "we need to close any gaps" in security provision for MPs, whose work includes regular meetings with constituents, called "surgeries". She said that police and parliamentary authorities were implementing "immediate changes and measures that are actively being put in place, and discussed with MPs". This includes MPs sharing information on their whereabouts with police. Close protection at surgeries was also "in consideration right now", she added.

The Sunday Telegraph reported that uniformed police were guarding some surgeries following the attack, which prompted calls from some MPs for a pause in face-to-face meetings. Police said late on Saturday that detectives had until Friday to question the suspected attacker after he was detained under the Terrorism Act, which allowed them to extend his detention. He has not been charged. British media, citing unnamed official sources, identified the suspect as Ali Harbi Ali.

Reports said he was a British national of Somali descent who had been referred to Prevent, the UK's official counter-terrorist scheme for those thought to be at risk of radicalisation. Ali is believed not have spent long on the program, which is voluntary, and was never formally a "subject of interest" to MI5, the



LEIGH-ON-SEA: Community Safety officers patrol near the scene of the fatal stabbing of British lawmaker David Amess, at Belfairs Methodist Church in Leigh-on-Sea yesterday. — AFP

domestic security agency, said the BBC. The Prevent program is currently under independent review. "We want to ensure it (the Prevent program) is fit for purpose, robust, doing the right thing, but importantly, learning lessons," Patel told Sky News.

'Fast-paced investigation'

Detectives said they have been carrying out searches at three addresses in the London area in a "fast-paced investigation". Police and security services believe the suspected attacker acted alone and was "self-radicalised". The Sunday Times reported, while adding he may have been inspired by Al-Shabaab, Al-Qaeda-linked Islamists in Somalia.

Ali's father, named as Harbi Ali Kullane and said to be a former adviser to the prime minister of Somalia, confirmed to The Sunday Times that his son was in custody, adding: "I'm feeling very trau-

matized." Patel nevertheless stressed to the BBC that, "We have the best security and intelligence agencies in the world." The government stepped up security for MPs following the 2016 murder of Labour MP Jo Cox, 41, who was shot and stabbed outside her constituency meeting near Leeds, northern England.

House of Commons Speaker Lindsay Hoyle in The Observer wrote that "we need to take stock" and review whether security measures introduced after Cox's murder are "adequate to safeguard members, staff and constituents, especially during surgeries". Tobias Ellwood, a Conservative MP who tried to save a stabbed police officer during a 2017 terror attack near the Houses of Parliament, on Saturday urged a temporary pause in face-to-face meetings with constituents, until the security review is complete. — AFP

International

Turkey's philanthropist awaits his fate under Erdogan's wrath

Council of Europe issues a final warning to Turkey

ISTANBUL: Jailed without a conviction since 2017, Turkish philanthropist Osman Kavala says he feels like a tool in President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's attempts to blame a foreign plot for domestic dissent against his mercurial rule. A gaunt and bearded intellectual who once patronized culture and the arts, the 64-year-old Kavala makes a striking foil for Erdogan, a promoter of political Islam who has governed Turkey with an increasingly iron fist since 2003.

While tens of thousands have been jailed or stripped of their jobs on tenuous charges since Erdogan survived a coup attempt in 2016, it is Parisian-born Kavala whose fate is creating particular tensions in Turkey's frayed ties with the West. The Council of Europe, a human rights body Turkey joined in 1950, has warned it could launch the first infringement proceedings against Ankara if Kavala is not released by the end of the month. Facing a barrage of alternating charges, including espionage and attempts to topple the state, Kavala does not expect to walk out of his Istanbul prison cell any time soon.

"I think the real reason behind my continued detention is that it addresses the need of the government to keep alive the fiction that the (2013) Gezi

protests were the result of a foreign conspiracy," Kavala said in a written, English-language response to questions from AFP. "Since I am accused of being a part of this conspiracy allegedly organized by foreign powers, my release would weaken the fiction in question and this is not something that the government would like."

'Dreyfus and the Rosenbergs'
Kavala was referring to spontaneous



Tens of thousands jailed or stripped of their jobs

rallies that broke out against plans to pave over a little park near Istanbul's Taksim Square that morphed into the first serious challenge to Erdogan's rule. Some Turkey watchers see the 2013 protests, which were violently suppressed, as the original source of Erdogan's authoritarian streak.

Kavala was acquitted of the Gezi charges in February 2020, only to be re-arrested before he could return home and thrown back in jail over alleged links to the 2016 coup plot. Well-versed in history, Kavala compares the current case against him to the treason charges faced by French captain Alfred Dreyfus in the late 1800s - long discredited as an anti-Semitic plot - and Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, a US couple controversially executed for espionage in 1953. "I suppose that the files on Dreyfus and the Rosenbergs were better prepared than mine," Kavala said. If convicted, he could be jailed for life without the possibility of parole.

'Political benefits'

The Council of Europe has issued a final warning to Turkey to comply with a 2019 European Court of Human Rights order to release Kavala pending trial. If not disciplinary proceedings could be launched and ultimately result in the suspension of Turkey's voting rights and even membership of the body.

But while such a step could further hurt Turkey's efforts to join the EU, Erdogan has given no indication that his views on Kavala have changed. He calls him the "red Soros of Turkey" - an agent



ISTANBUL: This undated handout photograph shows Parisian-born Turkish philanthropist Osman Kavala speaking during an event in Istanbul. — AFP

of Hungarian-born US financier and pro-democracy campaigner George Soros - a reference to Kavala's leftist views. Kavala considers the Council of Europe his best hope for release. "If the infringement procedure starts and if the damage this would cause is considered to outweigh whatever political benefits are expected from my continued detention, I might perhaps be released," he said.

Much of the focus in Turkey is shifting to June 2023, the last date by which Erdogan - with approval ratings already at the lowest point of his career - must call a general election. Kavala, who has access to newspapers and a TV in his cell, watches the latest political developments with concern, questioning whether Erdogan is ready to accept a possible election defeat. — AFP

15 US missionaries and family members kidnapped in Haiti

PORT-AU-PRINCE: About 15 American missionaries and family members were kidnapped on Saturday by a gang outside the Haitian capital, a local security source told AFP. The group of between 15 and 17 people, including children, were being held by an armed gang that for months has been engaged in theft and kidnappings in the area between Port-au-Prince and the border with the Dominican Republic, the source said.

The "400 Mawozo" gang has hijacked several vehicles on the roads it controls, kidnapping American citizens and an undetermined number of Haitian citizens. A spokesman for the US government said it was aware of the reports but declined to provide any information. "The welfare and safety of US citizens abroad is one of the highest priorities of the Department of State," the official said. The missionaries and their families were returning from a visit to an orphanage about 30 kilometers (18 miles) east of Port-au-Prince, a security source said.

In April, 10 people were kidnapped by 400 Mawozo in the same region, including two French Catholic clergy members. One member of that group, Michel Briand - who was released after 20 days - told AFP that they had "been in the wrong place at the wrong time", believing that the gang members had not planned their abduction. Armed gangs, which for years have controlled the poorest districts of the Haitian capital, have extended their hold to other parts of Port-au-Prince and its surroundings, sowing terror with kidnappings.

More than 600 kidnappings were recorded in the first three quarters of 2021, compared with 231 over the same period last year, according to the Center for Analysis and Research in Human Rights, a civil society group based in the Haitian capital. Gangs do not hesitate to demand decades of wages from the families of their victims, most of whom are living below the poverty line.

The vast majority of women kidnapped by criminal gangs are sexually assaulted, according to human rights groups that have denounced police inaction. Before the Saturday kidnappings, professional associations and businesses in Port-au-Prince had called for an indefinite strike starting today to protest the growing climate of insecurity. For years, Haiti has been paralyzed by a deep political and economic crisis, and the July assassination of President Jovenel Moise plunged the Caribbean country into even further turmoil. — AFP

Vaccine stand-off between US mayor, police hits courts

CHICAGO: A Chicago judge has banned a police union president from making public statements on the city's COVID-19 policy as a stand-off over vaccine mandates sparked dueling lawsuits. The dispute between mayor Lori Lightfoot and police union head John Catanzara has made the city the latest flashpoint in a deeply polarized debate over vaccines and whether governments have the right to mandate them.

Lightfoot sought and received an injunction against Catanzara Friday when the judge issued a 10-day restraining order that bans him from making statements that encourage members not to report their vaccination status. The police union filed its



CHICAGO: In this file photo, a Chicago Police cruiser monitors the area outside the Local Market Foods store in Chicago, Illinois. Up to half of Chicago's police face being placed on unpaid leave after refusing to disclose their COVID-19 vaccine status, in a high-stakes game of chicken that comes as the US city grapples with a surge in violent crime. — AFP

own lawsuit Friday against Lightfoot and Chicago Police Superintendent David Brown that seeks to force arbitration over the matter. Like all city employees, Chicago police officers have been mandated to report their

vaccine status to an online portal by midnight Friday. Those not vaccinated will be subject to twice-weekly testing.

Those who refuse to disclose their status have a few days' grace to explain themselves - but face being

placed on unpaid leave and eventually fired. In two videos released this week, Catanzara urged police officers to ignore the order and risk loss of pay. On Tuesday, he predicted that if a large number of officers refused to be tested or report their vaccinations, Chicago would have a "police force at 50 percent or less for this weekend."

Lightfoot responded by saying: "I cannot and will not stand idly by while the rhetoric of conspiracy theorists threatens the health and safety of Chicago's residents and first responders." She also said Catanzara was "encouraging a work stoppage or strike." Both state law and the union contract prohibits Chicago police from striking. The union responded with a tweet Friday saying: "President John Catanzara has never engaged in, supported, or encouraged a work stoppage." Since issuing the mandate, Lightfoot's approach has softened. Backing down from a rule that mandated vaccination for city employees, she has since agreed to give the unvaccinated an alternative: twice-weekly tests for the rest of the year. — AFP

Macron condemns 'inexcusable' deadly Algerian massacre

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron on Saturday condemned as "inexcusable" a deadly crackdown by Paris police on a 1961 protest by Algerians whose scale was covered up for decades, disappointing activists who hoped for an even stronger recognition of responsibility. Macron told relatives of victims on the 60th anniversary of the bloodshed that "crimes" were committed on the night of October 17, 1961 under the command of the notorious Paris police chief Maurice Papon.

He acknowledged that several dozen protesters had been killed, "their bodies thrown into the River Seine" and paid tribute to their memory. The precise number of victims has never been made clear and some activists fear several hundred could have been killed. Macron "recognized the facts: that the crimes committed that night under Maurice Papon are inexcusable for the Republic", the Elysee said. "This tragedy was long hushed-up, denied or concealed," it added in a statement.

Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune said there was "strong concern for treating issues of history and memory without complacency or compromising principles, and with a sharp sense of responsibility", free from "the dominance of arrogant colonialist thought", his office said in a statement. The deadly 1961 crackdown revealed the horror of "massacres and crimes against humanity that will remain engraved in the collective memory", he said in a statement released by his office. "There were bodies on all sides, I was very afraid", recalled Bachir Ben-Aissa Saadi, who took part in the rally and was 14 years old at the time.

'Much further'

The rally was called in the final year of France's increasingly violent attempt to retain Algeria as a north African colony, and in the middle of a bombing campaign targeting mainland France by pro-independence militants.

Papon was in the 1980s revealed to have been a collaborator with the



HAUTS-DE-SEINE: French President Emmanuel Macron (center) lays a wreath of flowers near the Pont de Bezons (Bezons Bridge) in Colombes, Paris. — AFP

occupying Nazis in World War II and complicit in the deportation of Jews. He was convicted of crimes against humanity but later released. Macron, the first French president to attend a memorial ceremony for those killed, observed a minute of silence in their memory at the Bezons bridge over the Seine on the outskirts of Paris where the protest started.

His comments that crimes were committed went further than prede-

cessor Francois Hollande, who acknowledged in 2012 that the protesting Algerians had been "killed during a bloody repression". The president, France's first leader born after the colonial era, has made a priority of historical reconciliation and forging a modern relationship with former colonies. But Macron, who is expected to seek re-election next year, is wary about provoking a backlash from political opponents. — AFP

Heavy rain triggers landslides, floods in Kerala; 26 killed

TRIVANDRUM: The toll in floods in India's southern state of Kerala mounted to 26 yesterday as the state witnessed torrential rainfall from Friday onwards. Of the 26 deaths, 13 were reported from Kottayam district, nine from Idukki district and four from Alappuzha district. The National Disaster Relief Force (NDRF) and defense forces have been pressed into rescue and relief operations in the state where heavy rains since Friday triggered landslides and floods.

Among the bodies recovered were those of three children, aged eight, seven and four, who were found holding on to each other, according to offi-

cialists who visited the site. The officials said rescue operators yesterday morning recovered five more bodies from Koottickal in Kottayam district. The bodies have not been identified yet.

The Madras Regiment from Pangode military station commenced the rescue operation at Kavali village, 4 km away from Koottickal. The rescue team consisted of about 40 personnel. Defense PRO said a navy helicopter with relief materials was on its way from INS Garuda towards rain-affected areas in the state. Two Mi-17 helicopters are on standby at the Air Force Station in Shangumugham, ready for deployment in rescue efforts.

One column of army personnel from DSC centre in Kannur, with engineering and medical teams, arrived at Wayanad for rescue ops yesterday, the defense PRO added. An engineering task force from Bengaluru arrived in Mundakayam and Koottickal. So far, three columns have been deployed by the Army. During the operation, army personnel recovered a huge quantity of gold and other expensive

accessories. These materials have been handed over to the civil administration.

India's Home Minister Amit Shah said yesterday the government was monitoring the situation in Kerala and has already deployed NDRF teams to aid rescue ops in the rain-ravaged parts of the state. "We are continuously monitoring the situation in parts of Kerala in the wake of heavy rainfall and flooding. The central government will provide all possible support to help people in need. NDRF teams have already been sent to assist the rescue operations. Praying for everyone's safety," Shah tweeted.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi took to Twitter to say he had spoken to Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan about the flood situation. In a Facebook post, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said relief camps have been opened in the disaster-struck regions. He directed the authorities concerned to ensure that the camps are functioning adhering to COVID-19 health protocols. — AFP



THODUPUZZHA: A car stuck in mud waters is pictured after flash floods caused by heavy rains at Thodupuzha in India's Kerala state on October 16, 2021. — AFP

International

New Japan PM sends offering to controversial Yasukuni shrine

Seoul expresses 'deep disappointment'

TOKYO: Japan's new prime minister yesterday sent a ritual offering to the controversial Yasukuni shrine that honors the war dead but is seen by neighboring countries as a symbol of Tokyo's past militarism. Fumio Kishida sent the "masakaki" tree offering under his name as prime minister to celebrate the shrine's biannual festival held in the spring and autumn, a spokeswoman for the shrine told AFP. Two of Kishida's ministers also offered sacred trees.



Kishida sends 'masakaki' tree

Yasukuni honors 2.5 million war dead, mostly Japanese, who have perished since the late 19th century. But the central Tokyo shrine also honors senior military and political figures convicted of war crimes by an international tribunal. Earlier this year, three top ministers paid their respects at the shrine on the anniversary of Japan's World War II surrender.

But a Japanese prime minister has not appeared there since 2013, when Shinzo Abe sparked fury in Beijing and Seoul and earned a rare diplomatic rebuke from close ally the United States. Kishida's predecessor Yoshihide Suga made a pilgrimage to the shrine yesterday, the spokeswoman said, while public broadcaster NHK showed footage of his visit.

Suga had avoided visiting the shrine after 2012,



TOKYO: People pray in front of a 'masakaki' tree sent by Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida as an offering to the controversial Yasukuni Shrine on the first day of autumn festival in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

when he became the Abe government's spokesman, and only sent ritual offerings when he became prime minister. Visits to the shrine by government officials have long angered countries that suffered at the hands of the Japanese military prior to and during World War II, particularly South Korea and China. Kishida, who became Japan's prime minister on October 4, does not plan to visit the shrine during the two-day autumn festival that runs through Monday, Kyodo News reported, citing unnamed people close to him.

But Seoul's foreign ministry yesterday expressed "deep disappointment" at his decision to send an offering. "The government expresses and regrets that Japanese leaders again sent the offering or repeated their visits to the Yasukuni shrine," it said in a statement, according to South Korea's Yonhap News Agency. Seoul urged Tokyo's leaders to "squarely face history and show by action their humble introspection on and genuine self-reflection for the past history". — AFP



PULWAMA: Onlookers stand amid the debris of a house that was damaged in a gunbattle between suspected militants and Indian government security forces in the Drangbal area of Pampore in south Kashmir's Pulwama district on October 16, 2021. — AFP

A deadly surge in Kashmir violence

SRINAGAR: Clashes between rebels and government forces as well as street killings left six more dead in Indian Kashmir, officials said, as the disputed Himalayan region battles a worsening wave of violence. At least 28 people, including nine civilians, have been gunned down in the past two weeks - the victims of a deadly resurgence in a three-decade-old insurgency in the Muslim-majority region, which is also claimed by Pakistan. Saturday saw two militants from The Resistance Front (TRF) rebel group killed outside the main city of Srinagar, police inspector general Vijay Kumar said.

One of them was top rebel commander Umer Mushtaq Khanday, Kumar added. Hours later, gunmen shot dead a street vendor and a laborer from outside Kashmir in separate shootings, police said. Two soldiers also died in a "fierce firefight" near the highly militarized ceasefire line between Indian and Pakistani

controlled Kashmir, a military statement said. They had been involved in a week-long hunt for rebels that had already seen seven troops killed in the forested border area of Mendhar.

TRF has claimed seven earlier targeted killings, including three Hindu men and a Sikh woman. More than 1,000 people suspected to have links with banned religious and militant groups have been detained in a crackdown as part of the investigation into the civilian killings, a police officer told AFP on Saturday. Kashmir has been divided between India and Pakistan since their independence in 1947 and an insurgency that erupted in 1989 has claimed tens of thousands of lives.

Tensions have mounted again since the Indian government annulled Kashmir's semi-autonomy in August 2019 and put it under direct New Delhi rule. The government has said it took the measures to bring peace and prosperity to the restive region. But Mirwaiz Umer Farooq, Kashmir's chief Muslim cleric who has been under house arrest for more than two years, warned in a statement Saturday that "systemic oppression" was pushing many Kashmir youths into the underground. — AFP

leader Juan Guaido, who is recognized as the country's acting president by the United States and more than 50 other countries, also welcomed the move. "We Venezuelans, who have seen justice kidnapped for years, respect and celebrate the system of justice in democratic countries like Cape Verde," he tweeted.

'Political pawns'

In a development not officially linked to the Saab extradition, shortly after news broke of the extradition six former oil executives under house arrest for corruption in Venezuela were taken to an undisclosed prison. They had worked for Citgo, a US-based subsidiary of



CARACAS: The image of Colombian businessman Alexander Saab is projected on a screen at the National Assembly in Caracas. The Venezuelan government's delegation suspended the dialogue process with the opposition in Mexico after the extradition to the US of Colombian businessman Alex Saab, who is close to Nicolas Maduro. — AFP

Businessman close to Venezuela leader extradited to US

MIAMI: A fugitive businessman accused of acting as a money launderer for Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro's regime was extradited Saturday to the United States from Cape Verde, US justice officials said. The Justice Department said in a statement that Alex Saab was due to appear in court in Florida on Monday and expressed "admiration" to authorities in Cape Verde for their help in the case.

Venezuela reacted furiously, suspending talks with the US-backed opposition on ending the country's political and economic crisis. Saab, a Colombian national, and his business partner Alvaro Pulido are charged in the United States with running a network that exploited food aid destined for Venezuela, an oil-rich nation mired in an acute economic crisis.

They are alleged to have moved \$350 million out of Venezuela into accounts they controlled in the United States and other countries. They risk up to 20 years in prison. Saab, who also has Venezuelan nationality and a Venezuelan diplomatic passport, was indicted in July 2019 in Miami for money laundering, and was arrested during a plane stopover in Cape Verde off the coast of West Africa in June 2020. Venezuela's opposition has described Saab as a frontman doing shady dealings for the populist socialist regime of Maduro.

Colombian President Ivan Duque praised Saab's extradition. "The extradition of Alex Saab is a triumph in the fight against the drug trafficking, asset laundering and corruption that the dictatorship of Nicolas Maduro has fostered," Duque tweeted. Venezuelan opposition

China tests new space capability with hypersonic

WASHINGTON: China has tested a new space capability with a hypersonic missile, the Financial Times reported on Saturday. The report, citing multiple sources familiar with the test, said Beijing in August launched a nuclear-capable missile that circled the Earth at low orbit before descending toward its target, which three sources said it missed by over 20 miles. FT sources said the hypersonic glide vehicle was carried by a Long March rocket, launches of which it usually announces, though the August test was kept under wraps. The report added that China's progress on hypersonic weapons "caught US intelligence by surprise."

Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said he would not comment on the specifics of the report but added: "We have made clear our concerns about the military capabilities China continues to pursue, capabilities that only increase tensions in the region and beyond. That is one reason why we hold China as our number one pacing challenge." Along with China, the United States, Russia and at least five other countries are working on hypersonic technology. Hypersonic missiles, like traditional ballistic missiles which can deliver nuclear weapons, can fly at more than five times the speed of sound.

But ballistic missiles fly high into space in an arc to reach their target, while a hypersonic flies on a trajectory low in the atmosphere, potentially reaching a target more quickly. Crucially, a hypersonic missile is maneuverable (like the much slower, often subsonic cruise missile), making it harder to track and defend against. While countries like the United States have developed systems designed to defend against cruise and ballistic missiles, the ability to track and take down a hypersonic missile remains a question. China has been aggressively developing the technology, seeing it as crucial to defend against US gains in hypersonic and other technologies, according to a recent report by the US Congressional Research Service (CRS). — AFP

the state oil company PDVSA. Five of the six hold US nationality and the other is a permanent resident of the United States.

"American detainees in Venezuela are now being used as political pawns," said US Democratic Party heavyweight Bill Richardson, who led an unsuccessful mission to Venezuela to seek the executives' release last year. Richardson has managed international negotiations for a number of high-profile American detainees. "We will continue to press for their release," he said.

'Kidnapping'

Cape Verde agreed last month to extradite Saab to the United States, despite protests from Venezuela. Venezuela said Saab had been abducted by Washington. "Venezuela denounces the kidnapping of the Venezuelan diplomat Alex Saab by the government of the United States in complicity with the authorities in Cape Verde," the Caracas government said in a statement. The speaker of Congress, Jorge Rodriguez, said the government would not attend the fourth round of talks with the opposition due to start Sunday in Mexico City "as a deep expression of our protest against the brutal aggression" against Saab.

Rodriguez leads the government delegation for the negotiations and had hoped to make Saab one of its members until his arrest. Venezuela had called Saab's arrest in Cape Verde "arbitrary" and claimed he was suffering "mistreatment and torture" at the hands of the Cape Verde authorities. Roberto Deniz, a journalist who has covered Saab's story for the Venezuelan investigative news site Armando.info, said last month that the regime in Caracas was desperate to get him released.

"It is clear that there is a lot of fear, not only because he may reveal information about bribes, about the places where money was moved and the inflated pricing," Deniz said, but also because Saab "was the bridge for many of these deals that the Maduro regime is beginning to carry out with other allied countries." — AFP

News in brief

Four migrants drown

ALGIERS: The Algerian coastguard recovered four bodies from the Mediterranean Sea and rescued 13 migrants after a boat capsized in its waters, the defense ministry said yesterday. "Algerian coastguards and a rescue helicopter... saved 13 illegal migrants and recovered the bodies of four other migrants who drowned after their boat capsized 16 nautical miles north" of the capital Algiers, the ministry said in a statement. The statement did not specify the nationalities of those who died, but many young Algerians attempt the highly risky illicit crossing of the Mediterranean, often making for Spain. A total of 4,704 Algerians have been intercepted at sea so far this year. Algeria in 2009 ratified a law punishing illegal migration by up to six months in prison, but the legislation has failed to deter young people from attempting the dangerous crossings. — AFP

Lankan flotilla protests

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's fishermen launched a flotilla of boats yesterday demanding that the government block Indian trawlers from poaching in the island's prawn-rich northern waters. Boats flying black flags and carrying opposition legislators travelled 100 kilometers from the northeastern fishing town of Mullaivivu to the island's northernmost tip, Point Pedro. "We have come in boats to protest bottom trawling by Indian fishermen," MA Sumanthiran, a legislator for the main Tamil opposition party, the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), told reporters in Point Pedro. Bottom trawling - which was banned from Sri Lankan waters in 2017 - involves dragging heavy nets across the sea floor to catch a large volume of fish. It causes severe damage to the marine ecosystem. — AFP

Eighteen dead in Russia

MOSCOW: Russian authorities said on Saturday they had arrested two people as part of an investigation into the death of 18 people in the Urals who drank bootleg alcohol, in the second such incident in recent weeks. Investigators said "several individuals sold people an alcohol liquid that was dangerous for their health" over the past two weeks in Yekaterinburg, Russia's fourth-largest city. "Eighteen people died after drinking the liquid," the statement said. An investigation had been opened into the sale of sub-standard goods and death by negligence, which could entail prison sentences of up to 10 years, it said. At the beginning of October, at least 36 people in the region of Orenburg died after drinking bootleg alcohol containing methanol, which is highly toxic. Such cases are not uncommon in Russia, where around 21 million people live below the poverty line. — AFP

Migrants' bodies found

BARCELONA: Spain's emergency services recovered the bodies of four more migrants in its coastal waters Saturday, the coastguard said, but another 17 are still missing. The latest discoveries bring to eight the number of bodies found after a boat carrying migrants that had been spotted west of Spain's Cape Trafalgar sank on Thursday. "During the course of the day today, four bodies have been found," said a coastguard spokesman. The vessel was first spotted around 70 kilometers off Cape Trafalgar by a passing merchant ship which sounded the alarm, and rescue teams were mobilized overnight Thursday to Friday. Two men were found alive on board the boat while a woman was rescued from the water. The survivors said the boat had departed for Spain with 28 people on board. It is not clear what nationalities were on the boat or from where on the north African coast they set off. — AFP

Red alert over malnutrition

GUATEMALA CITY: Climate change and COVID-19 have sent impoverished Guatemala into one of its worst food security crises, the country's top human rights official said Saturday. The problems are so severe that 39 children have died of malnutrition so far this year, human rights ombudsman Jordan Rodas said in the Central American country's capital. "Guatemala is facing a grim outlook in terms of meeting (UN) Millennium Development Goals, especially Zero Hunger," which seeks to reduce poverty by 2030, Rodas said at an event marking World Food Day. Rodas also said 16 percent of the almost 17 million Guatemalans suffer from malnutrition, 18 percent live in severe food insecurity and 45 percent in a situation of moderate food insecurity. According to UN data, almost 50 percent of children under the age of five suffer from chronic malnutrition in Guatemala, the highest rate in Latin America. — AFP

Business

MONDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2021

Al-Kharafi: ZainTech unifies Group's ICT assets to offer extensive digital solutions

Zain launches ZainTech, a one-stop shop servicing enterprises and governments

DUBAI/KUWAIT: Zain Group, a leading telecom pioneer in seven markets across the Middle East and Africa announces the establishment of ZainTech, a new operating regional entity that unifies the Group's ICT assets to offer a unique value proposition, centered on a one-stop provision of comprehensive enterprise digital solutions and transformation services all under one roof. ZainTech will also incorporate NXX and Zain Data Park (ZDP) providing premium customer experience, local presence and support to enterprises and government clients across the region.

The launch of ZainTech, a first among Middle East operators, was made during a ceremony held at GITEX 2021 in Dubai that was attended by Zain Group Chief Technology Officer, Nawaf Algharabally;

Zain Saudi Arabia Chief Business and Wholesale Officer, Saad Al-Sadhan; and the newly appointed Zain Tech CEO, Andrew Hanna and other distinguished business and telecom figures from across the region.

ZainTech will operate and leverage Zain's global reach, unique footprint and infrastructure across its operations as well as other key markets in the Middle East. It will offer a single point of contact for sales and personalized customer care for multi-national corporations that have multiple presence across the region.

Moreover, the new entity will address a wide array of business needs ranging from solutions for cloud, cybersecurity, and associated managed and professional services. It will also provide standard and customized digital solutions addressing the unique needs of different verticals leveraging the latest innovations in IoT, Big Data, Artificial Intelligence, and emerging technologies.

Bader Al-Kharafi, Zain Vice-Chairman & Group CEO, said: "ZainTech is a major step in Zain's '4Sight' strategy, signifying a vital development in our determination to transform Zain into a multi-core digital business. The new entity, a first among telecom operators in the Middle East unifies the Group's ICT assets to offer comprehensive digital solutions and transformation services under one roof, also incorporating NXX and ZDP, both specialized ICT establishments in their respective fields."

Al-Kharafi continued, "It is my pleasure to announce the appointment of Andrew Hanna as CEO of ZainTech. Andrew will work closely with Zain Group and opco leadership to grow Zain Tech's presence in the region and beyond, ensuring we continue our transformation towards our new core. Andrew brings over 25 years of telecommunications & ICT experience gained in a wide variety of global and regional roles."

ZainTech's creation supports a key part of Zain's value accretive '4Sight' strategy that is centered on evolving Zain's core telecom business to maximize value and building on the company's many strengths to selectively invest in growth verticals beyond standard mobile services, while supporting Zain's vision of becoming a leading ICT and digital lifestyle provider.

The new ZainTech structure enhances Zain's competitiveness by improving ownership in growing the ICT and digital core, accelerating capability and capaci-



DUBAI: (From left): Zain Group CTO Nawaf Algharabally; ZainTech CEO Andrew Hanna; and Zain Saudi Arabia Chief Business and Wholesale Officer Saad Al-Sadhan.

- Providing a center of excellence and managed solutions for Cloud, Cybersecurity, Big Data, IoT, AI, Smart Cities and Emerging Technologies incorporating NXX and Zain Data Park
- Leveraging Zain Group's unique footprint and global reach, ZainTech offers a single point of contact for sales and customer care for multinational corporations
- Andrew Hanna appointed CEO of ZainTech

ty building, and synergizing investments where it makes sense to, as well as maximizing the value Zain derives from partnerships with global ICT vendors.

and public sector entities to simplify and accelerate their digital transformation and next-generation technology innovations with confidence. ZainTech aims to empower customers to embrace innovation, digital disruption and future technologies, creating value and allowing them to make their aspirations a reality."

line with the current successful model.

Incorporating NXX into ZainTech

Founded in 2007 and acquired by Zain in 2016, NXX is an end-to-end smart digital services provider, leveraging the deep expertise of its industry consulting, data, and technology teams. Its advanced DNX Digital Services Platform provides customers with the agility they need to fast track innovation, break down data silos and implement disruptive technology solutions.

Zain Data Park

ZDP was formed by Zain in 2020 and provides government and enterprise customers with the very best IT support services focused on cloud hosting and managed services across the ICT stack, including applications, cybersecurity and networking.



A first for MENA telcos, ZainTech to leverage Zain's global reach

Andrew Hanna, CEO of ZainTech, commented: "I look forward to working with visionary leaders in local and multinational enterprises, city management

cross-sell advanced ICT services to differentiate Zain's position in the regional enterprise market. The operations will continue to spearhead local execution, in



Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO Bader Al-Kharafi

Bader Al-Kharafi:

"ZainTech is a major step in Zain's '4Sight' strategy, signifying a vital development in our determination to transform Zain into a multi-core digital business. The new entity, a first among telecom operators in the Middle East unifies the Group's ICT assets to offer comprehensive digital solutions and transformation services under one roof, also incorporating NXX and ZDP, both specialized ICT establishments in their respective fields."

Less product, same price: 'Shrinkflation' hits US shoppers

ARLINGTON: More air in that bag of chips? Fewer flakes in your cereal box? You're not imagining it: "Shrinkflation," a tactic used by industry to hide price increases, is back in vogue. Facing the post-pandemic inflationary surge, partly fueled by bottlenecks in global supply and trouble finding workers, companies are under more pressure to deal with rising costs.

Consumer advocate Edgar Dworsky, who has followed the phenomenon he calls downsizing for quarter of a century, says he has identified dozens of products in recent months that have seen sneaky price increases. He found goods ranging from Charmin toilet paper rolls to Cheerios cereal, to Royal Canin canned cat food, where the size or weight has shrunk, but the price remains the same.

In September, food giant General Mills, maker of Cheerios, flagged the soaring costs for materials and labor to justify conventional price increases but also changes to "PPA"-price pack architecture—a technical term for the adjustment of size or quantities.

While these small changes in size could pass largely unnoticed in the past, the internet era puts them in the spotlight. On the social network Reddit, the "Shrinkflation" group has 14,500 members, who share their discoveries though mostly tongue-in-cheek rather than to protest.

"It's definitely more insidious because shrinkage, at least for me, is less noticeable than a price increase," Jonathan Khoo, 44, a software designer in Oregon, told AFP.

But "it's the delay in finding out that you've been played" that makes the tactic "much



ARLINGTON: Charmin Ultra Strong toilet paper is on display on a supermarket shelf on Friday in Arlington. More air in that bag of chips? Fewer flakes in your cereal box? You're not imagining it: "Shrinkflation," a tactic used by industry to hide price increases, is back in vogue. — AFP

worse" than a straightforward price hike, he said. Pierre Chandon, professor of marketing at the Sorbonne University's INSEAD behavioral lab, said shoppers feel they have been scammed because "most consumers have a mistaken idea that the quantities are standardized, regulated," which is only true for a few with rare exceptions like alcohol.

"Since we assume that the weight is fixed, we do not look at it," Chandon said.

'Bad shoppers'

Fellow Oregon resident Brian Johnson winced when he recently saw that a container of trendy local ice cream brand Tillamook lost six ounces, dropping to 48 ounces (to 1.42 liters from 1.65 liters). "I know that companies are doing this because consumers have a price point for items based on years of experience. They expect to buy a container of something within a price range," the 52-year-old data scientist said. Dworsky, known as

"Mr Consumer," said companies "don't take a step like that lightly."

"They did the calculation" and if they get a handful of complaints "they send a couple of bucks in coupons to the consumer to get them to keep buying." In fact there are no documented examples of shoppers revolting against a product that has shrunk, and even the members of the Reddit group hardly ever call for a boycott of a brand.

"Perhaps we have learned that this is normal and that if we are fooled, it is because we have been bad shoppers," Chandon explained. Anand Krishnamoorthy, a marketing professor at the University of Central Florida, said that even after the cost spikes have receded, "there is no incentive" for brands to revert to their original size. Examples of shrinkage can be seen in many other sectors—from tiny urban apartments to legroom on airplanes—but "where we notice it the most is consumer packaged goods." — AFP

Frustrated and weary, more US workers are striking

NEW YORK: Exhausted after working long hours during the coronavirus pandemic and resentful that their bosses are not sharing sometimes huge profits, tens of thousands of nurses, laborers and entertainment workers are going on strike across the United States. If they fail to reach agreement with the Hollywood studios on a new collective bargaining contract, 60,000 members of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees plan to strike today. The IATSE includes cinematographers, hairdressers, makeup artists and sound editors.

Some 31,000 employees of the Kaiser Permanente healthcare group in the western states of California and Oregon are also poised to strike soon. Since Thursday, 10,000 employees of the John Deere farm equipment company have been on strike; while 1,400 workers walked off the job at the Kellogg's cereal company on October 5, and more than 2,000 employees of Mercy Hospital in Buffalo, New York, began striking on October 1.

The sudden rash of strikes this month has even led some to coin the word "Striketober," a neologism since embraced on social media even by prominent progressive Democrat Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.

During the pandemic, workers say, they often had to bear extra burdens to make up for others who were staying home. "We've sacrificed our time with our families, we missed ballgames with

our kids and dinners and weddings, in order to keep boxes of cereal on the shelves," said Dan Osborn, a mechanic at Kellogg's for 18 years. "And this is how we're getting repaid," he continued, "by asking us to take concessions at a time when the CEO and executives have taken increases in their compensation." Osborn, the president of a local chapter of the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers union (BCTGM), said workers object to a two-tier pay system that leaves some newer employees making far less than older workers.

"We are not asking for anything as far as increases in our wages and benefits," he said. Nor are workers opposing long hours. But they do reject a pay system that leaves some employees earning less for the same work, and to a revocation of inflation-linked pay raises—particularly at a time when prices have been surging. "The strike can go however long it takes," Osborn said. "All we have to do is hold out one day longer than the company."

Most of the strikers are motivated by demands for better working conditions, said Kate Bronfenbrenner, who specializes in union and labor issues at Cornell University in New York. "Companies are making more profits than ever, and workers are being pushed to work harder than ever, sometimes risking their lives to go back to work in the context of COVID," she said. — AFP

Business

NBK Macroeconomic Outlook 2021-2024

Saudi Arabia's growth to soften in 2H2021 after strong rebound in H1

Oil sector expected to support growth due to increased oil production

KUWAIT: Saudi Arabia's non-oil economy recovered relatively fast, increasing by 5.4 percent y/y in 1H2021 (2 percent higher than pre-pandemic levels of 1H2019), following a 2.3 percent contraction in 2020. This recovery was mostly driven by the private sector (+7.5 percent in H1), while the less-pandemic-impacted government sector was up by 0.8 percent. A successful vaccination rollout (56 percent+ of the population fully vaccinated) supported this fast recovery. The manufacturing sector saw the highest growth rate of 11.9 percent helped by several initiatives taken to develop that sector, in line with Vision 2030.

Nevertheless, the recovery lost some momentum in 2Q2021 with non-oil output falling by a relatively steep 8 percent q/q, partly driven by seasonal factors as can be seen historically. While we expect the recovery to continue in 2H2021, we are forecasting lower y/y growth rates than in 1H2021. Base effects is one reason for that (given the pandemic-induced plunge in 2Q2020), but also several indicators (such as consumer spending, credit growth, cement sales, etc.) are pointing to a more gradual recovery going forward. Given all that, we forecast non-oil growth at 3.9 percent in 2021, then averaging a slightly lower 3.3 percent in 2022-24.

Effective policymaking, ongoing reforms, Shareek program-induced capital spending, and the PIF's commitment to invest at least SAR 150 billion annually in 2021-2025 (versus an estimated average of SAR 77 billion in 2019-2020) in the local economy underpin this relatively robust growth outlook. Reflecting that, the stock market is up by around 34 percent YTD, reaching levels unseen since more than 10 years.

As for the oil sector, KSA has been playing a leading role within OPEC+ to rebalance the global market, and much of the success in terms of that can be attributed to the Kingdom's effective strategy. While the oil sector has been a drag on GDP growth since 2019, it is expected to support growth starting in 2H2021 given higher oil production as per the OPEC+ agreement, and we forecast oil GDP to grow by an average of 4.2 percent in 2022-24 after a flat performance this year. All in all, total GDP is expected to grow by an average of 3.7 percent in 2022-24, after a softer 2.3 percent projected expansion in 2021 that is being held back by the oil sector. Following the

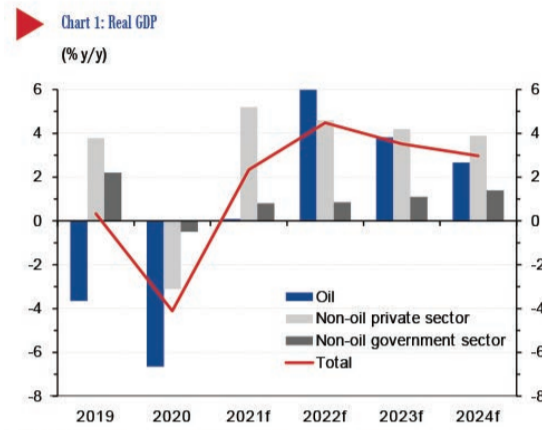
tripling of VAT, inflation increased to 3.4 percent in 2020, and will likely decelerate to around 3 percent this year, before normalizing to 2 percent in 2022-24. As for credit, growth strengthened to 15.7 percent y/y through August from a very solid 15 percent in 2020, as higher growth in personal non-mortgage credit more than compensated the slower growth in mortgage lending.

Fiscal position on a sustainable footing

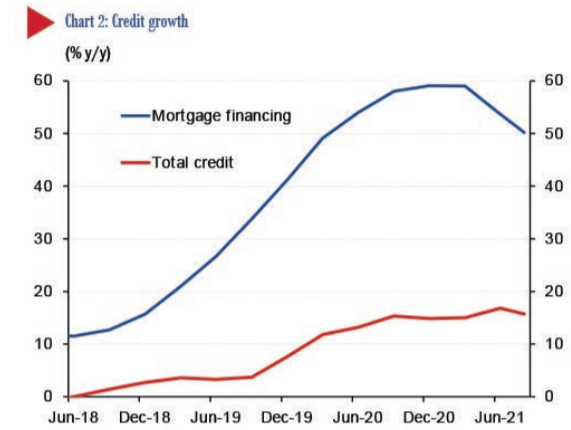
Following the pandemic-induced deterioration in 2020, the fiscal position improved sharply in 1H2021 on soaring non-oil revenues, higher oil prices, and

ing in line with Vision 2030, we forecast a steady and gradual improvement in the deficit to less than 1 percent of GDP in 2024. Accordingly, we see the debt/GDP ratio staying below 32 percent through 2024, significantly lower than the 50 percent self-imposed cap.

After a slight dip in to the red in 2020 (-2.8 percent of GDP), we forecast the current account to return to surplus of around 4 percent in 2021 on higher oil prices and a strong rebound in non-oil exports. The latter exceeded pre-pandemic levels in 1H2021 (10 percent above 1H2019), hitting an all-time monthly high in June. Moreover, FDI soared to



Source: General Authority for Statistics (GASTAT), NBK forecasts



Source: SAMA

spending restraint. Revenues increased by 39 percent y/y in 1H2021 as oil revenues were up 11 percent on higher oil prices, while non-oil revenues more than doubled driven by higher tax receipts. In contrast, expenditures inched down 1 percent in 1H2021 as current spending increased by 4 percent, while capital spending was cut by 36 percent. The fiscal deficit dropped to less than 1 percent of GDP in 1H2021, down from 11.2 percent in 2020. However, given seasonal spending patterns (spending highest in Q4) and the fact that 2H2020 included material non-oil revenue one-offs that will be difficult to sustain in the same magnitude this year, we forecast the deficit to stand at around 2.8 percent for the full year. Looking ahead, given the increase in oil production and the government's unwavering commitment to continue expanding non-oil revenues and rationalizing spend-

\$13.8bn in Q2, nearly matching the combined flows for the last three years. The improving balance of payments trends can be seen in SAMA's reserve assets, which have been flat YTD through August (after dropping 9 percent in 2020) to stand at \$455 billion (55 percent of 2021F GDP).

Effective policymaking and the reform momentum are the key drivers for the country's favorable outlook. Some of the recent reforms/important policy initiatives included the areas of public procurement, transport/logistics, FinTech, personal data protection, education, and several societal matters. Higher-than-forecast oil prices is the main upside risk to our forecast, while slower-than-projected momentum in terms of non-oil growth and weaker-than-expected oil production given KSA's leading role within OPEC+, are the main downside risks.

Coal in the stocking: US retailers scramble ahead of festive season

NEW YORK: With the pandemic grimly persisting, American homes could face a meager holiday season, forced to do without some of their favorite items missing from store shelves.

Even as demand surges as the world's largest economy reopens, US retailers are working hard to avoid putting a damper on festivities, taking unprecedented actions to try to navigate around myriad supply chain obstacles. The most dramatic steps have included moves by Walmart and other big box chains to charter their own ships and bypass messy delays at West Coast ports.

Other workarounds have included bringing imports in earlier in the season, launching holiday promotions sooner and shifting to air cargo from ships. "A lot of companies have made the decision over the last 30 days that we have to change modes," said Neel Jones Shah, global head of air freight at Flexport, a freight forwarding company.

"They're having to pivot to air or they're going to miss their sale season all-together." But even with these measures, Scott Case, a logistics industry veteran and founder of Chicago-based Position: Global, predicted "there are going to be noticeable gaps in what is available to people this holiday season."

Retailers are trying to plan for that as well, working up strategies to mollify or cushion the disappointment when choice items run out. On the positive side, consumer activity remains robust, a dynamic apparent in US retail sales data released Friday, which showed another surprising gain in September. —AFP



شركة الصفاة للاستثمار
AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON
14 OCTOBER 2021

| Market | M. Cap (KD ml) | Last Close | WTD % | MTD % | YTD % | Quantity Traded | Value Traded | No. of Trades | P/E | P/B | % of Total M. Cap |
|----------------|----------------|------------|-------|-------|-------|-----------------|--------------|---------------|------|-----|-------------------|
| Premier Market | 30,172 | 7,461.46 | -0.2% | -0.5% | 23.3% | 307,500,360 | 124,514,848 | 19,257 | 29.1 | 2.3 | 75.1% |
| Main Market | 10,026 | 5,772.26 | 0.8% | 2.7% | 26.8% | 1,511,727,950 | 136,269,166 | 48,618 | 21.1 | 3.8 | 24.9% |
| All Share | 40,197 | 6,886.15 | 0.0% | 0.3% | 24.2% | 1,819,228,310 | 260,784,014 | 67,875 | 27.9 | 2.7 | 100% |

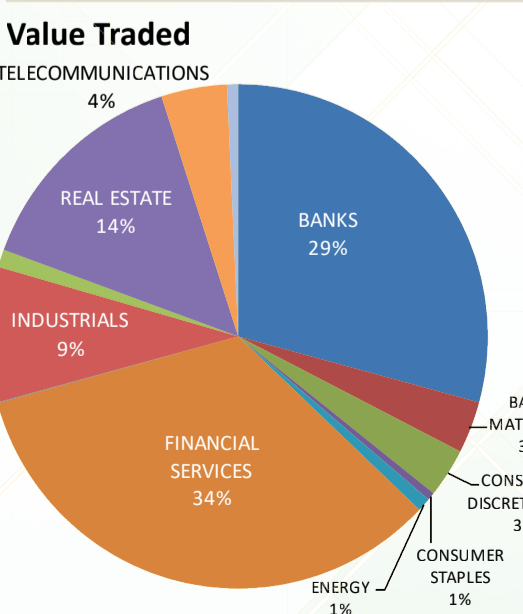
| Sector | M. Cap (KD ml) | Last Close | WTD % | MTD % | YTD % | Quantity Traded | Value Traded | No. of Trades | P/E | P/B | % of Total M. Cap |
|------------------------|----------------|------------|-------|-------|--------|-----------------|--------------|---------------|------|------|-------------------|
| BANKS | 23,129 | 1,567.80 | -0.4% | -0.5% | 24.2% | 174,893,115 | 76,196,528 | 9,132 | 33.0 | 2.3 | 56.95% |
| BASIC MATERIALS | 1,013 | 1,136.45 | 5.7% | 4.4% | 26.5% | 16,264,752 | 8,689,556 | 2,002 | 25.3 | 1.7 | 2.49% |
| CONSUMER DISCRETIONARY | 592 | 1,154.73 | 1.2% | 3.4% | 54.7% | 45,376,812 | 8,206,922 | 3,183 | 9.6 | 43.8 | 1.46% |
| CONSUMER STAPLES | 241 | 791.01 | 1.5% | 1.0% | -3.4% | 2,113,027 | 1,307,538 | 301 | 16.4 | 1.7 | 0.59% |
| ENERGY | 292 | 1,402.99 | 1.1% | 1.9% | 9.8% | 48,484,290 | 2,274,759 | 1,482 | 14.4 | 1.4 | 0.72% |
| FINANCIAL SERVICES | 3,774 | 1,361.82 | 1.8% | 3.3% | 46.5% | 759,500,807 | 87,783,520 | 24,123 | 8.9 | 1.7 | 9.29% |
| HEALTH CARE | 394 | 794.68 | 0.0% | -0.2% | -3.9% | 106,992 | 123,317 | 17 | 27.4 | 5.3 | 0.97% |
| INDUSTRIALS | 4,129 | 1,166.20 | -0.4% | -0.1% | 30.9% | 76,922,694 | 22,614,573 | 6,791 | 26.5 | 1.8 | 10.17% |
| INSURANCE | 611 | 1,465.63 | 0.0% | 1.1% | 26.8% | 48,710,433 | 2,946,053 | 1,661 | 10.7 | 1.2 | 1.50% |
| REAL ESTATE | 2,798 | 1,302.62 | -0.1% | 1.8% | 36.7% | 508,835,154 | 37,678,942 | 15,918 | 27.3 | 1.3 | 6.89% |
| TECHNOLOGY | 10 | 712.22 | -5.0% | -0.3% | 41.7% | 113,349 | 11,361 | 24 | - | 0.8 | 0.02% |
| TELECOMMUNICATIONS | 3,370 | 1,099.87 | 0.0% | 0.4% | -0.2% | 129,894,643 | 11,074,870 | 2,726 | 23.0 | 1.4 | 8.30% |
| UTILITIES | 257 | 615.79 | -0.4% | -1.3% | -15.5% | 8,012,242 | 1,876,075 | 515 | 20.2 | 4.9 | 0.63% |

| Top Gainers | | | | | |
|-------------|------------|----------|------------|-----------|--------|
| Stock | last Close | Change % | Volume | Value | Trades |
| MARAKEZ | 104 | 44.4 | 7,204,416 | 660,147 | 618 |
| AMAR | 79 | 39.1 | 3,458,796 | 239,018 | 110 |
| WETHAQ | 39.6 | 37.0 | 40,486,832 | 1,445,001 | 1,023 |
| ALSAFAT | 127 | 27.0 | 50,007,167 | 6,330,765 | 1,500 |
| ALMANAR | 72.0 | 15.9 | 7,842,443 | 530,006 | 386 |

| Top Losers | | | | | |
|------------|------------|----------|------------|-----------|--------|
| Stock | last Close | Change % | Volume | Value | Trades |
| QIC | 78 | -11.4 | 198,556 | 15,527 | 25 |
| WARBACAP | 124 | -8.8 | 3,345,743 | 425,033 | 300 |
| SENERGY | 51.0 | -7.6 | 14,701,844 | 785,771 | 588 |
| SOKOUK | 32 | -6.7 | 50,763,403 | 1,666,773 | 1,357 |
| GFC | 51.1 | -5.4 | 17,000 | 876 | 5 |

| Top Volume | | | | | |
|------------|------|----------|-------------|------------|--------|
| Stock | Last | Change % | Volume | Value | Trades |
| AAN | 16 | 5.4 | 113,515,390 | 1,798,502 | 1,364 |
| GFH | 70 | 4.8 | 108,543,783 | 7,398,498 | 2,805 |
| MANAZEL | 54 | 4.7 | 103,966,244 | 5,651,032 | 2,743 |
| SECH | 116 | 4.5 | 91,987,301 | 10,531,439 | 1,566 |
| INVESTORS | 16 | 4.6 | 79,979,275 | 1,236,988 | 835 |

| Top Value | | | | | |
|-----------|------|----------|------------|------------|--------|
| Stock | Last | Change % | Volume | Value | Trades |
| KFH | 807 | -1.6 | 36,036,749 | 29,147,870 | 3,609 |
| NBK | 947 | -0.6 | 15,105,389 | 14,305,545 | 1,854 |
| AUB | 285 | 0.7 | 47,710,705 | 13,580,636 | 790 |
| SECH | 116 | 4.5 | 91,987,301 | 10,531,439 | 1,566 |
| AAYAN | 169 | 0.0 | 52,611,052 | 8,837,764 | 1,127 |



Market Summary:

- Premier market volume decreased 6% while the value increased 18% as a result of few stocks witnessed big jumps in prices. Main market volume and value decreased 17% and 14%, respectively.
- All share and Main indexes closed at a new all-time high record despite the minor correction during the week. The Premier market rebounded from the support level 7400 yet struggled to return to the highest point it has reached which shows weakness in trading.
- Technically, the All-Share index registered a new all-time high-level closing at 6886 creating support levels at 6875 and 6830. Staying above 6882 will lead to 6905 passing the resistance at 6890. Premier index closed at 7461 creating support levels at 7440 and 7400. Staying above 7460 will lead to 7525 passing the resistance at 7490. The Main index registered a new all-time high-level closing at 5772 creating a support level at 5725 and 5675. Staying above 5750 will lead to 5810.

Business

Gulf Bank launches 'Data Ambassadors'

The first standalone data and analytics program in Kuwait

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank has announced the launch of its Data Ambassadors program as part of the bank's ongoing efforts to provide a digitally superior banking experience for its clients. The new program will train 140 employees across various departments in key data quality and analytics, upskilling and empowering employees to use advanced data science in order to enhance the Bank's offerings and services.

The new program is part of Gulf Bank's announced strategy for the year 2025, which aims to provide customers with an unprecedented banking experience based on digital transformation. The launch of the new program marks a remarkable undertaking by the Bank to train employees both quickly and efficiently in key concepts including data quality, data concepts and Tableau training. As part of the new program, 1 out of 10 employees in each team will be trained on how to use data and analytics tools.

It is worth noting that the Data Ambassadors' curriculum was developed completely in-house by Gulf Bank's Data and Analytics office, and is the first stand-alone Data and Analytics program in the country. The new curriculum, which was developed primarily by Kuwaiti talent, has also been endorsed by world-renowned data expert, Dr Thomas Redman, whose books and articles have been featured in respected periodicals including MIT Sloan and Harvard Business Review.

In a series of firsts for the country, Gulf Bank's Chief Data Officer (CDO), Mai Al-Owaish, is notably also the first female CDO in Kuwait, and a

board member of the world-renowned Digital Analytics Association. Commenting on the Data Ambassadors program, Al-Owaish said: "At Gulf Bank, we firmly believe that our people are the cornerstone of our success, and the secret behind our excellence in the banking industry. That is why we are constantly investing into our employees, ensuring that our employees are always learning new skills in order to keep up with the demands of the current marketplace. The launch of our Data Ambassadors program marks not only a series of firsts for the country, but also for the Bank, as we are working to invest in integrated technological solutions to facilitate a digital transformation both internally with our employees, and externally for our clients. With the banking sector heading toward a new era of digitization, Gulf Bank is proud to demonstrate a dynamism in responding swiftly to today's digital demands. We are proud to be developing our internal talent in digitally critical disciplines such as data science and cybersecurity, and are excited to reap the multitude of benefits that will follow as a result of empowering our employees to think critically and be data-minded."

Gulf Bank plans to hold its Data Ambassadors program annually as part of its commitment to upskill new employees and enhance existing talent. The Bank also plans to launch a bank-wide Data



Mai Al-Owaish



KUWAIT: (From left), Sabikah Al-Rashid, Mai Al-Owaish, Fozan Al-Sumait and Awos Al-Ansari

Literacy program to upskill Gulf Bank employees on an ongoing basis, and enable departments to create automated data flows and use state-of-the-art tools and technologies to advance projects.

Gulf Bank's vision is to be the leading Kuwaiti Bank of the Future. The Bank is constantly engaging and empowering its employees as part of an inclusive and diversified workplace in recognition of every employee's role in delivering customer excellence and serving the community at large. With its extensive network of branches and innovative digital services, Gulf Bank is able to give its customers the choice of how and where to conduct their bank-

ing transactions, all while ensuring a simple and seamless banking experience.

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

For more information on Gulf Bank's various initiatives and activities, customers can visit one of Gulf Bank's branches or log on to Gulf Bank's Online/Mobile Banking services.

Four reasons why Huawei MatePad T Kids Edition is a safe and unique tablet

KUWAIT: Committed to creating high-quality tablets, Huawei has launched the Huawei MatePad T Kids Edition with children's creative and educational needs at the heart of it. Children and parents are set to be thrilled by the new tablet that comes with a sleek and minimal design, portable and child-friendly case, Kids corner with rich educational content, eye protection, secure parental assistant and more. Coming in two different sizes of 8 and 9.7-inch variants, the Huawei MatePad T Kids Edition tablets will be up for grabs in Kuwait starting on 21st October 2021. Here are four reasons why we think it is suited to be your little ones ideal companion.

The Huawei MatePad T Kids Edition

First reason: A child-friendly design with accessories for your little ones

The Huawei MatePad T Kids Edition comes with a beautiful kids case made from environmentally safe silicone, offering all-around protection for both the device and your child. As a tablet made for children, the Huawei MatePad T Kids Edition has tailored accessories to ensure that your child can make the most out of the tablet in a fun yet safe way. The Huawei MatePad T Kids Edition has a case with a deep-sea blue shell and green grips, echoing kids' inquisitive minds. The kid's case not only looks nice, but it is also anti-shock and it fully wraps the device, offering an all-around protection for the tablet while keeping it clean. A bright blue stylus

pen is attached with a string and can be stowed away in the kid's case so it will not be easily lost.

Second reason: A Kids Corner - A rich and educational content corner

Kids Corner is a key feature of the Huawei MatePad T Kids Edition that provides entertaining features to keep your child engaged. In addition to entertaining features such as Recorder, Camera and Kids Painting, Kids Corner covers educational apps. Huawei has partnered with Azoomee and BabyBus, two of the leading educational developers creating apps for children. The Huawei MatePad T Kids Edition therefore comes with a free three-month membership to Baby Panda World, and a free one-year membership to Azoomee. With a constant stream of updated content, these apps allow children to keep learning, and have fun while doing it.

BabyBus is an internet company providing children with creative and educational content. The company has served 500 million families worldwide, and released over 200 apps and 2,500 episodes of animations, as well as over 5,000 audio stories. Their products are available in 12 languages in 160 countries and regions worldwide.

Third reason: Protect your little ones eyesight by multi-layered eye protection

As children have sensitive developing eyes it is imperative the Huawei MatePad T Kids Edition was built with multi-layered eye protection. As expected, blue light filter comes as standard - turning cold color tones into warm ones to protect the eyes from myopia. Utilizing the tablet's gravity sensor and algorithms, children are prompted to change position if they try to lie down whilst using it, as this causes eyestrain through reduced circadian rhythm. A similar notification will appear if a child uses the tablet whilst walking or in a car, which can lead to eye muscle strain. Moreover, if your child is a keen reader? An eBook mode makes the display



grayscale to make reading easier on the eye.

Fourth reason: Parental assistant and educational features

Aside from the other mentioned default features, Kids Corner also comes with a comprehensive suite of parental assistant features for you to fine-tune and manage your children's digital experience, so you can ensure your children are exploring in a safe way. Parents are able to implement time limit intervals throughout the day to make sure the children do not overuse the tablet - allowing them to only use the tablet for 20 minutes after school for example. You can set different limits between the week and weekend to help your child strike a balance between study and play across different days. Beyond this, you can manage the selected apps you would like to give your children access to and which photos and videos they can see, providing you with peace of mind. With Kid's Profile logs, kid's usage time and used apps, parents can better understand their children's habits. From the history log, they can find out if their children are using the tablet heavily or not. All of these factors combine to demonstrate that the Huawei MatePad T Kids Edition is the ideal parent's choice.

'Unintentional gift': US steps into China's bitcoin breach

ROCKDALE: The long sheds at North America's largest bitcoin mine look endless in the Texas sun, packed with the type of machines that have helped the United States to become the new global hub for the digital currency. The operation in the quiet town of Rockdale was part of an already bustling US business-now boosted by Beijing's intensified crypto crackdown that has pushed the industry west.

Experts say rule of law and cheap electricity in the United States are a draw for bitcoin miners, whose energy-gulping computers race to unlock units of the currency. "There's a lot of competitors coming into Texas because they are seeing the same thing (as) when we came here," said Chad Everett Harris, CEO of miner Whinstone, which operates the Rockdale site owned by US company Riot Blockchain.

China was the undisputed heartland of crypto mining with about two-thirds of global capacity in September 2019, but last month Beijing declared illegal all transactions involving crypto money as it seeks to launch one of its own. Figures released Wednesday by the University of Cambridge showed that activity in the United States 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.

Samir Tabar, chief strategy officer at miner Bit Digital, said the company started to pull out of China in 2020 and accelerated that process as the crackdown intensified. They have operations in the United States and Canada. "China's bitcoin mining ban was basically an unintentional gift to the US," he said. "Thanks to their ban an entire sector migrated to North America-along with innovation, labor and machines."

Some of the key pulls toward the United States are simply a democratic government, a court system and the power to protect property rights. "If you're



ROCKDALE, US: Workers install a new row of Bitcoin mining machines at the Whinstone US Bitcoin mining facility in Rockdale, Texas. —AFP

going to make long-term investments and accumulate wealth in a country, you want to have some confidence that it's not going to be taken away by the government," said David Yermack, a crypto expert at New York University.

'Poetic' return to America

He expected the shift to the United States to be temporary, saying places like Nordic countries have cheap and abundant renewable energy, as well as plenty of cold weather to cool the hot-running mining machines. The steady increase in US-based mining operations has fanned the ongoing environmental criticisms of the industry's massive annual electricity consumption-more than what the Philippines uses in a year, according to Cambridge University data.

An ongoing backlash has been fueled by concerns the industry relies on carbon-emitting power sources that contribute to climate change. "To think that we're causing harm or pollution or all those things here... the majority of our power comes out of the ERCOT grid and that profile is extremely

friendly to the environment," Harris said, referring to the Texas power network operator.

According to ERCOT's data for 2020, about 46 percent of its power came from natural gas while wind and solar combined for 25 percent with coal at 18 percent. The price miners pay for electricity is key, and a place like Texas is desirable because the market is de-regulated so companies can have more flexible terms, said Viktoriya Zotova, a business school professor at Georgetown University.

"In principle, they can buy the electricity when it's cheaper and not buy it when it's more expensive," she said. While there are obvious reasons for the crypto world's migration, some also see a bit of poetry in mining operations coming to the United States from China.

Tabar, from miner Bit Digital, said his company has a site in Buffalo, New York, which used to be one of the country's main manufacturing hubs but lost jobs and prosperity as production work shifted to places like China. "There is a bit of a poetic thing going on," he noted. "It dawned on me how this is going full circle." —AFP

Al-Tijari announces winners of Al-Najma Account draws

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

The results of the draws were as follows:

1- Al-Najma weekly account - the prize of KD 5,000 went to the winner Zakie Ali Nasser Abboud
2- Salary account campaign - the prize of up to KD 1,000 went to the winner Dalal Falah Al-Mutairi

The bank stated that the salary campaign is aimed at customers who transfer their salaries of KD 500 or more to the bank, especially Kuwaiti employees and residents working in the government, oil sectors and companies listed with the bank as well as retirees, and take advantage of the benefits of this campaign and get an instant cash gift from KD 400 to KD 500 or an interest-free loan for a period of up to four years and up to KD 70,000, Kuwaiti pensioner, along with expatriate customers who transfer their debt to the bank will receive an instant cash gift of two percent from their transferred debt up to KD 1,000.

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

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

Burgan Bank reveals winners of Yawmi account draw

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

The lucky winners are:

- Shaimaa Ibrahim Mohammad
- Hamad Ghazi Almatar
- Abeer Shawah Taher
- Shaikh Begum Syed Ibrahim
- Nadeen Hasan Alsadek

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

Business

Boubyan Bank profits soar to KD 31.9m at a growth rate of 37% until Sept 2021

Bank's operating profits surpassed KD 76 million at a growth rate of 8.5%

KUWAIT: Boubyan Bank has announced KD 76 million in operating profits until the end of September, while continuing to allocate provisions amounting to KD 44 million, thereby recording KD 31.9 million in net profits at a growth rate of 37 percent compared with past year, with an earnings per share of 9.29 fils.



Adel Al-Majed

Boubyan Bank's Vice-Chairman & Group Chief Executive Officer, Adel Al-Majed stated: "Thanks to Almighty Allah, we continued recording good levels of operating and net profits, which makes us optimistic in ending the year with positive results despite the exceptional circumstances we have been experiencing, with our aspiration to continue providing the highest levels of customer service while maintaining flexibility in incorporating our services and products via our various digital channels."

Al-Majed, who is also the Chairman of the Bank of London and the Middle East "BLME", stated: "The announcement of profits coincides with the launch of marketing campaigns for Nomo Bank during Q3, which is the first Islamic Digital Bank launched from London through the UK-based Bank of London and the Middle East; a member of Boubyan Bank's Group, which is subject to the laws of UK's financial regulatory authorities."

"The new bank is a demonstration of Boubyan Bank's strategy in action to expand internationally after affirming our domestic position, and follows in the path of our plans to expand our digital banking services," he added.

Al-Majed went on to add: "We are happy that the economic sectors in Kuwait have returned to work normally as a result of the efforts exerted by the various bodies in Kuwait to vaccinate the majority of citizens and residents, leading to the reopening of all sectors and the return to normal life."

Al-Majed highlighted the most significant numbers recorded by the bank until the end of Q3, where the total of customers' deposits grew by 8 percent to reach KD 5.4 billion, while the financing portfolio grew by 13 percent to reach KD 5.3 billion, and operating income grew by 14 percent to reach KD 141 million.

Speaking of the bank's market shares, the bank's share of local financing continued its growth journey in reaching approximately 11 percent. "Of course, we had to allocate additional precautionary provisions to support the bank's financial position, and to bolster our ability to face any future repercussions of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, which is normal as a result of this unprecedented crisis: a first in our modern era," Al-Majed elaborated.

Achievements and successes

Al-Majed went on to highlight prominent achievements during this year, the most significant of which, was the bank's regional and international success in covering the \$500 million sukuk issuance at 3.95 percent annual profit rate. Total subscription requests exceeded \$1.3 billion (the issuance was oversubscribed by 2.6 fold the issued sukuk). This confirms Boubyan Bank's international and regional status and reputation, gained owing to its achievements over the past years across many levels.

Furthermore, the crisis caused by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in Kuwait has revealed the strength of Boubyan Bank in its ability to continue its

HIGHLIGHTS

- As a part of Boubyan Bank's growth plans, the bank inaugurated its new Mubarkiya Branch that will serve both retail and corporate customers.
- The bank inaugurated two main branches at Sabah Al-Ahmad area, making it the first bank to be available over there to serve customers in addition to opening another branch at Egeila, while reopening its revamped Ministries Complex Branch to customers.
- As a part of its corporate social responsibility, the bank provided its full support to CBK and KBA's Let's Be Aware Campaign "Diraya" to spread awareness about many banking matters among citizens and residents.
- Over the past months, the bank launched the biggest campaign in Kuwait to encourage and reward our customers, who got vaccinated, with valuable prizes including trips to other countries abroad, inclusive of all costs and expenses in addition to valuable cash prizes to more than 20 winners. This campaign was open for all the bank's customers.

quality customer service without compromising the high levels maintained over recent years. This helped the bank continue topping the pyramid of customer service in Kuwait, which was confirmed by being named the Best Islamic Bank in Customer Service for the eleventh year in a row since 2010 by Service Hero, the international consumer-driven customer satisfaction index.

The bank continued supporting its human resources by announcing the admission of the first cohort to Boubyan Digital Academy in addition to a new group of employees joining the MBA program in collaboration with GUST, which was launched over 10 years ago to support the bank's human resources, making Boubyan the only bank supporting its employees in their journey

to earn an MBA by providing them with both moral and financial support.

Since 2012, more than 100 male and female employees earned their MBA degrees from GUST within the framework of the joint program by Boubyan and GUST, which is managed through the Itqan Academy, the training arm of the bank. The bank also inked an exclusive collaboration agreement with the College of Business Administration and the College of Engineering and Petroleum at Kuwait University as a part of its corporate social responsibility efforts seeking the development of young national cadres and supporting them across various modern domains, especially those related to digital technology.

NBK Money Markets report

Dollar falls as tapering looms

KUWAIT: The minutes of the September meeting of the Federal Open Market Committee were released on Wednesday showing that officials were firming up their plans for the eventual end to the \$120 billion monthly asset purchase program. The Federal Reserve signaled that it could start reducing its pandemic era support for the US economy as early as the middle of November. The minutes also showed that a growing number of the Fed's policymakers worried that inflation could persist longer than previously thought.

Though no official decision on a taper was taken in the meeting, the minutes showed the Fed to be poised to begin reducing its pandemic era stimulus program as early as next month and to wrap up the process by mid-2022, as the economic recovery advances and more officials start to pencil in an interest rate rise next year.

In a change from the Fed's rhetoric during its summer meetings, the minutes showed policymakers were no longer described as "generally" expecting inflation pressures to ease as transitory factors "dissipated." Instead, they suggested there were intensifying worries within the Fed over inflation. "Most" policymakers are now seeing upside risks, and "some" are concerned about elevated inflation feeding through to inflation expectations and more broadly into prices. Still, "several other" policymakers attributed upward price pressures to pandemic related supply bottlenecks that could abate.

With the taper decision on the horizon, market attention is now shifting towards the timing of future rate hikes. The Fed has promised to keep its benchmark overnight lending rate at the current near zero level until the economy reaches full employment, and inflation has not only reached its 2 percent goal but is on track to stay modestly above that level for some time. These parameters were set by the central bank when inflation had been running below 2 percent for years, and the big challenge was lifting it up rather than tamping it down.

Now we see the opposite problem to be emerging, with suppressed demand fueling spending in a reopening economy and businesses, we are seeing prices to be running away. The forecasts released alongside last month's policy statement showed half of Fed policymakers thought a rate hike would be needed before the end of next year, with all but one forecasting a first increase in borrowing costs before the end of 2023. Now the key question is whether policymakers will need to begin raising interest rates earlier in an effort to stop inflation from its upward spiral, potentially sacrificing labor market gains in the process.

Fed chair Jerome Powell has played down the possibility of being forced into that uncomfortable position, but the data may be trending against him given the inflation data released on the same day of the minutes.

Heating inflation

Data released alongside the Fed's meeting minutes showed the pace of US consumer price growth to be pushing higher in September, now hovering at a 13 year high as inflationary pressures drove up the cost of

food, energy and rent. The Bureau of Labor Statistics published the consumer price index (CPI) on Wednesday showing the figure to be rising 5.4 percent in September from a year ago. Slightly higher than the annual increase of 5.3 percent reported in August. On a monthly basis, prices climbed 0.4 percent up from the 0.3 percent increase recorded a month earlier. Taking out the prices of volatile items such as food and energy, core CPI ticked up 0.2 percent from August, up from the previous reading of 0.1 percent and maintaining an annual pace of 4 percent.

Looking at the components of the figures, food prices jumped a significant 0.9 percent for the month, and shelter costs were higher. Combined, those two categories accounted for more than half of the monthly increase in the headline figure. Energy prices rose 1.3 percent in September, and are now up 24.8 percent for the year. On Wednesday, the US Energy Information Administration separately forecast a sharp rise in domestic heating bills this winter, as a global energy crisis begins to reach American consumers.

Both economists and policymakers have debated the extent to which ongoing consumer price increases will shift to a more persistent inflation that broadens beyond sectors that are most sensitive to pandemic related disruptions, such as used cars and travel related expenses, which have so far driven the bulk of the increase.

Prices for used cars and trucks fell another 0.7 percent in September after a 1.5 percent decline in the previous month. For the year, however, prices are still up 24.4 percent. Additionally, airlines fares decreased by 6.4 percent over the month after falling 9.1 percent in August. Apparel costs fell 1.1 percent for the month, pushing the brakes on a five-month streak of increases.

September's data showed that pricing pressures were beginning to broaden out elsewhere, with owner's equivalent rent - a measure of what homeowners believe their properties would rent for - and rents posted their largest increase since 2000, up 0.4 percent and 0.5 percent respectively for the month. The readings are especially important as the FOMC meeting minutes showed that "many" participants said owners' equivalent rent should be "monitored carefully."

Dropping unemployment claims

The Labor Department reported on Thursday the second week of straight weekly declines. Initial claims are now in the zone that is generally associated with healthy labor market conditions. Yet, the labor market still faces challenges from shortages of workers and raw materials, especially in the auto sector. Initial claims for state unemployment benefits dropped 36,000 to a seasonally adjusted 293,000 for the week ended Oct. 9. That was lowest level since mid-March 2020, when the nation was in the early phase of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Producer price index

In another report on Thursday, the Labor Department said its producer price index for final demand increased 0.5 percent in September after advancing 0.7 percent in August. A 1.3 percent jump in prices of goods accounted for nearly 80 percent of the increase in the PPI. Energy products and food boosted goods prices, which advanced 1.0 percent in August. Economists had fore-

cast the PPI gaining 0.6 percent. In the 12 months through September, the PPI accelerated 8.6 percent, the largest year-on-year advance since November 2010 when the series was revamped, after surging 8.3 percent in August.

Boosted retail sales

The Commerce Department released its retail sales reading on Friday, showing sales unexpectedly increased in September, but there are fears that supply constraints could disrupt the holiday shopping season amid continued shortages of cars and other goods. Retail sales rose 0.7 percent last month, vanishing economists' expectations of a 0.2 percent decline. While Data for August was revised higher to show retail sales increasing 0.9 percent instead of 0.7 percent as previously reported. Sales last month were partly lifted by higher prices.

A tight labor market

A separate reading was released by the ONS the day before, showing that Britain's labor is at its tightest in more than four decades, with fewer unemployed people for each job vacancy than before the pandemic.

The ONS said that the number of open jobs rose to a record high of 1.1m in the three months to August, while the average unemployment rate for the period fell to 4.5 percent, down from 4.9 percent in the previous three-month period. The vacancies matched or exceeded pre-pandemic levels in all sectors and come as Bank of England policymakers grow concerned about building inflationary pressures in an economy grappling with supply chain disruptions and rising energy costs. However, the figures indicated the UK workforce is still significantly smaller than it was before the COVID-19 crisis began. The Institute for Employment Studies estimated that there are almost a million people fewer in the labor market, largely due to younger people staying in education and older people dropping out of the workforce.

The data divided economist's opinions on whether it would increase the chance that the BoE would tighten monetary policy sooner than it had previously signaled. They are now on the lookout for any further pick up in wages.

Market movement

Last week saw the US dollar's first weekly decline versus major peers since the start of last month as global risk appetite rebounded, while the Japanese yen headed down to clock a three-year low. The dollar index closed the week down 0.12 percent at 93.954, in what was the first weekly loss in six weeks. The Japanese yen, another currency seen as a haven against risk, suffered from the risk on sentiment closing the week at 114.26, the first time since October 2018.

The sterling on the other hand, rose to a four week high, to close the week at 1.3751, boosted by rising expectations that the Bank of England will raise rates this year. Many investors are now betting that the BoE will become the first major central bank to lift interest rates since the start of the pandemic. The market is pricing in a 72.4 percent chance of a rate hike at the BoE's December 2021 meeting, up from a 45.6 percent chance a week ago.

Kuwaiti dinar

USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30170

Opinion Editorial

Partnerships pivotal for zero carbon shipping

By Lars Liebig

There is no doubt that ammonia and methanol are in the race to be the most viable zero-carbon bunker fuels in the global shipping industry. When you consider the rapid acceleration of the world's transition to a greener future and that shipping facilitates 90 percent of the world's traded goods, the importance of these budding markets could be colossal. But two ingredients to leverage these urgently needed carbon-free fuels first need leveraging in the Middle East and beyond: Collaborations and investment.

Signs of appetite are certainly emerging. Ammonia itself is not new, with 80 percent of the market used for the fertilizer industry, according to the Royal Society, but using ammonia as a bunkering fuel is very new. The first such ship is yet to be built, so this a very fresh journey - meaning there is plenty of potential for first-mover advantage. Industry expects ammonia usage to grow to 7 percent of fuels by 2030 and 20 percent by 2050, detailed a survey by Lloyd's List and LR - making it one of the top three fuels with potential for 2050. Potential customers are also emerging, including those who already share established trade links with the Middle East. For one, Japan has set a formal target to grow the nation's ammonia fuel demand to three million t/yr by 2030 - from zero now.

Theory turns to action

Oman's strategic green hydrogen project HYPOR Duqm signed a cooperation agreement with Uniper to provide engineering services and negotiate an exclusive offtake agreement of green ammonia from 2026 - potentially leading to the first ship on the high seas with ammonia bunkering. The \$5 billion deal in Saudi Arabia between Air Products, ACWA Power and NEOM to produce and export green hydrogen will also produce 1.2 million t/yr of green ammonia. Scheduled to be onstream in 2025, Air Products said it will be the exclusive offtaker of the green ammonia.

Methanol is also attracting attention, especially as it can be blended with other bunkering fuels, such as low sulfur fuel oil (LSFO). Moves by Maersk, the world's largest container shipping company, reflects how the market is increasingly open to change. In the first quarter of 2024, AP Moller - Maersk plans to introduce the first in a series of eight large ocean-going container vessels capable of being operated on carbon neutral methanol. More than half of

Maersk's 200 largest customers have set, or are in the process of setting, ambitious science-based or zero carbon targets for their supply chains - a trend increasingly echoed by other major operators.

The pressure to tick both economic and environmental boxes in the shipping industry is fast rising. The sector produces around three percent of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and emits an estimated 15 percent of some of the world's major air pollutants annually, highlighted the World Bank. These may not seem like big figures, but in the context of the global pressure on industry's decarbonization, they are big enough. And they have even more weight following the recent report by the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report - a "code red for humanity."

Collaborative clout

We are currently working on the cost side of ammonia bunkering, so that our current and prospective customers can understand cost per volume. We hope that interested parties can share their demand projections with us and then together, with us also leveraging Uniper's global footprint, we can establish a commercially viable supply chain in ammonia or methanol bunkering. Of course, it is a risky sell for some as it proposes investing finances and reputational weight into a bunkering market that does not yet exist. But adopting this collaborative approach means harnessing the coveted first-mover advantage in a scalable market for which their clear political and environmental need. Using this collaborative clout, such a partnership could be the first to use ammonia bunkering in the Middle East, or even worldwide.

It is clear that there is a lot of work to do. For one, marine engines capable of using ammonia are not yet available. There are many routes to market, but one is an obligation by a company that orders a vessel to make it compliant for carbon-free fuel at the same time. Completing such upgrades could take up to three years to complete, meaning customers willing to commit to longer-term ammonia offtakes in 2022 could secure their supplies from 2025 onwards - a relatively quick schedule. Investments in broader infrastructure is also needed, primarily dedicated tankage and ammonia barging. But longer-term commitments from interested shipping clients are pivotal to kick-starting those investment. The UAE's Port of Fujairah, the world's third largest bunkering hub, holds great potential for ammonia bunkering - but it will likely require investor support to support the entire value-chain. For example, it will require building a terminal and pipelines to the jetties. Much can be learned from the route taken by Singapore, the world's biggest bunkering hub, as it already has ammonia tankage, pipelines, and jetties. Keep in mind, however, that this potential is not restricted to the Middle East and Asia - we are interested in global conversations.

Note: Lars Liebig is Managing Director, Uniper Energy Dubai (UED).

Lifestyle | Features



Randal Plunkett, Baron of Dunsany, poses inside Dunsany Castle, in Dunsany, northwest of Dublin. — AFP photos



Randal Plunkett poses in the grounds of his seat Dunsany Castle.

Lord of the plants: Death metal eco-baron rewilds Irish estate

Randal Plunkett, the 21st Baron of Dunsany, strides out of his Irish castle in a T-shirt bearing the name of death metal band "Cannibal Corpse" in bloody lettering. In the distance, a russet-coloured stag appears for a moment, before dissolving into the 750 acres (300 hectares) of ancestral estate Plunkett has surrendered to the wilderness—almost half of his lands. "I felt a sort of sense of duty towards the environment here," said Plunkett, perched on a decaying tree trunk sprouting a clutch of mushrooms.

"I'm a caretaker of this estate for this generation and the estate is not just the castle, it's also the land but it's also the environment," the aristocrat told AFP, his mane of shoulder-length hair rippling in the breeze.

Born to rewild

Eight years ago, death metal fan Plunkett, whose family have presided over Dunsany Castle northwest of Dublin for nine centuries, began his "radical" rewilding project. The 38-year-old vegan, an unlikely successor to ancestors depicted in sober portraits lining the walls of the grey stone castle, evicted livestock and dismissed lawnmowers to allow nature to take its course. Now, the results are plain. The ultra-rare pine martin has been spotted. Otter and red deer thrive.

Skies are jammed with birds: buzzards, red kites, peregrine falcons, sparrowhawks, kestrels and snipes. Plunkett



A picture shows Dunsany Castle, the seat of Randal Plunkett, Baron of Dunsany, in Dunsany.

says a woodpecker has been sighted in the area for the first time in a century. Beyond the castle crenellations, the lawn is transformed into a swirling morass of 23 species of grass, fizzing with insect life. Plunkett lends a hand here and there—planting 2,500 trees last year was no small feat—but mostly he is hands-off. "As I watched it, I began to understand what the land was doing," he said after trudging across a field of knotted undergrowth in a faux leather jacket.

"It became a rewilding project," he

said, two Jack Russell terriers named Beavis and Butt-head gambol around his vegan-friendly Doc Marten boots. In June the UN said an area the size of China must be rewilded over the next decade. Stemming land "degradation" is key to keeping temperature rise below two degrees celsius in accordance with the international 2015 Paris Agreement, the UN Environment Program said.

The UN COP26 summit is taking place in Scotland from October 31, hoping for stronger commitments from world leaders

to halt runaway climate change. Last Saturday, UK campaigners marched on Buckingham Palace with a petition signed by 100,000, calling on the British royal family to commit to rewild their estates before they appear as ambassadors at the Glasgow summit. "I think we need to do a lot more than we're doing. I unfortunately think that it's not going to be done by governments," said Plunkett pessimistically. "I started all of this because I wasn't willing to wait anymore," he added. "I'm trying to popularize an idea, which I know for a fact will help."

Fresh Eire

The benefits of rewilding are manifold. It reverses biodiversity loss, draws carbon down from the atmosphere and can even quash natural disasters. Some 65 percent of Ireland—known as the "emerald isle"—is agricultural land according to 2018 World Bank figures. Livestock is responsible for around 14 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions according to the UN. For Plunkett, unhitching the perception of the estate as a farming asset has been difficult. He said initially some locals considered him a "moron".

"They thought that I was destroying perfectly good farmland," he said. "They thought I was just decadent." There have been dark moments too. Plunkett now considers the rewilded estate an "oasis" where deer hunting is off-limits. He patrols the land at dawn to keep unwelcome



Randal Plunkett, Baron of Dunsany, poses with a handful of some of the 23 types of grass in the grounds of his seat Dunsany Castle.

poachers at bay. "There were certain threats, there was abuse, there was vandalism. It became very difficult," he recalled. "It became a war and we're slowly winning it because the truth is this needs to happen for climate change."

Listing the species that have taken up residence on his estate it is clear Plunkett still has an appetite to fight for his self-described "mini-movement". "Every year I'm getting at least one animal back," he enthused. "We're bringing the wild back to Ireland, a place that used to be remembered for being green." — AFP

Ant Anstead: It is 'too early' to move in with Zellweger

Ant Anstead says it is "too early" to move in with Renee Zellweger. Oscar-winning actress Renee and the 'Celebrity IOU: Joyride' host met earlier this year on the set of his show and although their relationship has gone from strength to strength since then, Ant, 42, says they are not ready to live together yet. He told 'Extra': "I would say it would be too early for that... We're taking things nice and slow, and we're really happy." Ant previously explained that he and Renee are taking their relationship "one

day at a time" and want to keep their romance as private as possible. He said: "Renee and my relationship is something that's really private. It's something I'm not really willing to talk too much about. It's really early in our relationship and I don't want to put any pressure on that." However, a close to the couple revealed that Renee, 52, and Ant are madly in love. The insider told PEOPLE: "There is so much respect between them. They spend as much time as possible together when they aren't working on other projects. They truly like each other as well as their romantic attraction. The relationship is serious. "Renee has found love again, a love where she feels confident and secure about herself. And Ant, too, has had a lot of ups and downs, but seems to have stability in this romance."



Redmayne 'loved' being at home during lockdown

Eddie Redmayne learned to grow vegetables during lockdown. The 'Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them' actor "loved" spending more time at home with his wife Hannah and their children Iris, five, and three-year-old Luke during the coronavirus pandemic because it gave him the chance to learn new schools and see his kids growing and developing. He said: "My wife is gently converting me to someone who knows his way around a veg patch. "I loved it. Iris was just learning to read, and Luke was just learning to talk. I felt very lucky to be around." Next month, Eddie will be returning to the stage in London's West End, playing 'Cabaret's Emcee, a role he first played at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival when he was 19. And the 39-year-old star is excited about going back to theatre for the first time in a decade because he's always had positive experiences. He told Britain's Vogue magazine: "In theatre, I had such luck with new plays, such fun, and I have not always had that on film. I have done some catastrophically bad films and had some great experiences. In theatre, I've always found a wonderful alchemy... "It's the reason I love what I do, that rare moment when something becomes real. That's the drug." Even if the production turns out to be a "catastrophe", the 'Theory of Everything' star will still embrace the positives. He said: "Anxiety is something that drives me. It has for a long time. Ultimately, I think, you only live once. If it's a catastrophe, I got to play a part that always felt unfinished in me. If I don't do it, then perhaps I will just live with regret."



George accuses Styles of being 'too scared' to play him in biopic

Boy George has accused Harry Styles of being "too scared" to play him in a Culture Club biopic. The 60-year-old singer/songwriter claims Harry was in talks to portray him in a new movie but alleges the former One Direction singer "ran" and Yungblud is in talks to take on the leading role. He told the Daily Mirror newspaper: "They are looking at a kid called Yungblud. He is a big English sensation. He is quite young and he has been auditioning. There was talk of Harry Styles, but I think he ran. He was too scared." 'Karma Chameleon' - named after Culture Club's 1983 hit song - will document Boy George's rise to fame. It had been due to start filming this year but the COVID-19 pandemic and casting issues have delayed it. Boy George said: "I don't want it to be like a fantasy of somebody else. I feel like it

should be honest and truthful as I am hilarious. I say tell the truth as the truth is far more interesting than things that are made up, you know." Boy George has lived an eventful life and his four-month prison sentence in 2009 - for falsely imprisoning a male escort - is likely to feature in the biopic. Speaking about it previously, he said: "I always maintained that jail would finish me off, but it didn't. "You somehow find the strength. It was a life-changing experience and I feel I came out of that situation with some wisdom and knowledge. "I really don't view that period in my life as negative... But I wouldn't want to go back." The star admitted his "troubles" - which also included being sentenced to community service in 2006 after police in New York found cocaine in his home - were a valuable life lesson, but they also reminded him he hasn't fully shaken off the "nihilistic attitude" of his youth, which he wants to hold on to. He said: "I have always had a mistake in me, but that's OK. As far as the troubles I had back in 2006 and 2009, of course they are things I'm not proud of. "Yet at the same time they remind me that I hadn't shaken off that nihilistic attitude of the past, nor would I ever want to. "And every mistake is a positive life lesson ... It really is."



Juliette Lewis urges actors to show support for IATSE

Juliette Lewis is sharing her support for the International Association of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE). IATSE, the union which represents 150,000 people across the entertainment industry, including electricians, camera operators, costumers, makeup artists, special effects, hairstylists and script supervisors, is currently in negotiations with the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers (AMPTP) ahead of a strike deadline and Juliette, 48, has taken to Instagram to show her support for IATSE. She wrote: "I personally was conditioned in TV/film business since a teenager to never take a sick day off, or it would cost tens of thousands of dollars.



And you'd be labeled 'problematic,' so much so I've worked through a flu I've worked through migraines I've worked through walking pneumonia on Natural Born Killers for two weeks where I thought I might die. Apparently that was always better than speaking up and having them simply shift their schedule around to accommodate a person's health. Because it just didn't happen. "I am an actor so when I think of the crew who shows up hours before actors do and leaves hours after actors do and are asked to work miracles daily that's a whole other story that goes beyond a soldier like work ethic and that's why all you have to do is read some of the stories." And Juliette called on her fellow actors to show their support and solidarity for the union and its members. She added: "You've seen them show up hours before you and leave hours after how we were all thought if I am this overworked and under pressure how are they even standing on 2 feet. How are they even sleeping because they didn't even have the SAG protections that we did with the 12 hour turnaround. ... Even with our turn around we've been exhausted and totally overworked so I think about our crews. "Even though I love how hard we work to bring people entertainment and I love being challenged on how to pull the impossible for over 30 years I have wanted better care for myself and the miraculous crews I've seen thanklessly perform daily miracles weekly miracles without the protections that I had. — Bang Showbiz

Lifestyle | Features



This handout video grab shows the Russian Soyuz MS-18 space capsule landing, southeast of the Kazakh town of Zhezkazgan.



This handout video grab shows crew member, Russian film director Klim Shipenko (center), reacting after the landing of the Russian Soyuz MS-18 space capsule.



This handout video grab shows crew member, Russian actress Yulia Peresild, reacting after the landing of the Russian Soyuz MS-18 space capsule.

RUSSIAN CREW RETURN TO EARTH AFTER FILMING FIRST MOVIE IN SPACE

A Russian actress and a film director returned to Earth yesterday after spending 12 days on the International Space Station (ISS) shooting scenes for the first movie in orbit. Yulia Peresild and Klim Shipenko landed as scheduled on Kazakhstan's steppe at 0436 GMT, according to footage broadcast live by the Russian space agency. They were ferried back to terra firma by cosmonaut Oleg Novitsky, who had been on the space station for the past six months. "The descent vehicle of the crewed spacecraft Soyuz MS-18 is standing upright and is secure. The crew are feeling good!" Russian space agency Roscosmos tweeted.

The filmmakers had blasted off from the Russia-leased Baikonur Cosmodrome in ex-Soviet Kazakhstan earlier this month, travelling to the ISS with veteran cosmonaut Anton Shkaplerov to film scenes for "The Challenge". If the project stays on track, the Russian crew will beat a Hollywood project announced last year by "Mission Impossible" star Tom Cruise together with NASA and Elon Musk's SpaceX. The movie's plot, which has been mostly kept under wraps along with its budget, centres around a surgeon who is dispatched to the ISS to save a cosmonaut. Shkaplerov, 49, along with the two Russian cosmonauts who were already aboard the ISS are said to have cameo roles in the film. The mission was not without small hitches.



This handout video grab taken and released yesterday by the Russian Space Agency Roscosmos shows crew members Roscosmos cosmonaut Oleg Novitskiy (center), Russian actress Yulia Peresild (left) and film director Klim Shipenko resting in chairs after landing, southeast of the Kazakh town of Zhezkazgan.



This handout video shows crew member, actress, Yulia Peresild (second right), is helped to disembark after the landing of the Russian Soyuz MS-18 space capsule in a remote area southeast of Zhezkazgan. — AFP photos

As the film crew docked at the ISS earlier this month, Shkaplerov had to switch to manual control. And when Russian flight controllers on Friday conducted a test on the Soyuz MS-18 spacecraft the ship's thruster fired unexpectedly and destabilized the ISS for 30 minutes, a NASA spokesman told the Russian news agency TASS. But the spokesman confirmed their departure would go ahead as scheduled.

21st-century space race
Their landing, which was documented by a film crew, will also feature in the

movie, Konstantin Ernst, the head of the Kremlin-friendly Channel One TV network and a co-producer of "The Challenge", told AFP. The mission will add to a long list of firsts for Russia's space industry. The Soviets launched the first satellite Sputnik, and sent into orbit the first animal, a dog named Laika, the first man, Yuri Gagarin and the first woman, Valentina Tereshkova. But compared with the Soviet era, modern Russia has struggled to innovate and its space industry is fighting to secure state funding with the Kremlin prioritizing mili-

itary spending. Its space agency is still reliant on Soviet-designed technology and has faced a number of setbacks, including corruption scandals and botched launches. Russia is also falling behind in the global space race, facing tough competition from the United States and China, with Beijing showing growing ambitions in the industry. Russia's Roscosmos was also dealt a blow after SpaceX last year successfully delivered astronauts to the ISS, ending Moscow's monopoly for journeys to the orbital sta-

tion. In a bid to spruce up its image and diversify its revenue, Russia's space program revealed this year that it will be reviving its tourism plan to ferry fee-paying adventurers to the ISS. After a decade-long pause, Russia will send two Japanese tourists-including billionaire Yusaku Maezawa-to the ISS in December, capping a year that has been a milestone for amateur space travel. — AFP



No Time To Smile: Rami Malek jokes about his 'resting villain face'

Rami Malek quipped about having a "resting villain face" during his opening monologue for 'Saturday Night Live'. The 'No Time To Die' star plays Bond baddy Lyutsifer Safin in Daniel Craig's last outing as 007, and the late Queen frontman Freddie Mercury in 'Bohemian Rhapsody', and he poked fun at always being cast in "intense" roles as he hosted the late-night sketch show on Saturday. He joked: "I've played a lot of dramatic roles in my career, recently the new Bond villain. 'I don't usually do comedy. I tend to play these really intense characters, which makes a lot of sense because people tell me I have a resting villain face...I've always been more drawn to villains." Elsewhere, Daniel himself made an appearance dressed as a royal prince instead of the late 'Purple Rain' singer, as he arrived for auditions for a biopic about the music legend. Rami and 'Kenan & Kel' star Kenan Thompson tried out for the film directed by Jordan Peele (played by Chris Redd), who said: "Wow this is going to be tough - first of all, you guys are my top two choices to play Prince in my biopic?" Arriving late with a huge smile across his face, Daniel, 53, said: "Am I late? To audition for the part of the prince?" Elsewhere, Rami and 'SNL' comic Pete Davidson featured in a country music video mocking Netflix hit 'Squid Game'. Meanwhile, 'Mr. Robot' star recently recalled his encounter with a real-life member of the British royal family. Rami offered to babysit for The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge when he met Prince William's wife, Catherine, at the BAFTAs in February 2019. The 40-year-old actor offered to help as they had just welcomed their third child Prince Louis, now three, in April 2018. He said: "The funniest thing about that was, I said, 'If you ever need a day off, some time off, I'm backup for you'. 'She's like, 'What do you mean?' I go, 'I can babysit, you guys go out, have a good time.'" — Bang Showbiz

Adele rumored to be planning one-off Vegas gig

Adele is reportedly in talks for a one-off concert at The Encore Theatre at Wynn in Las Vegas. The 33-year-old singer made her long-awaited comeback with the brand new single 'Easy On Me' this week. And after it was claimed she has been getting tips from Celine Dion about making a residency work, it looks like the Grammy-winner might be set to follow in the footsteps of Beyonce and Robbie Williams by playing to 1,500 fans at the famed venue in Sin City. A source told The Sun on Sunday newspaper: "Adele has said that she wants to showcase the album in Vegas with a one-off, very special concert. Ideally, she doesn't want it to be an arena. "She is much more comfortable in smaller venues than playing to crowds of tens of thousands. "And the smaller Encore is a very strong contender. Its old-school Rat Pack influences make it feel very 'her'." Inside the venue, is the At Sinatra Italian restaurant in homage to late Rat Pack member Frank Sinatra. 'My Heart Will Go On' hitmaker Celine played in the US city during a record-breaking four-year run between 2003 and 2007 before returning to perform in Vegas from 2011 to 2019. And a source recently claimed: "Adele adores Celine. When they met she asked all about how she manages the workload. "Celine was happy to help and recommend Vegas. Adele wants to be near her LA home so it's a great option." The 'Skyfall' hitmaker has just confirmed that her fourth record, '30' - the highly-anticipated follow-up to 2015's '25' - will be released on November 19, and she described the LP as her "ride or die throughout the most turbulent period" of her life. Adele filed for divorce from Simon Konecki in 2019 having been separated for a long time following their marriage the previous year, while her dad Mark Evans lost his battle with cancer earlier this year. She said: "It was my ride or die throughout the most turbulent period of my life." — Bang Showbiz



This picture shows school teacher Nasrin Hasani posing for pictures during an interview with AFP in Kabul. — AFP photos



This picture shows school girl Amena posing for pictures at her house as she is banned from lessons after the Taliban's hardline government excluded them from returning to class one month ago, in Kabul.

'Why can't we study?' - Afghan girls still barred from school

Afghan teenager Amena saw dozens of classmates killed when her girls' school was targeted by an Islamic State bomb attack in May, but she was determined to continue her education. Now, like most secondary school girls in the country, she is banned from lessons altogether after the Taliban's hardline government excluded them from returning to class one month ago. "I wanted to study, see my friends and have a bright future, but now I am not allowed," 16-year-old Amena told AFP at her home in western Kabul. "This situation makes me feel awful. Since the Taliban arrived, I am very sad and angry." On September 18, Afghanistan's new Islamist rulers ordered male teachers and boys aged 13 and over back to secondary schools, picking up an academic year already cut short by violence and the COVID-19 pandemic. However, there was no mention of women teachers or girl pupils. The Taliban later said older girls can return to secondary schools, which were already mostly split by gender, but only once security and stricter segregation under their interpretation of Islamic law could be ensured. Reports have emerged of girls going back to a few high schools-such as in Kunduz province where the Taliban promoted the return with a stage-managed rally. The de facto Taliban education minister told the UN children's body that a framework to allow all girls to go to secondary school will be announced soon, a senior UNICEF executive said Friday. But for now, the vast majority are barred from lessons across the country of about 39 million people, including in the capital Kabul. Primary schools, meanwhile, have reopened for all children and women can go to private universities, though with

tough restrictions on their clothes and movement.

'No hope'
Amena lives just a short walk from her Sayed Al-Shuhada High School, where 85 people-mainly young girls-perished in the May bomb attack. "Innocent girls were killed," Amena said, her eyes welling up. "I saw with my own eyes the dying and wounded girls." However, I still wanted to go to school again." Amena would be in Grade 10 studying her favorite subjects such as biology, but instead is stuck inside with a handful of books doing "nothing special". The teenager said she dreamt of becoming a journalist, but now has "no hope in Afghanistan". Her siblings help her at home, and occasionally she gets lessons from a psychologist who comes to see her younger sister, still traumatized by the school attack. "They say: 'Study if you cannot go to school-study at home so that you may become someone in the future.'" "My brother brings home storybooks and I read them," Amena said. "And I always watch the news." But she does not understand why boys are allowed to study and girls are not. "Half of the society is made up of girls and the other half is made up of boys. There is no difference between them," she said. "Why can't we study? Are we not part of society? Why should only boys have a future?"

Recent progress
After US-led forces ousted the Taliban in 2001, progress was made in girls' education. The number of schools tripled and female literacy nearly doubled to 30 percent, but the change was largely limited to the cities. "Afghan women have made great achievements in the past 20 years,"

said Nasrin Hasani, a 21-year-old teacher at a Kabul secondary school who now helps out with primary pupils. But the current situation has "lowered both our and the students' morale", she said, questioning the Taliban's reasoning. "As far as we all know, the religion of Islam has never hindered the education and work of women." Hasani said she has not experienced any direct threats from the Taliban.

But Amnesty International reported that one high school teacher received death threats and was summoned for prosecution because she used to teach co-educational sport. Hasani said she was clinging to hope that the Taliban will be "a little different" from their brutal 1996-2001 regime, when women were not even allowed out of their homes unchaperoned.

Buried dreams
Born years after 2001, Zainab has no memories of that period and loved going to school until the Taliban directive. The 12-year-old was stuck looking out of the window with a "terrible feeling" last month when boys went back to school. "It is quite obvious that things get worse day by day", said Zainab, whose name has been changed to protect her identity. Her 16-year-old sister Malalay said tearfully that she had "feelings of despair and fear". Malalay, whose name has also been changed, passes her time helping around the house, cleaning, washing dishes and doing laundry. She said she tries not to cry in front of her mother "because there are a lot of pressures on her". The teen had dreams of promoting women's rights and speaking out against the men depriving her of her rights. "My rights are to go to school and university," she said. "All my dreams and plans are now buried." — AFP

Sports

Surprise finalists Norrie, Basilashvili set to clash in Indian Wells showdown

Norrie beat Dimitrov, Basilashvili overcame Fritz to advance

INDIAN WELLS: Britain's Cameron Norrie dominated Grigor Dimitrov 6-2, 6-4 on Saturday to book a title clash with Nikoloz Basilashvili at the ATP Indian Wells Masters. The 26-year-old Norrie overpowered Dimitrov in their semi-final to become the first British finalist since 2009.



Norrie first British finalist since 2009

Norrie kept Dimitrov off guard with a strong serve, blasting four aces and hitting a number of precision forehands and backhands in the one hour, 27 minute match on the main stadium court in Southern California.

"I am so happy," said Norrie. "Unfortunately he didn't bring his best today. I was very solid. I went a lot to his backhand he was getting frustrated with that. I managed to serve well and in the big moments I executed when I needed to."

Several Brits have reached the final in the California

desert without success, including Andy Murray, who lost to Rafael Nadal in 2009. Tim Henman lost two finals in 2002 and 2004, and Canadian-born Briton Greg Rusedski was runner-up in 1998. Norrie was born in Johannesburg, South Africa and grew up in New Zealand before becoming the No 1 college player in America while attending university in Texas. He has represented Great Britain since 2013.

Norrie is seeking his second career title after winning earlier this year in Los Cabos. "I'm looking forward to the match tomorrow and really looking forward to going out and enjoying it again," he said. He broke through in Los Cabos following a string of runner-up heartbreaks, including earlier this year in Estoril, Lyon and London.

"I've had some opportunities there to make the second week of a slam, but it's not gone my way," said Norrie who has never gone past the third round of a Grand Slam. "It's all been great learning for me. 'Hopefully with these results I can put myself in a higher seeding and maybe have some more chances.'"

Dimitrov was coming off a couple of upsets over top 10 seeded players. The Bulgarian battled back from a set down to beat top seed Daniil Medvedev 4-6, 6-4, 6-3 in the fourth round and outlasted eighth seeded Hubert Hurkacz in the quarter-finals 3-6, 6-4, 7-6 (7/2).

There were no players ranked in the top 25 in the



INDIAN WELLS: Cameron Norrie of Great Britain plays a forehand against Grigor Dimitrov of Bulgaria during their semi-final match on Day 13 of the BNP Paribas Open at the Indian Wells Tennis Garden on Saturday in Indian Wells, California. - AFP

world in the men's semi-finals. Norrie, at 26, was the highest ranked semi-finalists. Norrie easily won the first set by breaking Dimitrov on three of four service games. He got the early break in the second then held to serve to wrap up his 46th win of the season.

Norrie clinched the match on the first match point when Dimitrov hit a backhand into the net. Norrie is going up against another surprise finalist in the 29th seeded Basilashvili, who defeated American Taylor Fritz 7-6 (7/5), 6-3 to post one of the biggest wins of his career. Basilashvili, of Georgia, is gunning for his third ATP title of the season after earlier triumphs in Doha and Munich.

Kept focus

He clinched the win over crowd favorite Fritz on the fourth match point, hammering a forehand winner that froze the American in his tracks. "It is an unbelievable feeling," said the 29-year-old Basilashvili, the son of a Georgian national ballet dancer. "I am super happy. I was nervous and stressed. I got very tight, but I just tried to focus on the game. When you focus, the stress goes away. I know I can play good tennis I just have to not get too tight."

Basilashvili saved three set points to take the opening set in a tiebreaker. The players stayed on serve throughout the match until the seventh game of the second set when Basilashvili got the break he needed to go ahead 4-3. The 23-year-old American fought off three match points before surrendering on the fourth one to end the one hour 41 minute contest. Fritz, who was born in nearby San Diego, blasted 11 aces but had three double faults to Basilashvili's one. — AFP



OLYMPIA: Greek actress Xanthi Georgiou (right), playing the role of the High Priestess, lights up the torch during the last rehearsal of the flame lighting ceremony for the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics at the Ancient Olympia archeological site, birthplace of the ancient Olympics in southern Greece yesterday. - AFP

Beijing flame to be lit in a vacuum in Olympia

OLYMPIA: The Olympic flame will once again be lit in an empty stadium today as it starts its truncated journey to Beijing for the Winter Games in February. Like the ceremony in March 2020 to light the flame for Tokyo, and like those Games, which were put back a year, today's ceremony is a victim of coronavirus restrictions.

"Due to the situation created by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Lighting Ceremony will be held in strict compliance with local health protocols," the Hellenic Olympic Committee announced in September. The ceremony is conducted at the ruins of the Temple of Hera in Olympia, site of the ancient Greek games from eighth century BC to the fourth century AD. Clear skies are forecast for 11:30 local time (08:30 GMT) when the flame is due to be lit by the rays of the sun concentrated in a concave. Priestess Xanthi Georgiou will light the torch from the flames.

During the lighting rehearsal yesterday, because of the cloudy sky the Priestess had to use a fire lit the previous days while all the participants weren't wearing their ancient costumes in order to protect them in case of rain. This year the rehearsal fell on the 100th anniversary of the creation of the Executive Board of the International Olympic Committee which is holding ceremonies to celebrate.

Before the pandemic, the flame had been lit behind closed doors once, in 1984, when Greek organizers wanted to protest against the decision of the Los

Angeles organizers to accept sponsorship of stretches of the torch relay in the United States.

This time the ceremony will be held in front of an audience limited to the members of the International Olympic Committee, the Greek and Chinese Olympic committees as well as the president of Greece, Katerina Sakellariopoulou, and vaccinated members of the media.

Greek skier, Ioannis Antoniou, will be the first torchbearer, followed by Li Jiajun, former Chinese track speed skater, who won five Olympic medals at 1998, 2002 and 2006 Winter Olympic Games. "It is one of the greatest honors for an athlete to be the first torchbearer for the Olympics, especially while I'm trying to qualify and participate in those Games," Antoniou told AFP during the rehearsal.

Greek Vasilis Papavassiliou will be the last torchbearer of the brief relay in Olympia, as organizers have decided to skip the usual journey round the country. "There will be no Torch Relay on Greek soil and following the Lighting Ceremony in Ancient Olympia the Olympic Flame will be transferred to the Acropolis where it will stay overnight," they said on October 12.

They said that on the next morning it will be carried to the Panathenaic Stadium in Athens, a second-century arena used in both the 1896 and 2004 Games, and handed over to the delegation from Beijing 2022 to be flown to China. Traditionally, the flame travels hundreds of kilometers round Greece, visiting fifty cities and archaeological sites, relayed by artists and athletes from around the world. In March 2020, as coronavirus began to spread round Greece, spectators ignored health precautions and flocked to the relay. It was abandoned on the second day after leaving Olympia in nearby Sparta, where crowds gathered to cheer Greek-American actor Billy Zane, best known for "Titanic", and British actor Gerard Butler, who played King Leonidas of Sparta in the movie "300". — AFP

Grand slam double powers Red Sox past Astros

LOS ANGELES: JD Martinez and Rafael Devers delivered a historic brace of grand slams Saturday to propel the Boston Red Sox to a 9-5 victory over the Houston Astros, evening their American League Championship Series at one game apiece.

Designated hitter Martinez came to the plate with two outs and the bases loaded in the first inning and launched a 1-0 fastball from Astros starting pitcher Luis Garcia 363 feet into the right-field stands to give the Red Sox a fast 4-0 lead in Houston.

It was the second home run of the 2021 post-season for Martinez, who missed the first two games of Boston's playoff run with a sprained ankle. Stuningly, the Red Sox — who fell 5-4 in a back-and-forth game-one battle on Friday — doubled their lead in the second inning. Garcia walked Kevin Plawecki to open the inning, then departed with right-knee discomfort. His replacement, Jake Odorizzi, gave up singles to Christian Arroyo and Enrique Hernandez to load the bases and Devers hit a 357-foot drive up the right-field line that cleared the wall just inside of the foul pole for another grand slam.

It made Boston the first team in post-season history to hit two grand slams in one game. "That was the first one? That's interesting," Martinez said, adding that he felt that in the at-bat the pressure was all on Garcia.

"It's the first inning. He has bases loaded. I'm trying to tell myself that, trying to stay relaxed and just looking for a pitch so I can just put a barrel on it," Martinez said. "Just trying to see something deep and just put a good swing on it really."

Hernandez, the hottest hitter in these playoffs with 16 hits, five homers and four doubles, added a solo

home in the fourth inning to put the Red Sox up 9-0. Houston finally got on the board with two outs in the fourth on Kyle Tucker's two-out, run-scoring double. Yuli Gurriel added a single to right field that scored two more runs to make it 9-3 through four innings.

Gurriel and Jason Castro added solo homers in the ninth off Red Sox relief pitcher Darwinson Hernandez before Ryan Brasier came in and retired Jose Altuve for the final out. The Red Sox, back in the playoffs for the first time since they won the 2018 World Series, will try to ride the momentum when they host game three of the best-of-seven series today.

Braves in walk-off

"It feels good," Devers said of going back to Boston with a split of the first two games. "Houston is a really good team, and being able to split here and then now we're able to go back home to Fenway where we're comfortable and we know how we can play over there is really good for us."

Atlanta third baseman Austin Riley was the hero in the Braves' 3-2 victory over the Los Angeles Dodgers to open the National League Championship Series. Riley cracked a walk-off single that scored second baseman Ozzie Albies from second base to break a 2-2 tie that had stood since the fourth inning and give the Braves the upper hand over the reigning World Series champions. Albies had singled with one out then stole second base to set the stage for Riley — whose solo homer in the bottom of the fourth inning had forged the tie, answering a home run from Dodgers catcher Will Smith in the top of the inning. "Base-hit, that's all you need," Riley said of his mindset in the decisive at-bat. "Put something in play and see what happens." As chants of "M-V-P" rained down on him, Riley called it "unbelievable."

"It took a whole team effort," he said. "Our pitching staff, you know they've been unbelievable. What they did was just amazing." Braves starting pitcher Max Fried allowed two runs in six innings, striking out five as he kept the Dodgers 1-for-5 with runners in scoring position. — AFP



HOUSTON: JD Martinez #28 of the Boston Red Sox is congratulated by Alex Verdugo #99 after he hit a grand slam home run against the Houston Astros in the first inning of Game Two of the American League Championship Series at Minute Maid Park on Saturday in Houston, Texas. — AFP



Bahrain's Laila Janahi and Noura Sultan



UAE's Adel Al-Jallaf

'Fierce competition' at Kuwait Open bowling tournament

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Open bowling tournament, organized by Kuwait Bowling Sport Club with a large participation of athletes from Gulf countries, saw Hassan Qassem and Jana top the "Class A" category for men and women respectively, as players are getting ready for the world championship which will be held in the UAE in November.

The tournament, which will conclude on Saturday, is witnessing heated competition between participants as it draws closer to the final stages. Jassem Darweesh was second in the men's category, followed by Mustafa Al-Mousawi, Ibrahim Al-

Haddad, Khalid Al-Deeban, Bader Al-Mulla, Abdullah Khalid, Mohammad Khalid, Prince Mohammad bin Sultan Al-Saud, Salem Al-Hajras, Abdullah Al-Deeban, Saleh Khalid, Asseel Al-Roumi, Ali Qassem, Abdelwahab Al-Shatti and Ali Ashkanani.

In the women's category, Rawan Al-Balel was second, followed by Mariam Al-Qabandi, Sonia, Reem Al-Zaabi, Zeinab Al-Haddad and Hadeel Abdullah. The results are subject to change as other players will arrive in Kuwait later.

Bahrain's Laila Janahi and Noura Sultan agreed that competition is fierce, adding this is the best preparation for the world championship. Both players hoped to emerge as winners in this tournament, which will be a good motivation for them for future events. UAE's Adel Al-Jallaf lauded the timing of this tournament as the best preparation for next month. He said the UAE team has been preparing for a long time, adding the Kuwait Open was included in the program due to its good timing.

Sports

Masharipov leads Al-Nassr into Asian Champions League semi-finals

Al-Nassr meets Al-Hilal in Riyadh derby tomorrow

RIYADH/JEONJU: Uzbek winger Jaloliddin Masharipov struck a second-half brace as Saudi Arabia's Al-Nassr thrashed the UAE's Al-Wahda 5-1 to storm into the semi-finals of the Asian Champions League on Saturday. Al-Nassr will now meet compatriots Al-Hilal tomorrow in a Riyadh derby after the three-time champions saw off Iranian giants Persepolis 3-0 in the second quarter-final from AFC's western zone. Meanwhile, title-holders Ulsan Hyundai will play fellow South Korean side Pohang Steelers in Wednesday's semi-finals as they close in on an unprecedented third AFC Champions League crown.

The AFC were forced to play the quarter-finals in a single-leg format after the COVID-19 pandemic played havoc with the scheduling. Masharipov, who joined Al-Nassr from Uzbekistan's Pakhtakor this year, had vowed to do his best in the match. "I promise our fans that I will give my best and so will all of my teammates to meet the fans' expectations and ambitions," he told the AFC website on Friday.

And sure enough the 28-year-old delivered in style, first by providing the assist for Abderazzak Hamdallah to score Al-Nassr's opening goal in the seventh minute and then booting home the second seven minutes after the break as he cut in from the left flank and beat Al Wahda goalkeeper Mohamed al-Shamsi with ease.

Abdulfattah Asiri added the third goal in the 56th minute before Masharipov made it 4-0 in the 65th on a pass from Hamdallah with a composed finish. Al-Wahda, who were on a six-match unbeaten run in the tournament, just couldn't cope against the better organized Saudis and conceded their fifth goal with Sami al-Naji firing home in the 75th minute. The Emiratis managed to pull one back in stoppage time but Ismael Matar's strike was too little too late as they crashed out of the tournament at this stage for the third time.

Also in Riyadh, Al-Hilal made light work of Persepolis with star striker Bafetimbi Gomis on target twice in the second half. Salam al-Dawsari put the 2019 winners ahead in the 27th minute, making good on a long pass by Mohamed Kano and blasting the ball past goalkeeper Hamed Lak whose full-length dive went in vain.

Frenchman Gomis made it 2-0 five minutes after the break with an easy tap-in from a Matheus Pereira pass as Al Hilal completely dominated their rivals. Former Swansea striker Gomis got his second



Ulsan win thriller to reach all-Korean semi

goal in the 70th minute following a spell of crisp passing involving Pereira and al-Dawsari to put Al Hilal within two wins of a possible fourth Asian title.

All-Korean semi

Elsewhere, substitute Lee Dong-gyeong hit a cracker in extra time as Ulsan squeezed past another Korean team, Jeonbuk Motors, 3-2 in a thriller at Jeonju World Cup Stadium yesterday. Earlier at the same arena, where a modest crowd was socially distanced because of coronavirus rules, Pohang defeated Japan's Nagoya Grampus 3-0 to book their last-four spot.

In a terrific clash between the top two in the K League, Ulsan went ahead against Jeonbuk in the 13th minute thanks to a spectacular strike from



RIYADH: Nassr's players celebrate their goal during the AFC Champions League quarterfinal football match between UAE's Al-Wahda and KSA's Al-Nassr on Saturday, at the Mrsool Park Stadium in Riyadh. — AFP

Valeri Qazaishvili. The Georgian international picked the ball on the edge of the box, danced his way past three defenders and pinged the ball into the top corner.

Home side Jeonbuk hit back six minutes before half-time through Han Kyo-won, but Ulsan retook the lead in scrappy fashion in the first minute of injury time, with Yun Il-lok pouncing from close range. Jeonbuk were level again however just three minutes into the second half when Japanese forward Takahiro Kunimoto chested the ball down and

volleyed into the bottom corner.

The two sides went into extra time locked at 2-2, before Lee stepped up to smash the ball into the net from outside the box in the 101st minute. In the other quarter-final, Lim Sang-hyub scored twice as Pohang sealed their place in the last four.

Pohang failed to have a shot on target in the first half, but the 2009 champions cranked up the pressure on Nagoya in the second period, with Lee Seung-mo grabbing the other in an ultimately comfortable triumph for the Koreans. — AFP

Man Utd must fix 'mentality and tactics', says Pogba

MANCHESTER: Paul Pogba delivered a withering assessment of the state of Manchester United's form after a 4-2 defeat to Leicester left the Red Devils already five points adrift in the Premier League title race. United have not won an English top-flight title since 2013, but were expected to challenge this season after splashing out to sign Cristiano Ronaldo, Jadon Sancho and Raphael Varane in the transfer window.

However, Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's men have taken just one point from a possible nine against Aston Villa, Everton and Leicester in their last three league games. United also crashed out of the League Cup last month and are under pressure for Wednesday's Champions League clash with Atalanta after losing their opening group game to Swiss side Young Boys.

"If we want to win the title, these are the games we need to win, even if

they are very hard," Pogba told Sky Sports. "We have been having these kind of games for a long time and haven't found the problem. We have conceded easy and stupid goals."

United's defense was easily exposed by a Leicester side that had not won since August before Saturday. Solskjaer started with all of Pogba, Bruno Fernandes, Sancho, Mason Greenwood and Ronaldo and hinted afterwards he may have to sacrifice some of his attacking stars to better balance the side.

"We know that the fans were going to push and put pressure on us and we need to be more mature, play with more experience and arrogance - in a good way - by taking the ball and playing our football," added Pogba. "We need to find the key for this change because we deserved to lose. I don't know if it is the mindset of the players. We need to change something. We need to find the mentality and tactics to win. We have to look at individuals and as a team to fix this."

Former Manchester United captain Gary Neville said Solskjaer's forward players were not working hard enough defensively. "I love them as players those five, but having them all in the same team there's not enough work horses," said Neville. "We need-



LEICESTER: Manchester United's French midfielder Paul Pogba controls the ball during his team's English Premier League football match against Leicester City at King Power Stadium in Leicester, central England, on Saturday. — AFP

ed work horses alongside the great players. Manchester United at this moment in time are imbalanced."

The pressure is rising on Solskjaer to turn things around quickly ahead of

a demanding run of fixtures. Solskjaer's men face Liverpool, Tottenham, Manchester City, Chelsea and Arsenal in their next six Premier League games. — AFP

Tuchel backs 'unselfish' Lukaku to end goal drought

LONDON: Thomas Tuchel insists Chelsea striker Romelu Lukaku will end his worrying goal drought because he is so unselfish. Tuchel's side moved to the top of the Premier league with a hard-fought 1-0 win at west London neighbors Brentford on Saturday.

But Belgium forward Lukaku was unable to get on the scoresheet as his run without a club goal extended to six games. That is a concerning statistic as his strong start to his second spell at Chelsea begins to fade away.

Signed in a club record £98 million (\$134 million) deal from Inter Milan, Lukaku looked unplayable as he scored four times in his first four games for the Champions League winners. But since then the goals have dried up, raising questions about a player who also flopped in the Premier League with Manchester United before reviving his career at Inter. Lukaku tucked away Timo Werner's cross against Brentford, only to see the effort chalked out for offside. Ben Chilwell provided Chelsea's winning goal. Blues boss Tuchel is relaxed about Lukaku's recent barren run, praising the 28-year-old's selfless approach.

"I am not concerned as I felt him a bit tired, and then isolated because we were defending too deep as a block," Tuchel said. "I felt him a bit tired. Altogether we produced a very strong 60 to 75 minutes, including Romelu and Timo. Both of them, Romelu and Timo, were too far away to help us escape the pressure. That was the problem, but I have no concerns. Normally the best thing is that he scores but he is very unselfish at the moment, looking for Timo in good situations. And we had him in the situation to score, it was a close offside decision."



LONDON: Chelsea's Belgian striker Romelu Lukaku (center) shoots during the English Premier League football match between Brentford and Chelsea at Brentford Community Stadium in London on Saturday. — AFP

Superb Mendy

Meanwhile, Tuchel saluted Edouard Mendy as the Chelsea goalkeeper's superb display sealed the hard-fought win at Brentford. Tuchel's side had been knocked out of pole position by Liverpool's 5-0 rout of Watford a few hours earlier. But Chelsea had the perfect response with a gritty victory in their first league meeting with their west London neighbors for 74 years.

Ben Chilwell's fiercely-struck goal in first half stoppage-time was enough to give Chelsea their sixth win in eight league games. But Chelsea had to rely on a series of fine saves from Mendy in the closing stages before they could move one point clear of second placed Liverpool. "They trouble you with long throws and set pieces. They created big chances and Mendy was the key to the clean sheet," Tuchel said.

At the start of a five-game run of winnable

league fixtures, Tuchel had warned his players not to expect an easy ride from Brentford and the Chelsea boss was proved right. "We were very strong for 70 minutes and very lucky for 20 minutes, to sum it up," Tuchel said. "We escaped with the three points thanks to Edouard. It was like a cup game at the end; they took risks and the atmosphere gave them a lot of courage. It is better to be there at the top but there are way too many teams who are close."

Just five months ago, the gulf between the clubs appeared huge as Chelsea won the Champions League on the day Brentford earned promotion to the top-flight for the first time since 1947. However, Brentford had already bloodied the noses of two supposedly superior opponents this term, with Arsenal beaten at the Community Stadium and Liverpool held to a draw. They pushed Chelsea to the brink as well with another spirited showing. — AFP

Inter 'lose heads' in Lazio defeat as AC Milan go top

MILAN: Reigning champions Inter Milan suffered their first Serie A defeat of the season as they lost a bad-tempered game 3-1 to Lazio on Saturday, while AC Milan fought back from two goals down against Verona to go top of the table.

Inter were incensed after Felipe Anderson tapped home a rebound in the 81st minute to put the hosts 2-1 ahead at the Stadio Olimpico, with the visiting players angry that Lazio had not stopped play due to Federico Dimarco being down injured. But Lazio were under no obligation to stop and Dimarco had hit the floor before Inter continued attacking themselves. Five yellow cards were dished out in the aftermath as the away side's protests stopped play for several minutes, with visiting full-back Denzel Dumfries perhaps lucky to only be booked.

It was a miserable return to the capital for away coach Simone Inzaghi, who left Lazio in the close-season to replace Antonio Conte at Inter. His Lazio replacement, Maurizio Sarri, has often been criticized in the early weeks of the campaign, but the three points take his new team into fifth place.

"(We) conceded a strange second and lost our heads," Inzaghi told DAZN. "That should not happen, because the referee can let play continue and there were 10 minutes plus stoppages to go, we should've kept playing. The third goal was the worst, as we were not defending properly and switched off. We lost our focus and there was still time to make up for the second goal until then."

AC Milan took first place overnight, though, as Zlatan Ibrahimovic made his return from injury as a substitute in a dramatic 3-2 victory over Verona.

Lazio fight back

In Rome, Inter made the breakthrough in the 20th minute as Albanian full-back Elseid Hysaj clipped Nicolo Barella and Ivan Perisic stepped up to score for the second time this season. But Lazio deservedly drew level in the 64th minute, after Alessandro Bastoni handled inside the area.

Immobile made no mistake with the penalty to net his seventh league goal this term and move above Inter striker Edin Dzeko at the top of the scoring charts. The controversial moment came with nine minutes remaining as Dimarco went down holding his chest after appearing to be fouled in the center circle.

But the referee waved play on and Inter's attack ended with Lautaro Martinez shooting straight at Reina, who started a quick counter-attack. Immobile's shot was saved by goalkeeper Samir Handanovic, with Anderson tapping in the follow-up. Dumfries and Handanovic responded angrily, with the Dutch wing-back almost ripping the apologetic Anderson's shirt. "There's no debate," Sarri said. "Dimarco was down and Inter went to have a shot on goal." — AFP

Spurs spoil Newcastle's Saudi party



NEWCASTLE: Newcastle United's English midfielder Sean Longstaff (center) passes the ball during an English Premier League match between Newcastle United and Tottenham Hotspur at St James' Park yesterday. — AFP

NEWCASTLE: Newcastle's new dawn under the ownership of the Saudi sovereign wealth fund got off to a disappointing start as Tottenham silenced St James' Park with a 3-2 win yesterday. The defeat leaves Newcastle still in the relegation zone without a Premier League win this season.

Expectations on Tyneside are high for a huge injection of funding by the Saudi Public Investment Fund (PIF) to transform Newcastle's fortunes on the field. PIF governor Yassir Al-Rumayyan was given a hero's welcome by the 55,000 crowd when he was presented before kick-off.

A jubilant atmosphere was matched by the perfect start for the home side when Callum Wilson headed home Javier Manquillo's cross inside two minutes. Al-Rumayyan celebrated wildly in the

stands alongside co-owner Amanda Staveley, who has bought a 10 percent stake in the club and been the face of the takeover bid for well over a year.

Staveley said this week her ambition is for the Magpies to become champions of England within the next 10 years. However, the gulf between where Newcastle are and where the new owners want them to go was exposed after their flying start.

Spurs have had a far from ideal start to the season under new boss Nuno Espirito Santo but in Harry Kane and Son Heung-min they have the star quality Newcastle hope to have in years to come. Tanguy Ndombele smashed home an equalizer on 17 minutes from Sergio Reguilon's cross to get the Tottenham revival started.

Kane then ended his wait for a Premier League

goal this season with a deft lob over Karl Darlow. The England captain was initially flagged offside, but a VAR review proved Kane was onside from Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg's ball over the top. The game was then stopped for 20 minutes due to a medical emergency for a Newcastle fan.

Tottenham players alerted the need for a defibrillator and the players were taken off the pitch by referee Andre Marriner. But the flow of the game remained the same when it resumed for seven minutes of first-half stoppage time. Kane turned provider for Spurs' third as his low cross was converted by Son sliding in at the far post.

Many expected Newcastle's consortium of owners to dispense with the services of manager Steve Bruce as one of their first points of business. The

former Manchester United captain was handed a reprieve to take charge of his 1,000th game of his managerial career.

But the 60-year-old is deeply unpopular among the Newcastle support and was met with persistent chants of "we want Brucey out" and "you're getting sacked in the morning" during the second half as Spurs continued to dominate.

A red card for Jonjo Shelvey seven minutes from time rounded off a miserable day on the field for Newcastle. Eric Dier's comical own goal in the final minute gave the 10 men hope. But Spurs held out to move up to fifth and level on points with fourth-placed Brighton. Newcastle remain three points adrift of safety and much further from matching the ambitions of their wealthy new owners. — AFP

Oman crush PNG, Scotland shock Bangladesh

MUSCAT: Oman handed Papua New Guinea a 10-wicket rout as the Twenty20 World Cup, which was shifted from India due to COVID-19, got underway in the unlikely surroundings of a 3,000-seat stadium on the outskirts of Muscat yesterday. Oman skipper Zeeshan Maqsood returned figures of 4-20, which included three in one over, as tournament debutants PNG struggled to 129 for nine.

Openers Aqib Ilyas (50 from 43 balls) and Jatinder Singh (73 from 42) then clattered the PNG bowlers around the ground without being parted to steer Oman home with 6.2 overs to spare. PNG captain Assad Vala, who made 56 off 43 balls, and Charles Amini, who smashed 37, had briefly given their team hope with an attacking third-wicket partnership of 81.

"They were batting very well when I got the wickets. And because we got the wickets, they couldn't put on a big total," said Maqsood. Maqsood sent back Norman Vanua, Sese Bau and Kiplin Doriga in the space of five deliveries and later took one more as PNG, who had been 2-0 at one stage, collapsed from 102-3. "It wasn't a good start with the bat, losing two wickets with no runs," said Vala.

Later yesterday, Chris Greaves starred with bat and ball as Scotland shocked Bangladesh with a six-run win. Greaves' 28-ball 45 guided Scotland to 140-9 and he then took two key wickets with his leg spin to keep down Bangladesh to 134-7 in the second first-round match of the day in Muscat. Pace bowler Brad Wheal returned figures of 3-24 as world number six Bangladesh suffered an early setback in their fight to make the Super 12 stage.

Ireland, Namibia, Netherlands and 2014 champions Sri Lanka join the fray today. The



MUSCAT: Women mounted on horses hold national flags of participating countries during a ceremony before the start of the ICC men's Twenty20 World Cup cricket match between Oman and Papua New Guinea at the Oman Cricket Academy Ground yesterday. — AFP

eight teams in the first round of qualifying are chasing four places in the Super 12 round-robin stage. England, Australia, South Africa, defending champions West Indies, India, Pakistan, New Zealand and Afghanistan will be waiting with all matches in Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Sharjah.

2022 places at stake

The top four then progress to the semi-finals before the final in Dubai on Nov 14. There is plenty at stake. A place in the next round guarantees a spot in the 2022 T20 World Cup in Australia. There is also a financial incentive. Teams exiting at the first hurdle take home a modest \$40,000. The eventual champions pocket a \$1.6 million winner's cheque. Bangladesh have just one victory at the tournament since 2007 but with a world ranking of six, will be heavily fancied to make the second round. They go into the tournament with home series wins over Australia, New Zealand and Zimbabwe under their belts.

England narrow favorites?

The Scots have fallen at the first hurdle in their three previous T20 World Cup appearances, in 2007, 2009 and 2016. They claimed their first and only win at the tournament five years ago - an eight-wicket triumph in a rain-affected match against lowly Hong Kong. The top nations will join the event-played in stadiums 70-percent full - on Oct 23, with Australia and South Africa meeting in the opener of the Super 12 stage and England up against West Indies.

England beat New Zealand to win the 50-over world title at Lord's in 2019. Eoin Morgan's team will, however, be without Ben Stokes and Jofra Archer, who played key roles in that one-day World Cup triumph. England had to defend 19 runs in the last over of the 2016 T20 final in Kolkata but West Indies' Carlos Brathwaite famously hit Stokes for four straight sixes, giving the Caribbeans their second world T20 title. — AFP

Bayern crush Leverkusen to return to top

BERLIN: Robert Lewandowski and Serge Gnabry both scored twice as Bayern Munich rampaged to a thumping 5-1 win at Bayer Leverkusen to return to the top of the Bundesliga yesterday. After suffering a shock defeat to Eintracht Frankfurt two weeks ago and losing top spot to Borussia Dortmund overnight, Bayern bounced back in style against fellow title hopefuls Leverkusen.

Level on points in first and second before the weekend, the gulf in class between the two teams became apparent as Bayern put their hosts to the sword with a brutal and brilliant first-half performance. "It sounds a bit strange when you've scored five goals, but we could have had six or seven in the first half today," Bayern coach Julian Nagelsmann told broadcaster DAZN.

The 31-time German champions smashed in four goals in the space of seven minutes in the first half to humiliate a young Leverkusen side and go a point clear of Borussia Dortmund at the top of the table. "It was clear after 45 minutes that the three points were coming to Munich," said Lewandowski, who kick-started the rout with the opening two goals. "We knew that we would have to play our football from the beginning today, and the result shows how well we played."

It took Bayern less than four minutes to go ahead, Lewandowski con-

verting a Dayot Upamecano cross with a brilliant backheel to net his eighth goal of the season. Leroy Sane hit the post shortly afterwards, as Leverkusen struggled to control a sparkling Bayern attack.

On the half-hour mark, the visitors carved through their opponents on the counter-attack, with Alphonso Davies bursting into the box to set up a poacher's finish from Lewandowski. Thomas Mueller quickly made it 3-0, deflecting a Niklas Sule shot past a helpless Lukas Hradecky.

Any hope of a Leverkusen fight-back was buried just seconds later, as Mueller set up Gnabry with a low cross to make it 4-0. Gnabry added a fifth on 37 minutes after a sharp one-two with Leon Goretzka. Leverkusen rallied in the second half, Kerem Demirbay forcing a save from Manuel Neuer before Patrik Schick pulled a goal back.

"Bayern showed us today why they are the best team in Germany and one of the best in Europe," said Leverkusen coach Gerardo Seoane. English defender Omar Richards came on as a second-half substitute to make only his second appearance for Bayern since signing from Reading earlier this year, and Lucas Hernandez started the game despite being expected in court in Spain on Tuesday.

French international Hernandez potentially faces six months in prison for breaking a restraining order imposed on him in 2017 following an altercation with his then girlfriend, whom he has since married. Bayern continue their Champions League group stage campaign with a trip to Benfica on Wednesday, while Leverkusen meet Real Betis in the Europa League on Thursday. — AFP