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8 'Silent crisis' looms as US to end COVID aid for millions of jobless



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16 Tokyo bids colorful farewell to 'historic, fantastic' Paralympics



Speaker confident of political breakthrough

Health official says PCR test for arrivals essential after Delta case in returnee



KUWAIT: An Egyptian resident is welcomed upon arrival at Kuwait International Airport yesterday as direct flights resumed between the two countries. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said yesterday that a large number of initiatives have been put forward during the parliamentary recess, adding he is confident they will lead to a political breakthrough. He declined to provide details about the initiatives, which came from HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, MPs, political groups and activists, but expressed hope that positive results will be achieved before the start of the next Assembly term late October.

He however harshly blasted the opposition, whom he accused of opposing all positive initiatives and obstructing solutions. Ghanem said the initiatives aim to achieve "understanding that will contribute to achieve political breakthroughs for many complicated issues that had been the center of disputes in the past years". He did not elaborate on the nature of the issues.

Kuwait has been plunged into non-stop political disputes between the government and opposition MPs, which intensified in the past year. Disputes between the government and the speaker on one side and a majority of MPs completely paralyzed the National Assembly during the previous term. The government - with its 16 Cabinet members backed by the speaker and around 16 MPs - blocked attempts by the opposition, which had the

support of 32 law-makers, to grill the prime minister, leading them to boycott or disrupt sessions.

Ghanem said the initiatives are being studied quietly away from the media and "certain quarters who always attempt to obstruct positive initiatives", a clear reference to the opposition. "But I am pleased to announce today with confidence that considerable progress has been made in these initiatives, which reflect the good intention of those who floated them," Ghanem said.

Such initiatives are expected to secure a parliamentary majority, said Ghanem, who strongly lashed out at opponents. "I cannot deny that a small minority (of MPs) are trying to obstruct the initiatives, but they have been exposed to the Kuwaiti people. They work for agendas that are known to all," said Ghanem, adding they will raise their voices as long as progress is achieved. "Personally, I am confident there will be breakthroughs before the start of the next Assembly term" he said.



Marzouq Al-Ghanem

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News in brief

Children hurt in Houthi attack

RIYADH: Two children were hurt and 14 homes damaged as Saudi forces intercepted ballistic missiles fired across the border by Yemeni rebels, scattering debris over the eastern city of Dammam. "Saudi Air Defense has intercepted and destroyed (3) ballistic missiles and (3) bomb-laden drones launched by the Iran-backed Houthi militia," spokesperson Brigadier General Turki Al-Maliki said. — AFP (See Page 5)

IS attack kills 13 Iraqi police

KIRKUK: Thirteen Iraqi policemen were killed in an Islamic State group attack against a checkpoint in the country's north early yesterday, security and medical sources said. The attack, in the region of Al-Rashad around 65 km south of Kirkuk city, took place just after midnight, a senior Iraqi police officer said. "Members of the Islamic State organization targeted a federal police checkpoint," said the officer. — AFP

Man dies in shark attack

SYDNEY: A man has died following a shark attack in Australia despite the efforts of "incredibly brave" surfers and bystanders who came to his aid, authorities said yesterday. The man, believed to be in his 20s, was mauled by the shark at Emerald Beach near Coff's Harbour, about six hours north of Sydney, according to paramedics. It was the second fatal shark attack recorded in Australian waters this year. — AFP

Egypt bus crash kills 12

CAIRO: Twelve people were killed on an Egyptian highway early yesterday when their bus overturned on their return from the popular Red Sea resort Sharm El-Sheikh, medical and security sources said. Thirty-four other passengers were injured and transported to the port town of Suez for treatment, the medical source added. — AFP

UAE launches new 'green', freelance visas

DUBAI: The UAE announced a new visa yesterday allowing foreigners to work in the country without being sponsored by an employer, loosening residency requirements in an attempt to boost economic growth. Foreigners in the oil-rich United Arab Emirates are generally only given limited visas tied to their employment, and long-term residency is difficult to obtain.

But those holding the new "green visa" will be able to work without company sponsorship, and can sponsor

their parents and children up to 25 years old, officials said. "It targets highly skilled individuals, investors, businesspeople, entrepreneurs, as well as exceptional students and postgraduates," said Minister of State for Foreign Trade Thani Al-Zeyoudi.

The visa will also grant them a grace period of 90-180 days to stay in the country once their visa is cancelled either due to job loss or retirement. Zeyoudi also announced a "freelance visa" for owners of independent businesses or self-employed workers based in the UAE and overseas in specialized fields such as artificial intelligence, blockchain and digital currencies.

Resource-rich Gulf countries such as the UAE are increasingly seeking

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Crisis cements Qatari global influence

DOHA: Political leaders have flocked to Doha and some countries have moved their Kabul embassies to Qatar, all praising their host for its key role in the airlift out of the Afghan capital. Tiny Qatar has seized the moment, cementing its outside global influence and reputation as a neutral mediator after winning the trust of all

sides in Afghanistan's forever war. Qatar invited the Taliban to open a political office in Doha in 2013, with then US president Barack Obama's blessing as conflict in Afghanistan raged. It went on to host talks between Washington and the Taliban that concluded in 2020 with a troop withdrawal agreement, followed by direct negotiations between the former insurgents and Afghan government.

Doha's long-standing hotline to the Taliban ultimately helped Qatar burst onto the world stage as the lynchpin of efforts to evacuate desperate Afghans and foreigners - and now the

Continued on Page 2

Boom time for Afghan arms dealers

PANJWAI, Afghanistan: The Taliban takeover may have plunged Afghanistan into uncertainty and economic pain, but arms dealer Khan Mohammad is making the most of it.

Sandwiched between a pharmacy and a general store, his shop in the Panjwai district of southern Kandahar province - the spiritual birthplace of the Taliban - is flush with fresh inventory.

Camouflage combat vests and bandoliers hung from the walls as Mohammed showed off his wares, including US-made Smith & Wesson pistols and ammunition belts. More pistols, grenades, walkie-talkies and jars full of bullets lined the glass dis-



DUBAI: A boat sails at sunset against the backdrop of Burj Khalifa and high-rise buildings in this May 27, 2020 file photo. — AFP



DOHA: Afghan refugees are seen at their accommodation in the Qatari capital on Saturday. — AFP

play in the front. The end of the conflict has led many weapon-owners to conclude they no longer need them, Mohammad explained. "People who have had guns at home for years bring us their weapons," he said.

Mohammad has a customer lined up too. "We buy them and sell... to the mujahideen," he said, referring to the Taliban. "The Taliban don't let anyone else take (the weapons)." Mohammad did not just have weapons - there were accessories

too. White Taliban baseball caps with the Muslim proclamation of faith printed on them hung from the ceiling. The group's flags were also on sale.

Another dealer in the dusty Panjwai market, whose shop was adorned with large Taliban flags and pictures of the group's top leaders, had more potent offerings. They included assault rifles - variants of the AK-47 as well as the US-made M4 and M16 - and even light machine guns.

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Local

Kuwait's Amir receives Crown Prince, top officials



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. — Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Speaker of the National Assembly Marzouq Al-Ghanem.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Justice, and Minister of State for Enhancing Transparency Abdullah Al-Roumi.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets ministers of defense Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah and interior Sheikh Thamer Ali Al-Sabah.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Seif Palace yesterday His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. His Highness the Amir also received

Speaker of the National Assembly Marzouq Al-Ghanem, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah and

Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Justice, and Minister of State for Enhancing Transparency Abdullah Al-Roumi.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince received Speaker Ghanem and His Highness

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled at Seif Palace yesterday. His Highness Sheikh Mishal also received ministers Sheikh Hamad and Roumi, in addition to Minister of Interior Sheikh Thamer Ali Al-Sabah. — KUNA

Army putschists claim coup, arrest Guinea president

CONAKRY: Army putschists in Guinea said yesterday they had arrested the president and staged a coup, in the latest political upheaval to roil the impoverished west African country, as the government insisted it had repelled the attack. "We have decided, after having taken the president, to dissolve the constitution," said a uniformed officer flanked by soldiers toting assault rifles in a video sent to AFP. The officer also said that Guinea's land and air borders have been shut and the government dissolved.

But the situation remained unclear as Conde's government released a rival statement saying that an attack on the presidential palace by special forces had been "repulsed". Another video sent to AFP by the putschists showed a rumpled-looking President Alpha Conde sitting on a sofa, surrounded by troops. He refused

to answer a question from one soldier about whether he was being mistreated.

Guinea - one of the world's poorest countries despite boasting significant mineral resources - has long been beset by political instability. Earlier yesterday, residents of the capital Conakry's Kaloum district, the government quarter, reported hearing heavy gunfire. Speaking on condition of anonymity for their safety, they reported seeing a number of soldiers on the streets who called on residents to return to their homes and stay there.

A Western diplomat in Conakry, who also declined to be named, said the unrest started after the dismissal of a senior commander in the special forces - provoking some of its highly trained members to rebel and occupy the presidential palace. AFP was unable to independently

confirm this account. Later yesterday, the head of Guinea's military special forces Lieutenant-Colonel Mamady Doumbouya appeared on public television, draped in the national flag, and cited government "mismanagement" as a reason behind his actions.

The apparent coup comes amid a long period of political tension in Guinea, first spurred by Conde's highly contested bid for a third presidential term last year. The day before the presidential election last year, the military blocked access to Kaloum after an alleged military rebellion east of the capital. Conde, 83, also survived an assassination attempt in 2011.

The most recent presidential poll in the nation of some 13 million people, in Oct 2020, was violently disputed and also marred by accusations of electoral fraud. Conde won a controversial third term in that poll, but only after pushing through a new constitution in March 2020 that allowed him to sidestep the country's two-term limit. Dozens of people were killed during demonstrations against a



CONAKRY: Members of the armed forces of Guinea drive through the central neighborhood of Kaloum yesterday. — AFP

third term for the president, often in clashes with security forces. Hundreds were also arrested.

Conde was then proclaimed president on Nov 7 last year - despite his main challenger Cellou Dalein Diallo as well as

other opposition figures calling the election a sham. After the poll, the government launched a crackdown and arrested several prominent opposition members for their alleged role in abetting electoral violence in the country. — AFP

Boom time for Afghan...

Continued from Page 1

The Taliban for years procured weapons and ammunition from the black market. They also captured arms and equipment from the battlefield and abandoned military posts, according to UN and Western monitors.

And the recent collapse of the Afghan military created an arms bonanza for the militants. Alongside a large haul of American-made infantry weapons,

Afghanistan's new rulers now possess equipment and vehicles - including humvees, armored personnel carriers, and at least one functioning Black Hawk helicopter. The militants are also making the most of their spoils.

The Taliban are cashing in on a wide variety of items from abandoned Afghan and Western military bases. They seized Panjwai district in July as the withdrawal of US-led troops from Afghanistan gathered pace. In the local market, everything from construction material to metal trays salvaged from the district's Afghan military base was for sale. "We bought all these things from the Taliban after they conquered the Afghan army base," said vendor Murtaza, who gave only one name. "Now we bring them to the market to sell." — AFP

such scheme in the Gulf.

Similar programs have since been launched in other resource-rich Gulf countries, such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar. Riyadh said in June 2019 that it will offer permanent residency for 800,000 riyals (\$213,000) and a one-year renewable residency costing 100,000 riyals, allowing expats to do business and buy property without a Saudi sponsor.

Doha also flung open its property market to foreigners, with a scheme giving those buying homes or stores the right to longer-term or permanent residency permits. Foreigners account for 90 percent of the 10 million population in the UAE, the Arab world's second-largest economy after neighboring Saudi Arabia. — Agencies

have detected an infection in a passenger who arrived from a country where the Delta strain is active. The tweet promoted speculation that the case is of an Egyptian passenger after commercial flights resumed with Egypt following a year-long suspension.

But Jarallah wrote a second tweet saying the case was not of an expat and not related to someone who came from an Arab country. Local media said the case was of a Kuwaiti returning from Turkey. Jarallah insisted on the importance of continuing PCR tests on arrival.

Crisis cements Qatari global...

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push to reopen Kabul airport. "The Qataris have earned a reputation as honest brokers who are willing to help multiple warring parties to find a way to end these conflicts," said Colin Clarke, senior research fellow at the Soufan Center. "I think what Qatar got out of it was a growing recognition that Doha is the place to make a deal. It has grown into the Geneva of the Middle East, a place where warring parties can meet on neutral territory."

In little more than a week, the Arabian desert peninsula will have welcomed the foreign ministers of Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, Britain and the US. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, due in Qatar today, has already expressed "profound gratitude" for Qatar's evacuation of foreigners and Afghans vulnerable to reprisals from the Islamist hardliners.

Britain's Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab lauded the dramatic airlift, in which Doha has served as a key transit stop, saying "the biggest operation of its kind in our living memory (was) in no small part because of the cooperation of our Qatari friends". While in Doha, where Britain has relocated its Kabul embassy, Raab described Qatar as "an influential player" and its ruler Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani as a "friend".

The Gulf nation has been working with the Taliban to quickly reopen Kabul's airport, closed since the departure of US troops, and it hopes to see the establishment of humanitarian aid corridors. At the height of evacuation operations, Qatar's ambassador to Afghanistan personally escorted Americans and vulnerable Afghans to the airport. His efforts to accompany a number of young Afghan women, for whom access to education

under the Taliban is not assured, was seen as a powerful gesture.

Qatar's meteoric rise on the world stage is all the more striking because until January the gas-rich emirate was at loggerheads with its neighbors. Saudi Arabia, along with the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt, cut ties with Doha in 2017, accusing it of backing Islamist groups and Iran, charges which Qatar denied.

Despite its regional rehabilitation at a January summit, Qatar's growing role has not been without challenges. French website Intelligence Online claimed senior Qatar commanders "would have been convinced of the Pashtun insurgents' willingness to share power" with the now-ousted government. "Doha has watched with surprise the total disconnect between the promises of the political representatives (of the Taliban) in exile and the realities on the ground."

Several observers have also raised questions about the longevity of Qatari influence following the spectacular Taliban victory. David Roberts, an associate professor at King's College London, questioned whether the Taliban negotiators in Doha "will be able to retain important places in the Taliban apparatus back home, and whether they will have control".

"That will be the limit of the Qatari endgame," he told AFP. "I imagine that the phone lines between Washington, DC and Doha have been red-hot in the past few days. The apparatus in the State Department and the Pentagon, they know that Qatar has now had years of contacts that can be potentially used and leveraged."

On a skeptical note, however, Michael Rubin, resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, accused Doha of providing the Taliban with international legitimacy as well as access to international finance. "There is a limit to Qatar's influence," he said. "Attention can be addictive, and Qatar is both an addict for attention and a country in search of relevance." — AFP

UAE launches new 'green'...

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to diversify their economies and reduce reliance on oil. The coronavirus pandemic has also impacted tourism and businesses in the UAE, whose economy was already slumping in recent years due to low oil prices. In 2019, the UAE launched the 10-year "golden visa" to attract wealthy individuals and highly skilled workers, the first

Speaker confident of political...

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Meanwhile, head of the consultative committee to counter the coronavirus pandemic at the health ministry Khaled Al-Jarallah said yesterday authorities

Local

Kuwait's Prime Minister honors diplomats to be



KUWAIT: Kuwait's Prime Minister His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah is seen in a group picture with the Saud Al-Nasser Al-Sabah Diplomatic Institute's seventh class of graduates. — KUNA photos

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Prime Minister His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sponsored yesterday a ceremony honoring Saud Al-Nasser Al-Sabah Diplomatic Institute's seventh class of graduates, telling them to serve the nation well as they foray into the world of diplomacy. Addressing the new diplomats, Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Al-Nasser Al-Sabah congratulated them as they embark on their diplomatic careers, urging them to keep the Kuwaiti people's best interests at heart. He spoke of the local institute's efforts, some 15 years after its inception, to mold competent diplomats who would help further the nation's shrewd foreign policy, citing some of the profound contributions the institute has made over the years. The institute celebrates today a "promising" new class of diplomats, its chief Abdulaziz Al-Sharekh said in his speech, urging them to further "solidify Kuwaiti diplomacy." He went on to applaud the new diplomats for persevering in the face of the COVID pandemic, which makes their graduation all the more meaningful, added the diplomat. — KUNA



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah (center) receives a memento during the ceremony.



Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Al-Nasser Al-Sabah speaks during the event.

Return ticket prices to Kuwait sky high

KUWAIT: Kuwait International Airport received yesterday the first direct flight from Egypt since the Cabinet's decision to allow direct flights between the two countries. But while commercial flights resumed between Kuwait and Egypt after agreements were reached on the number of passengers and flights, ticket prices hit record levels, particularly for those desiring to return to Kuwait. Return ticket prices from all destinations have risen six-fold compared to departing airfares.

Chairman of the Board of Kuwait Travel and Tourism Agencies Association Mohammad Al-Mutairi said the rise in ticket prices is normal under the current circumstances, adding that there are four aspects to this issue - the limit on the operational capacity for arrivals, allowing full capacity for departures, supply and demand, and return from holidays. The lat-



est indicators show airfares from Kuwait to Egypt start at KD 58, while the return ticket price has reached around KD 550, Al-Rai Arabic daily reported yesterday.

Meanwhile, Director of Air Transport at Kuwait's Directorate General of Civil Aviation Abdullah Al-Rajhi said nine Kuwaiti and Egyptian carriers will oper-

ate between the two countries according to the number of seats decided between them, which agrees with the Cabinet's latest decisions to raise the capacity of Kuwait airport. He said his department is waiting for Indian authorities to resume flights from India to Kuwait, expected during the week.



KUWAIT: Travelers are greeted warmly upon their arrival to Kuwait yesterday, coming from Egypt on direct flights for the first time since the Cabinet's decision to allow direct flights between the two countries. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Kuwait's Ashkanani joins fine arts greats during Hungary gala

VIENNA: Visitors to an international exhibition in Hungary were treated to seven works of art by Kuwaiti artist Mahmoud Ashkanani on Saturday, as international craftsmen put their works on display to the delight of fine arts aficionados in attendance. Such gatherings give artists the recognition they strive for as they get a chance to mingle with their peers from all around the world, the Kuwaiti artist said. The two-week event features the works of some 30 artists from all over the globe, giving their works the global exposure they seek. — KUNA



Kuwaiti artist Mahmoud Ashkanani is seen in his studio. — KUNA photos



One of Kuwaiti artist Mahmoud Ashkanani's works.

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Kuwait condemns continued Houthi attacks on Saudi

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Foreign Ministry yesterday strongly condemned the continued Houthi attempts to target civilians and civilian areas, and to threaten the security of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, by firing three ballistic missiles and launching three drones on the Eastern Region and Najran and Jazan cities. The continuity and escalation of these hostile actions against the security of the Saudi Kingdom and regional stability are blatant violations of the international law and international humanitarian law, the Foreign Ministry said in a statement. It added that these violations necessitate swift and firm actions from the international community to stop these threats and hold perpetrators accountable. The ministry reiterated Kuwait's full solidarity with Saudi Arabia and support to all the measures it takes to defend its security, stability and sovereignty.

Meanwhile, Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf strongly condemned the continued Houthi militia attacks on Saudi Arabia. The Secretary General, in a press statement yesterday, stressed that these attacks are obvious violations of the international law and international humanitarian law. He renewed the council's full solidarity with Saudi Arabia and support to all the measures it takes to defend its security, stability and sovereignty. He also praised the high efficiency of the Saudi air defense forces that were able to intercept all Houthi attacks. On Saturday, Houthi attacks targeted civilian areas by firing three ballistic missiles and launching three drones on the Eastern Region, as well as Najran and Jazan cities. — KUNA

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Workers are seen near a street in Kuwait yesterday. The period in which outdoor labor is banned during noon hours in Kuwait has officially ended on August 31st. - Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh (To have your picture featured in the Kuwait Times' 'Photo of the Day' section, please send your high resolution, unedited photos to local@kuwaittimes.com, along with the full name and Instagram account)

Several arrests made in 'alcohol breweries' raid

KUWAIT: Hawally police made several arrests during raids at apartments where alcoholic drinks were being brewed illegally in the area. A total of nine apartments were raided during the operation, the Interior Ministry said in a statement yesterday. The suspects reportedly rented the apartments to use them for the sole purpose of brewing liquor, it added. The detainees were taken to the proper authorities for further action.

Separately, Kuwait Fire Force said that firemen battled a blaze that engulfed a 1,000-square-meter storage area for lumber in Al-Rai yesterday morning. No injuries were reported in the incident as an investigation was opened to reveal the cause of the fire. In the meantime, KFF also reported that firemen stopped a leak of hazardous material from a tanker outside a factory in Amghara yesterday.

In other news, Salhiya detectives arrested a suspected thief who confessed to stealing rosaries worth KD 120,000. He said he made copies of the keys of a store where he worked, then disabled surveillance cameras during the theft, Al-Anbaa



KUWAIT: This handout photo released by Kuwait Fire Force yesterday shows fire engines at the site of a storage area in Al-Rai where a fire was reported.

daily reported yesterday. He told police about two of his compatriots with whom he kept the stolen rosaries. An Arab resident rushed to Salhiya police and told them his store was burgled, accusing a person who works for him of committing the crime. Detectives found the accused was about to leave the country and were able to arrest him minutes before his departure..

Meanwhile, police in Rawda arrested a person who attempted to break into two ATM machines. The suspect then slipped into the house of a Kuwaiti man and took the keys of two cars before stealing them. The citizen told police the two cars were parked in front of his home in Yarmouk. The suspected thief was arrested from his Farwaniya residence, reported Al-Anbaa.

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NBK adopts digital training culture

KUWAIT: In-line with NBK's ongoing initiatives towards instilling a digital training culture and constantly developing its human capital, NBK has witnessed a remarkable interest in participation from employees in professional training courses and programs during the first half of 2021, which aimed to improve employees' capabilities and actively contribute to their career development through the latest learning solutions.

During the first six months of the year, 1,433 of the bank's employees successfully completed the training programs and courses, whilst scoring the highest attendance and training completion rate of total employee participation, which signals the great passion of the bank's employees towards career development.

From the beginning of the year, the Training and Development Department of Group Human Resources organized 27 interventions of in-house programs, including Yalla Watani, NBK Academy and workshops with a combined total of 661 participants.

The training programs held in the first half involved soft skills training, covering areas of building a performance-driven culture, that gained intensive attendance with a total of 282 participants, who all of which attended a variety of 15 soft skills training sessions; Covering all levels. Due to the massive interest witnessed, a total of 975 staff were enrolled in 32 planned sessions according to the annual training plan.

Furthermore, NBK organized specific courses and workshops for leadership and development training, as well as courses focusing on leading the digital transformation, in line with the bank's digital roadmap. In the meantime, the Training and Development Department intensively worked on developing 3 specialized curriculums for IBG, Corporate, CBG, Foreign Corporate and Oil and Gas, as well as Trade Finance and Internal Audit in coordination with Moody's Euromoney and Deloitte, with a total of 156 attended participants. In

addition, 72 employees attended Middle Management Program across 4 cohorts, delivered by Learning Tree International. With the shifting direction towards digital learning, Training and Development took the advantage of training 44 employees from NBK overseas branches across multiple development programs.

On this occasion, Ahmad Darweesh, Head of Training and Development at National Bank of Kuwait quoted: "At the Training and Development Department, we are proud of the progress made in implementing a map of top-notch training programs aiming to help promote a digital culture across NBK Group, in line with the bank's digital transformation strategy."

"Today, Group Human Resources has a digital infrastructure and a unique training and development system that are on par with international best practices. The bank's E-Learning platform was developed into an advanced easily accessible digital platform that offers various training programs, including induction for newly hired employees, training requirements of the Central Bank of Kuwait, as well as programs for developing key competencies, aside from its function as a tool for taking tests," he elaborated.

Darweesh emphasized that the "Accelerated Learning" concept is consistently exhibited across the NBK Group, within a culture and work environment that drives employees to pursue personal growth whilst recognizing their long-term career paths, in addition to its contribution to investing in their talents and skills, which serves the bank's sustainable growth.

Darweesh noted that NBK provides equal opportunities for all its employees, by giving them opportunities to attend training programs that are designed based on assessment of corporate and individual needs, as well as being committed to developing the academic and practical skills of its staff, with a view to prepare them as future leaders.

It is worth mentioning that NBK consistently supports its employees in building their careers within the bank, believing that its sustained successful transformation depends on the diversity and quality of talents. In recent challenging times, efficient workforce proved to make a difference, acting as a strategic pillar of the Bank's strategy and ambitious plans for the future.





Taliban push deep into Panjshir Valley holdout

Climate change blamed for havoc in northeast floods

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SANAA: Shiite Muslim supporters of the Iran-backed Houthi rebels gather to commemorate the anniversary of the death of Shiite Imam Zaid Bin Ali in the Houthi-held Yemeni capital Sanaa. —AFP

Yemen rebels fire missiles into Saudi

'Children hurt', 14 homes damaged

RIYADH: Two children were hurt and 14 homes damaged as Saudi forces intercepted ballistic missiles fired across the border by Yemeni rebels, scattering debris over the eastern city of Dammam, officials said yesterday. The attack, which took place on Saturday, was the latest in a series by the Iran-backed Houthi rebels who control almost all of Yemen's north. Saudi Arabia intervened in Yemen's war on behalf of the internationally recognized government in 2015, shortly after the Houthis seized the capital Sanaa.

"Saudi Air Defense has intercepted and destroyed (3) ballistic missiles and (3) bomb-laden drones launched by the Iran-backed Houthi militia,"

spokesperson Brigadier General Turki Al-Maliki said in a statement, calling it "brutal, irresponsible behavior" by the Yemeni rebels. A spokesperson at the defense ministry yesterday said that two children were wounded and 14 homes damaged after debris from the interception scattered across Dammam. It was not clear how serious the reported injuries were.

Houthis say Aramco targeted

Saudi authorities said the ballistic missiles were targeting civilians in the Eastern Province - where Dammam is located - and the southern cities of Najran and Jazan. Houthi spokesman Yahya Saree

said in a video statement that the rebels launched a series of missile and drone attacks on "vital installations", including military bases and facilities of Saudi oil giant Aramco. A Saudi official told AFP that the rebel claims were "baseless". No immediate comment was available from Aramco.

Eastern Saudi Arabia is home to major oil infrastructure. A previous attack in September 2019 temporarily halted half of the kingdom's oil production. The Saudi-led coalition fighting the rebels in Yemen told state-run television it would take "strict measures" to protect civilians. In August, the rebels escalated cross-border operations using unmanned aerial vehicles and missiles.

Saturday's interception comes four days after a drone hit Abha International Airport in the south, wounding eight people and damaging a civilian plane.

It also came just a few hours before Hans Grundberg, the UN's new envoy for Yemen, assumed his duties on Sunday. Yemen's grinding conflict has claimed tens of thousands of lives and displaced millions, resulting in what the United Nations calls the world's worst humanitarian crisis. While the UN is pushing for an end to the war, the Houthis have demanded the reopening of Sanaa airport, closed under a Saudi blockade since 2016, before any ceasefire or negotiations. —AFP

Algeria places Karoui in pre-trial detention

ALGIERS: The runner-up in Tunisia's 2019 presidential election, Nabil Karoui, has been placed in pre-trial detention in neighboring Algeria, accused of "entering the country illegally", local media reported yesterday. Karoui and his brother Ghazi, an MP, had faced a hearing before a magistrate in the northeastern city of Constantine, the Ennahar newspaper wrote citing "judicial sources". Constantine prosecutors could not immediately be reached for comment. In July, Karoui's former opponent, President Kais Saied had suspended parliament and granted himself sweeping powers, hitting judges, MPs and businessmen with arrests and trav-

el bans in a supposed anti-corruption purge.

Karoui was arrested in late August by Algerian border police, with Tunisia releasing a warrant for his arrest the day after. Algeria and Tunisia are bound by an agreement stipulating the extradition by either country "of any person prosecuted or convicted" in the other. Any extradition request must be "accompanied by an official document from the authorities". Karoui founded the private Tunisian channel Nessma TV, which is partly owned by Italy's former prime minister Silvio Berlusconi.

He has been under investigation since 2017 in a money laundering and tax evasion case. He was arrested in 2019 and spent more than a month in prison at the height of the presidential election campaign. He was freed but rearrested last December and spent six months in pre-trial detention before being let out again in June. Karoui came second in the 2019 election to Saied, a retired law professor and political newcomer, as the electorate rejected the political class that had ruled since the 2011 revolution. —AFP

Taliban order university women to wear niqab

KABUL: Women attending private Afghan universities must wear an abaya robe and niqab covering most of the face, the Taliban have ordered, and classes must be segregated by sex - or at least divided by a curtain. In a lengthy document issued by the Taliban's education authority, they also ordered that female students should only be taught by other women, but if that was not possible then "old men" of good character could fill in.

The decree applies to private colleges and universities, which have mushroomed since the Taliban's first rule ended in 2001. During that period, girls and women were mostly excluded from education because of rules regarding same-sex classrooms and the insistence they had to be accompanied by a male relative whenever they left the house. There was no order for women to wear the all-enveloping burqa in the new regulations issued late Saturday, but the niqab effectively covers most of the face anyway, leaving just the eyes exposed.

In recent years burqas and niqabs have largely vanished from the streets of Kabul, but are seen more frequently in smaller cities and towns. The decree comes as private universities prepare to open today. "Universities are required to recruit female teachers for female students based on their facilities," the decree said, adding that men and women should use separate entrances and exits. If it is not possible to hire women teachers, then colleges "should try to hire old men teachers who have a good record of behavior".

While women now have to study separately, they must also end their lesson five minutes earlier than men to stop them from mingling outside. They must then stay in waiting rooms until their male counterparts have left the building, according to the decree issued by the Taliban higher education ministry.



KABUL: An Afghan burqa clad woman sells face masks to the commuters at a traffic intersection in Kabul yesterday. —AFP

"Practically, it is a difficult plan - we don't have enough female instructors or classes to segregate the girls," said a university professor, who asked not to be named.

"But the fact that they are allowing girls to go to schools and universities is a big positive step," he told AFP. Afghanistan's new rulers have pledged to be more accommodating than during their first stint in power, which also came after years of conflict - first the Soviet invasion of 1979, and then a bloody civil war. They have promised a more "inclusive" government that represents Afghanistan's complex ethnic makeup - though women are unlikely to be included at the top levels.

Over the past 20 years, since the Taliban were last in power, university admission rates have risen dramatically, particularly among women. Before the Taliban returned in a lightning military campaign, entering the capital Kabul last month, women studied alongside men and attended seminars with male professors. But a spate of deadly attacks on education centers in recent years sparked panic. The Taliban denied being behind the attacks, some of which were claimed by the local chapter of the Islamic State group. —AFP

CONDOLENCES

**Kuwait Times Editor-in-Chief,
management and staff**

convey their deepest condolences to

Ismael Ibrahim

Al-Shenawi Al-Ruwaini

on the sad demise of his

Mother

May Allah Almighty bestow His mercy on her

International

Protests as Montenegro new Orthodox head inaugurated

Decision to anoint Bishop Joanikije aggravates ethnic tension

CETINJE: The new head of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Montenegro was inaugurated yesterday, arriving by helicopter under the protection of police who dispersed protesters with tear gas. The decision to anoint Bishop Joanikije as the new Metropolitan of Montenegro at the historic monastery of Cetinje has aggravated ethnic tension in the tiny Balkan state. Protesters had blocked roads since Saturday in a bid to prevent access to the small town, both the headquarters of the Serbian Orthodox Church (SPC) and a symbol of sovereignty for some Montenegrins.

Montenegro broke away from Serbia in 2006, but a third of its 620,000 inhabitants identify as Serbs and some deny Montenegro should be a separate entity. The SPC is the dominant religion in the small state but its opponents accuse it of serving Belgrade's interests. And the government that assumed power at the end of 2020 is accused by its opponents of being too close to the church. According to images released by the SPC, Joanikije and Patriarch Porfirije were dropped off by helicopter on the monastery's lawn and rushed in under the sound of bells.

'Defending our dignity'

A security perimeter had been set up by police around the 15th century building to protect the brief enthronement ceremony. Police fired tear gas

and sound bombs to clear the protesters from the monastery. On Saturday, thousands of protesters used cars or piled up rocks to block roads, with many spending the night huddled around fires set to keep warm, an AFP correspondent said. "I am here to show my love for the country," said one protester, Saska Brajovic, 50.

"We are not asking for anything from anyone else, but we are dismissed by the occupying Serbian Church. We are here defending our dignity." The protesters are backed by the Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) of President Milo Djukanovic. The president accused neighboring Serbia and the SPC of "dismissing Montenegro and the integrity" of his country. Djukanovic had been eager to curb the SPC's clout in Montenegro and build up an independent Orthodox church.

Police fire tear gas and sound bombs

'Benefits and privileges'

But in August 2020 elections the DPS lost - for the first time in three decades - to an opposition bloc led by SPC allies. Prime Minister Zdravko Krivokapic, who is close to the Serbian Orthodox Church, has accused Djukanovic of having deliberately stoked the recent tensions for political purposes. Krivokapic called on Montenegrins "not to give in to the manipulation" of those willing to risk conflict "in order to keep their benefits and privileges".



CETINJE: A man walks past burning tires at a barricade set up to block access roads to the historic city of Cetinje during a protest against the inauguration of the new head of the Serbian Orthodox Church yesterday in Montenegro. —AFP

The monastery, where Montenegrin leaders sat for centuries until the end of World War I, is considered by SPC opponents the property of the Montenegrin Orthodox Church, which remains a small minority and is not recognized by the

Orthodox world. Metropolitan Joanikije was named to his new post in May, after the death of his predecessor Metropolitan Amfilohije from COVID-19. The protesters abandoned the blockades as the enthronement ceremony began. —AFP

Salah Abdeslam, the '10th man' of the Paris attacks

PARIS: The sole surviving member of the terror cell that massacred 130 people in Paris in November 2015 was a pot-smoking party man who dabbled in petty crime before falling in thrall to the Islamic State group. All eyes will be on Salah Abdeslam on Wednesday when he goes on trial in Paris along with 19 others over the worst terror attack in France's history. But those hoping that the so-called 10th man of the Islamic State attacks will tell all about what drove him to be part of the macabre plot risk being disappointed.

Since his arrest after a massive four-month manhunt that ended in a shootout with police in Belgium, Abdeslam has maintained near-total silence on his role in the bloodshed. Nine other gunmen and suicide bombers died in the carnage, including Abdeslam's brother Brahim, who blew himself up in a bar. Like Brahim he was equipped with a suicide belt, but he did not activate the device, which was found in a rubbish bin in southern Paris several days after the killings.

The 31-year-old, who has French citizenship but grew up in Belgium, is accused of playing a key logistical role in the attacks. He drove the three suicide bombers who blew themselves up outside the Stade de France to their destination. Abdeslam also rented cars and hideouts and drove across Europe in the months before the attacks to collect jihadists who had slipped into the continent unnoticed among masses of migrants. He told police shortly after his arrest that he too had been primed to carry out a suicide attack at Stade de France, one of six venues targeted in the Paris attacks, but that he had backed out at the last minute. Investigators have cast doubt on that claim, saying they believe he was intent on seeing through his mission but was hamstrung by a faulty explosive belt. Whatever the outcome of the trial he is likely to spend many years behind bars, being just three years into a 20-year sentence for attempted murder over the firefight with Belgian police.

Dope-smoking clubber

One of the world's most-wanted spent the immediate aftermath of the Paris attacks eating fries and chatting with two unsuspecting teenagers in the stairwell of a Paris high-rise while waiting to be driven across the border to Belgium. It was only when his mugshot was released by police days later that the pair realized the man who was looking over their shoulder at a news item about the attacks was one of the chief suspects. In the Brussels suburb of Molenbeek, where he grew up, Abdeslam was known for his bad-boy lifestyle of petty crime, smoking weed and gambling. An inveterate clubber, he also had a reputation as a womanizer.

His multiple brushes with the law included a conviction for attempted robbery in 2010 with a childhood friend, Abdelhamid Abaaoud, the coordinator of the Paris attacks who was shot dead by French police in a siege a week later. Abdeslam, who grew up in a family of five children, worked as a technician for the Brussels tram network but was fired for skipping work in 2011. In later years, he spent much of his time hanging out in a cafe run by Brahim. Friends of the brothers say they became hooked on the Islamic State after the Sunni radical group proclaimed a caliphate in Iraq and Syria in 2014. They say they stopped drinking, showed a new-found interest in Islam and huddled with other would-be jihadists to imbibe IS propaganda. In February 2015, Belgian police summoned Salah Abdeslam to discuss Abaaoud who had appeared in a gruesome video from Syria, showing him driving a pick-up that was dragging mutilated bodies to a mass grave. —AFP

NASA's tiny Mars copter still flying high

WASHINGTON: It was only supposed to fly five times. And yet NASA's helicopter on Mars, Ingenuity, has completed 12 flights and it isn't ready to retire. Given its stunning and unexpected success, the US space agency has extended Ingenuity's mission indefinitely. The tiny helicopter has become the regular travel companion of the rover Perseverance, whose core mission is to seek signs of ancient life on Mars.

"Everything is working so well," said Josh Ravich, the head of Ingenuity's mechanical engineering team. "We're doing better on the surface than we had expected." Hundreds of people contributed to the project, though only about a dozen currently retain day-to-day roles. Ravich joined the team five years ago. "When I got the opportunity to come work on the helicopter project, I think I had the same reaction as anybody else: 'Is that even possible?'"

His initial doubts were understand-

able: The air on Mars has a density equivalent to only one percent that of Earth's atmosphere. By way of comparison, flying a helicopter on Mars would be like flying one in the thin air nearly 30 km above Earth. Nor was it easy getting to Mars in the first place. Ingenuity had to withstand the initial shock of takeoff from Earth, and then of the Feb 18 landing on the red planet following a seven-month voyage through space, strapped to the rover's belly.

Once in its new surroundings, the tiny (1.8 kilogram) copter has had to survive the glacial cold of Martian nights, drawing warmth from the solar panels that charge its batteries during the day. And its flights are guided using an array of sensors, since the 15-minute lag in communications from Earth makes real-time guidance impossible.

On April 19, Ingenuity carried out its maiden flight, making history as the first motorized craft to fly on another planet. Exceeding all expectations, it has gone on to fly 11 more times. "We've actually been able to handle winds greater than we had expected," Ravich told AFP. "I think by flight three we had actually accomplished all of our engineering goals ... (and) got all the information we had hoped to get," said



IN SPACE: This file NASA photo shows NASA's Ingenuity Mars Helicopter (right) captured by Mars Perseverance rover using its Left Mastcam-Z Camera. —AFP

Ravich, who works for NASA's famed Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL), which developed the helicopter.

Since then, Ingenuity has flown as high as 12 m, and its last flight lasted two minutes and 49 seconds. In all, it has covered a distance of 2.5 km. In May, Ingenuity flew its first one-way mission, landing outside the relatively flat "airfield" that had been carefully selected as its initial home. But not all

has gone smoothly. Its sixth flight brought some excitement.

After being knocked dangerously off-balance by a malfunction affecting the photos taken in flight to help it stabilize, the tiny craft was able to recover. It landed, safe and sound, and the problem was resolved. Ingenuity is now being sent out to scout the way for Perseverance, using its high-resolution color camera. —AFP

France's biggest trial to open over 2015 attacks

PARIS: The biggest trial in France's modern legal history begins on Wednesday over the November 2015 attacks on Paris that saw 130 people slaughtered at bars, restaurants and the Bataclan concert hall. The suicide bombing and gun assault by three teams of jihadists, later claimed by the Islamic State group, was France's worst post-war atrocity. A purpose-built facility at the historic court of justice on the Ile de la Cite in central Paris will host the trial, with 14 of the 20 defendants present, including the only surviving attacker, Salah Abdeslam.

"Everyone has their own expectations, but we know that this is an important milestone for our future lives," said Arthur Denouveaux, a survivor of the Bataclan music venue attack and president of the Life for Paris victims' association. The trial over the traumatic jihadist killings, which were planned from Syria,

is on a scale unmatched in recent times. It will last nine months until late May 2022, with 145 days for hearings involving about 330 lawyers, 300 victims and former president Francois Hollande who will testify in November. The case file runs to a million pages in 542 volumes, measuring 53 meters across.

Security alert

Surviving gunman Abdeslam, a Belgium-born French-Moroccan, fled the scene of the carnage after abandoning his suicide belt, which investigators found to be defective. Abdeslam, now 31, was later captured in Brussels, hiding in a building close to his family home, after four months on the run. He has resolutely refused to cooperate with the French investigation and remained largely silent throughout a separate trial in Belgium in 2018 that saw him declare only that he put his "trust in Allah" and that the court was biased. A major question is whether he will speak at his scheduled testimony in mid-January 2022.

Another focus of the trial will be on how the squad of killers managed to come undetected into France, allegedly using the flow of migrants from Islamic



PARIS: A man looks at the memorial plaque near the Bataclan theatre and Cafe in Paris where jihadists attacked and killed 90 people. —AFP

State-controlled regions of Syria as cover. Fourteen of the accused - who face a range of charges from providing logistical support, to planning and weapons offences - are expected to be present in court. Six more suspects are being tried in absentia. Five of them are presumed

dead, mainly in air strikes in Syria, including French jihadist brothers Fabien and Jean-Michel Clain. The alleged coordinator, Belgian national Abdelhamid Abaaoud, was killed by French police northeast of Paris five days after the attacks. —AFP

Guns for hire: New abortion law sparks debate

WASHINGTON: The phrase "bounty hunter" conjures images of "wanted" posters and gunslinging cowboys hunting fugitives in the Wild West - but the controversial profession is very much alive in modern-day America. The industry, almost unique to the United States, came under a renewed spotlight this week as the Supreme Court refused to block a Texas law giving ordinary citizens the green light to sue anyone helping women access abortions.

Activists and politicians from street level campaigns

to the White House have voiced alarm at the high court's break with 50 years of precedent in protecting nationwide access to abortion. "In effect, (Texas) has deputized the state's citizens as bounty hunters, offering them cash prizes for civilly prosecuting their neighbors' medical procedures," Justice Sonia Sotomayor wrote in a stinging dissent.

Activists who fear the reform will metastasize saw the writing on the wall when the Texas Right to Life campaign, which has tip lines for people to anonymously report violators, said it hoped to "replicate our success across the nation." Their concerns were confirmed when South Dakota's Republican governor Kristi Noem was among the first to suggest adopting the idea in her own state.

Bounty hunting spread across the globe from the Middle Ages but is found almost exclusively today in the United States and the Philippines. Tristan Cabello, a historian specializing in US culture and politics, told

AFP bounty hunting was a profession "deeply embedded in the American psyche... that speaks to the most conservative of US citizens." The vast majority of bounty hunters make their living by rounding up fugitives who have skipped town in return for a share of the bail. They argue that they provide a public service at no public expense.

But the Texas abortion law has reignited debate on a job that can unleash freelance law enforcement personnel whose methods are often protected from local oversight. President Joe Biden told reporters at the White House on Friday the Texas law amounted to "vigilante" justice that "sounds ridiculous, almost un-American." In one of the most high profile recent incidents of citizen law enforcement gone wrong in 2017, two bounty hunters died in a shootout in a Greenville, Texas car dealership, along with the fugitive they were hired to apprehend. —AFP

International

Taleban push deep into Panjshir Valley holdout

Afghan civil war 'likely': Top US general



PANJSHIR: An Afghan resistance movement and anti-Taleban uprising forces personnel takes part in a military training at Malimah area of Dara district in Panjshir province as the valley remains the last major holdout of anti-Taleban forces. - AFP

KABUL: Taleban fighters have advanced deep into Afghanistan's holdout Panjshir Valley, with resistance fighters saying they are keeping the Islamists at bay, but analysts warned they are struggling. Italian aid agency Emergency, which runs a hospital in Panjshir, said Taleban forces had reached the village of Anabah, where they run a surgical centre. "Many people have fled from local villages in recent days," Emergency said in a statement, adding it was continuing to provide medical services.



Resistance fighters 'keeping Islamists at bay'

"There has so far been no interference with Emergency's activities," it said. "We have received a small number of wounded people at the Anabah Surgical Centre." Anabah lies some 25 kilometers north inside the 115-km-long valley, but unconfirmed reports suggested the Taleban had seized other areas too. Bill Roggio, managing editor of the US-based Long War Journal, said Sunday that there was still a "fog of war" with unconfirmed reports the Taleban had captured multiple districts-but that "it looks bad".

Both sides claim to have inflicted heavy losses on each other. "The Taleban army has been hardened with 20 years of war, and make no mistake, the Taleban trained an army," Roggio tweeted Sunday, adding that "the odds were long" for the Panjshir resistance. "The Taleban army was injected with a massive amount of weapons and munitions after the US withdrawal and collapse of the ANA" (Afghan National Army), he added. Fighters in Panjshir held out for a decade against the Soviet military and also the Taleban's first regime from 1996-2001.

Ali Maisam Nazary-who is not in Panjshir but remains a spokesman for the resistance-boasted yesterday that the resistance "will never fail". But former vice-president Amrullah Saleh, who is holed out in Panjshir alongside Ahmad Massoud-the son of legendary anti-Taleban commander Ahmad Shah Massoud-warned of a grim situation. Saleh in a statement spoke of a "large-scale humanitarian crisis", with thousands "displaced by the Taleban onslaught".

Pro-Taleban social media have boasted of capturing swathes of the valley, but Nick Waters from the investigative website Bellingcat said the posts did not include verifiable photographs to back up the claims. "It will be quite easy to verify a video showing Taleban within the Panjshir valley," Waters said. The Panjshir Valley, surrounded by jagged snow-capped peaks, offers a natural defensive advantage, with fighters melting away in the face of advancing forces, then launching ambushes firing from the high tops down into the valley.

Civil war 'likely'

Afghanistan will "likely" erupt in civil war, the top US general told US media Saturday, warning that those conditions could see a resurgence of terrorist groups in the country. As American forces began their withdrawal, the Taleban took over Afghanistan in a lightning campaign, with only the northern province Panjshir holding out against the hardline Islamists. "My military estimate... is that the conditions are likely to develop of a civil war," General Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told Fox News.

He questioned whether the Taleban-who are yet to declare a government-would be able to consolidate power and establish effective governance. "I think there's at least a very good probability of a broader civil war and that will then in turn lead to conditions that could, in fact, lead to a reconstitution of Al-Qaeda or a growth of ISIS or other... terrorist groups," Milley said. Emphasizing that he could not predict what would happen next in Afghanistan, he nonetheless gave a bleak assessment.

"The conditions are very likely," Milley told Fox News, "that you could see a resurgence of terrorism coming out of that general region within 12, 24, 36 months." The United States invaded Afghanistan and toppled the first Taleban regime in 2001 in the wake of the 9/11 attacks by Al-Qaeda, which had sanctuary in the country. Western governments fear Afghanistan could again become a haven for extremists bent on attacking them. The United States has said it will maintain an "over-the-horizon" capability to strike against any threats to its security in Afghanistan.— Agencies

Haiti racing to rebuild schools destroyed in earthquake

PORT-AU-PRINCE: Haiti is struggling to send children back to class amid the devastation of the earthquake last month that killed more than 2,200 people and destroyed tens of thousands of buildings, including many schools. It is a logistical and humanitarian challenge in the disaster-prone country - the poorest in the Americas - one that never fully recovered from the huge quake in 2010 that killed more than 200,000 people and caused billions in damage.

Classes for most students, initially scheduled to start September 6, have been pushed back by two weeks. And they have been postponed until October 4 in the three southern departments hardest hit by the 7.2 magnitude quake of August 14. In those areas, many families lost everything. Word of the delayed start to the school year launched a countdown for aid workers, who have raced to help the very needy people in the southern departments.

Schools destroyed

"Of the 2,800 schools in the three affected areas, 955 have been assessed by the government with support from UNICEF, and the first results show that 15 percent of them were destroyed and 69 percent were damaged," Bruno Maes, head of UNICEF in Haiti. "It is going to be a race against time because it is just a few weeks to set up protective, safe learning shelters for children in these three departments so they do not miss another school year," Maes said.

The 2019-2020 school year ended in March of last year because of the Covid-19 pandemic. The following school year was then disrupted for many Haitians by widespread violence from powerful street gangs. In late 2020 and early this year, gang members carried out many kidnappings for ransom, abducting children or teachers near schools in the capital Port-au-Prince. About 150 kilometers from Port-au-Prince, the crime wave largely spared Camp-Perrin, but the area was hard hit by the quake.

Welcoming children back to school is a particular headache for private schools, which account for 80 percent of the schools in Haiti. "We have students who have not yet paid their tuition for the 2017-2018 school year," said Maxime Eugene, a teacher at Mazenod high school. "We cannot send them home and make them miss a year of school over money," he said. The quake destroyed every classroom in that well-known Catholic school. Soldiers have cleared away the debris but school officials are still waiting for help to get the scholastic year going.—AFP

Climate change blamed for havoc in northeast floods

NEW YORK: Climate change and creaky infrastructure have been blamed for the scale of the impact from floods tearing through New York City when remnants of Hurricane Ida swept across the US northeast, killing at least 47 people. "We are in a whole different world," New York Mayor Bill de Blasio said after the flash floods. "This is a different challenge." Record rain turned streets into rivers and shut down subway services as water cascaded onto tracks. Nearly a dozen people drowned in basement apartments.

The extreme weather, combined with a lack of preparation, stretched the United States' biggest city to breaking point. "It's no big surprise that the city seems to break down every time there's a big storm," said Jonathan Bowles, executive director of the think-tank Center for an Urban Future. "The city's infrastructure hasn't kept pace with the population growth that New York's had in the last couple of decades, let alone the increasing ferocity of storms, and rising sea levels that have come with climate change," Bowles said.

While there has been a lot of investment in big projects - train stations, airports, new bridges - less funding has gone to "unsexy" projects such as sewer



SRINAGAR: Indian paramilitary troopers patrol along a road in Srinagar yesterday as thousands of Indian security forces maintained a lockdown across Kashmir after the death of a separatist political leader sparked clashes with protesters. - AFP

Late Kashmir leader's family charged under anti-terror law

SRINAGAR: The family of a separatist icon from Indian-administered Kashmir has been charged under a sweeping anti-terrorism law for allegedly chanting anti-New Delhi slogans and wrapping his body with Pakistan's flag after he died, officials said. Tensions in the Himalayan territory, which is disputed between India and Pakistan, have been heightened since Syed Ali Geelani died on Wednesday at the age of 92 in the main city of Srinagar.

Police in Kashmir said a case under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) - which effectively allows people to be held without trial indefinitely-was registered on Saturday against Geelani's family. The family were accused of "raising anti-national slogans and resorting to other anti-national activities" at the influential resistance leader's home soon after his death. They have not yet been detained by police.

His son Naseem Geelani did not deny the allegations but repeated earlier claims that police took his father's body away to be buried in the middle of the night just hours after his death, and did not allow the family to perform last rites. Police have refuted those allegations. "We

told the visiting police officers that they had taken control of everything after my father's death and that we were mourning. We had no way of knowing who was doing what," the son said yesterday.

A video widely shared on social media showed the leader's body wrapped in a Pakistani flag before police officers took it away amid a scuffle with his family members. Chants of "we want freedom" were heard in the background during the mayhem. Authorities yesterday eased a lockdown imposed to maintain calm after his death across Kashmir, allowing for limited movement. An internet and mobile phone shutdown was partially eased on Saturday. Geelani, a popular figure in the region, spent over five decades fighting for self-determination for people in Indian-controlled Kashmir. Islamabad observed a day of national mourning after Geelani's death and funeral prayers for the leader were held across Pakistan and in Turkey. In Srinagar, Indian troops are guarding Geelani's grave and no-one is allowed to approach it. Anger has simmered in the territory since 2019 when New Delhi controversially revoked the region's semi-autonomy and brought it under direct rule.

Residents in the Muslim-majority region say repression has intensified in the two years since the changes. India has used the vaguely-worded UAPA legislation against thousands of Kashmiri residents, journalists and dissidents, according to activists. Rebel groups have been fighting Indian forces for decades, demanding independence for the territory or its merger with Pakistan that controls a part of it. Tens of thousands have died in the fighting, most civilians.—AFP

lines and water mains, he said. Nicole Gelinas, an urban economics expert at the Manhattan Institute, another think-tank, said New York's infrastructure "was not built for seven inches of rainfall in a few hours." Drains for the city's sewer system get clogged, Gelinas said, and "there's not enough green space to catch some of the water before it runs into the drains. "So some of these avenues, they become canals when there's a big storm."

New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania were the hardest hit by Ida, which ravaged the southern state of Louisiana and the Gulf Coast earlier in the week before sweeping northeast. President Joe Biden, who



LOUISIANA: A sign for a beach resort rests among storm debris in the wake of Hurricane Ida in Grand Isle, Louisiana. — AFP

has made threats from climate change a priority, flew to Louisiana, where more than 800,000 people remained without power after Ida made landfall as a Category 4 storm. He said costly improvements to the levee system around New Orleans after the far deadlier Hurricane Katrina in 2005 had proved their worth in preventing more catastrophic damage this time.

Similarly transformative infrastructure projects - rather than simply rebuilding - will have to become the new norm, he said, pushing for passage of his giant \$3.5 trillion infrastructure bill in Congress. "Things have changed so drastically in terms of the environment, you've already crossed a certain threshold," he said. "You can't build back a road, a highway or a bridge to what it was before." New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy said Storm Ida had left 25 people dead in his state, most of them "individuals who got caught in their vehicles." Thirteen deaths were reported in New York City, including 11 victims who could not escape their basements, police said.

Three people were killed in the New York suburb of Westchester, while another five died in Pennsylvania and one - a state trooper - in Connecticut, officials said. "I'm 50 years old and I've never seen that much rain ever," said Metodija Mihajlov, whose Manhattan restaurant basement was flooded with three inches of water. "It was like living in the jungle, like tropical rain. Unbelievable. Everything is so strange this year," Mihajlov said. The National Weather Service recorded 3.15 inches of rain in New York's Central Park in just an hour - beating a record set just last month during Storm Henri.—AFP

News in brief

Gunfire in Guinea capital

CONAKRY: Heavy gunfire rang out in the centre of the Guinean capital Conakry yesterday morning and troops were seen on the streets, with a Western diplomat in the city describing the events as an attempted coup. The government in the west African nation has not yet commented on the situation. The whereabouts of President Alpha Conde is not yet clear. Guinea - one of the world's poorest countries despite boasting significant mineral resources - has long been beset by political instability. Yesterday, residents reached by telephone in Conakry's Kaloum peninsula - the government quarter - reported hearing sustained gunfire. Speaking on condition of anonymity for their safety, they reported seeing a number of soldiers on the streets who called on residents to return to their homes and stay there. One resident said that he had seen a "column of military vehicles with excited soldiers" on board, driving towards the city centre. — AFP



CONAKRY: Members of the Armed Forces of Guinea drive through the central neighborhood of Kaloum in Conakry yesterday after sustained gunfire was heard. - AFP

Four killed in suicide blast

QUETTA: Four Pakistani paramilitary guards were killed yesterday when a suicide bomber on a motorbike blew himself up in the southwestern city of Quetta, police said. The bomber targeted Frontier Constabulary guards in the Mian Ghundi neighborhood of the city - around 140 kilometers from the frontier with Afghanistan - where Hazara Shiite merchants were trading vegetables. Three died immediately in the blast, with another officer dying later of his wounds, said Azhar Akram, a deputy inspector general of police. Akram told AFP that 17 guards and two civilians were wounded in the blast. Three are in a critical condition, he said. A spokesman for the police's Counter-Terrorism Department confirmed the attack. Quetta is home to approximately 500,000 Hazaras, who mostly live in an ethnic enclave on the edge of the city.— AFP

Sao Tome holds election

LIBREVILLE: Sao Tome and Principe, a tiny Portuguese-speaking archipelago widely praised for its strong democracy, was voting yesterday in the second round of a presidential election after two postponements. The runoff was initially scheduled for August 8 but was postponed until August 29 before being rescheduled again after a candidate complained about the results in the first round. The country is a former Portuguese colony of 210,000 people in the Gulf of Guinea off West Africa, whose parliamentary system has fostered a tradition of peaceful transitions of power. It opened up to a multiparty system in 1991 after 15 years of single-party rule by a Marxist regime. Carlos Vila Nova of the centre-right opposition Independent Democratic Action (ADI) party led the first round of voting on July 18 with 39.5 percent of the vote. — AFP

Business

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2021

Troubled German IAA auto show opens under climate, COVID cloud

Biennial event to spotlight electric cars, scooters and even bicycles

MUNICH: Germany's revamped IAA auto show, one of the world's largest, opens in Munich tomorrow for a celebration of all things car-related, but climate concerns and pandemic woes threaten to spoil the party. After a disappointing edition in 2019, marred by environmental protests, poor visitor numbers and no-shows from major automakers, the biennial event has reinvented itself as a "mobility fair" with a spotlight on electric cars, scooters and even bicycles.

Historically held in Frankfurt, the IAA will for the first time take place in the Bavarian city of Munich as part of efforts to revive the event. The six-day fair will be one of the biggest exhibitions since the start of the coronavirus pandemic, coming just as Germany grapples with a fourth wave.

To reduce the infection risk, daily visitor numbers are capped at 80,000 and guests must show proof of vaccination, recovery or a recent negative test before entering. Confirming a trend seen at auto shows around the world, many well-known brands will again skip the showcase, chief among them the Stellantis group (Peugeot-Fiat Chrysler) and Japan's Toyota.

Also absent will be leading electric car-maker Tesla, leaving IAA organizers to hope that this year's more than 70 bicycle exhibitors will keep audiences satisfied—and attract new ones. Chancellor Angela Merkel, who is bowing out of politics after a general election on September 26, will give a speech tomorrow when the fair opens to trade visitors.

Once known as the "car chancellor" for her efforts to shield German carmakers from tougher EU pollution rules, the veteran leader is likely to touch on the industry's costly transition towards greener engines, even if critics say change isn't happening fast enough.

Climate litigation

Climate campaigners have vowed to disrupt the IAA by staging protests on Friday and Saturday, when the general public is invited. Similar "civil disobedience" rallies at times blocked access to the IAA in Frankfurt in 2019, leaving visitors waiting outside for hours.

The threat of legal action against polluters will also hang over the fair, after Greenpeace and Germany's DUH environmental group threatened Friday to file lawsuits against Volkswagen, BMW and Daimler if they do not speed up efforts to reduce carbon emissions.

The plaintiffs want the German car giants to stop producing diesel or petrol cars by 2030, arguing that their current pledges for electrification are vague and non-binding. The plaintiffs are emboldened by landmark recent court decisions in favor of climate protection, including a German verdict that forced Merkel's government to commit to faster CO2 reduction so as not to place an unfair burden on future generations.

Chip shortage

The health crisis has meanwhile left its mark on the industry in other ways. While carmakers initially recovered quickly from last year's showroom and factory shutdowns, a pandemic-fueled surge in demand for home electronics has led to a global shortage in computer chips that threatens to slow the auto industry's recovery.

The semiconductor crunch has forced automakers worldwide to trim production, including at General Motors, VW and Stellantis. As a result, car sales are expected to remain below pre-pandemic levels for a while longer.

In Europe's top economy Germany, new car registrations were down 23 percent year-on-year



FRANKFURT: Visitors are pictured at the booth of German car maker Volkswagen at the International Auto Show (IAA), in Frankfurt am Main, on September 11, 2019. The German IAA motor show opens tomorrow in Munich.—AFP

in August. In France, they were 15 percent lower. In China, the world's biggest car market, sales have "clearly lost momentum", according to auto industry analyst Ferdinand Dudenhoeffer.

Electric surprises

Although car manufacturers are increasingly unveiling new models online, exhibitors are saving a few surprises for the IAA. VW will debut a plug-in hybrid T7 multivan, while its Audi sub-

sidary is to offer a fully electric sedan with semi-autonomous driving functions.

Mercedes-Benz maker Daimler will launch a battery-powered luxury Maybach concept car. The group's Smart brand will show off a small electric SUV. BMW plans to present a hydrogen-powered SUV, as well as its vision for a fully recyclable electric car made entirely from recycled material and renewable resources.—AFP

Nespresso adds two new limited-edition coffees to its Ispirazione Italiana range

KUWAIT: Nespresso is adding two new limited-edition coffees to its Ispirazione Italiana range for Original system inspired by the art of Italian master roasters and the tastes they so skillfully craft. Over the centuries, just as new artistic movements have emerged and grown, coffee roasting styles have also evolved. Indeed, despite Italy's long coffee history, the specialty coffee scene in the country is flourishing. Nespresso has captured the tastes and aromas of both the traditional and modern with Ispirazione Novecento and Ispirazione Millennio, each of them a true masterpiece of Italian roasting history.

Take a trip back in time with Ispirazione Novecento

New Limited Edition Ispirazione Novecento has been inspired by the classic Italian espressos of the 1940s. It is a smoky dark cup that paints a picture of the country's early stand-up coffee bars, in an era when roasting was slower and often wood-fired, and blends were dictated by the beans available in wartime Europe. Anchored in Brazil, Ispirazione Novecento is embellished with heirloom Arabicas and West African Robustas to give an intense espresso with raw spicy, nutty brown flavors and a dense, dark crema.

Step into the modern with Ispirazione Millennio

Nespresso's Limited Edition Ispirazione Millennio,

meanwhile, takes its aromatic cues from new trends of artisanal roasting sweeping the country, alongside growing preferences for brighter, fruitier flavors. To achieve this fresh, modern taste, lighter and shorter roasted Brazilian and Colombian Arabicas have been blended with beans from the Indian subcontinent. The result is a well-rounded and pleasantly intense coffee with spicy notes, fine acidity and hint of fruit.

Art comes in many roasts

Nespresso's Ispirazione Italiana is more than a range of Italian-inspired coffee, it's a skillfully crafted masterpiece, balancing varied aromas, tastes, and geographical influences. The permanent range of seven coffee capsules offers a broad variety of espressos and ristrettos, each capturing the roasting essence of an Italian city or region, from the spicy North African influences in Palermo to the rich depth of history of Rome. The range is available in Original with certain coffees also lending themselves to being prepared as longer coffees with milk.

Almond Lemon Brulee - with Ispirazione Novecento

1. Pour 100ml of semi-skimmed milk into the Nespresso Barista device. Close the lid, select "Cappuccino" and press start.
2. Extract 25ml of Ispirazione Novecento into an espresso glass.



3. Spoon the hot milk foam onto the coffee.
4. Sprinkle 3g brown sugar over the milk and caramelize it using a blow torch.
5. Sprinkle some flakes of grilled almond over the top and finish with lemon zest.

Padova Style Mint Cocoa - with Ispirazione Millennio

1. Pour 100ml of skimmed milk into the Nespresso Barista device. Add 5ml of mint syrup. Close the lid, select "Café Viennois" and press start.
2. Extract 40ml of Ispirazione Millennio into an espresso glass.
3. Spoon the milk foam onto the coffee.
4. Sprinkle some fresh mint leaves over the foam and dust with cocoa powder.

Limited editions Ispirazione Novecento and Ispirazione Millennio will be available online and at Nespresso boutiques. For further information on the Ispirazione Italiana range, please visit kw.buynespresso.com

'Silent crisis' looms as US to end COVID aid for millions of jobless

WASHINGTON: Spending less on food. Drawing down on retirement savings. Dropping out of the workforce altogether. Last year, the United States massively expanded unemployment aid as COVID-19 broke out. But in the coming days those benefits will end, forcing millions of jobless Americans—some of whom haven't worked for the entire pandemic—to make hard choices about how they will get by in an economy newly menaced by the Delta variant.

"I have no idea how we would survive, just on my daughter's income," said Deborah Lee, an unemployed phlebotomist in Arizona who is recovering from a COVID outbreak that affected her daughter and two of her three granddaughters.

The government-funded programs that increased weekly payments and gave aid to the long-term unemployed and freelancers were credited with keeping the United States from an even worse economic collapse last year. In recent months they have become controversial, with some states ending them early and arguing they encouraged people not to return to jobs that COVID-19 vaccines made safe, though studies have disputed that contention.

From September 6 they will end nationwide, and while economists don't expect them to meaningfully dent the US economy's recovery from its 2020 debacle, they'll undoubtedly up the pressure on the unem-

ployed. "I think it's going to be an underappreciated event in the economy," said Andrew Stettner of progressive think tank The Century Foundation, predicting that 7.5 million people will be relying on the programs when they end. "It'll be kind of a silent crisis."

'Screwed over'

The expansion of the unemployment safety net occurred in March 2020, when Congress rushed to blunt the emerging pandemic with \$2.2 trillion in spending through the CARES Act rescue package. While never meant to be permanent, the benefits were reauthorized twice, most recently in the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan enacted by President Joe Biden and his Democratic allies in Congress last March. While many in the Republican Party at first backed the programs, by this year their lawmakers were arguing against them, and 26 states, most with Republican governors, moved to end them early in whole or in part.

A study published last month by researchers from American and Canadian universities found only modest improvements in hiring and earnings in some of those states that ended the aid early, while spending fell 20 percent. Meanwhile, the economy is far from healed, with 5.3 million jobs lost to the pandemic yet to be restored and employers adding a mere 235,000 positions in August, according to government data released Friday.

In Delaware, Ohio, Karen Coldwell says she sends out about 10 job applications weekly but has yet to be hired. All other openings she sees are for low-wage work, the kind of jobs she held when she was younger. At age 64 she is not yet ready to



TORRANCE, US: In this file photo taken on June 23, 2021 an employer holds flyers for hospitality employment during a Zisis Group job fair at The Brew Hall in Torrance, California.—AFP

retire, but worries she'll have to start dipping into her retirement savings once the long-term unemployment program ends.

"There's just nothing out there. There's jobs, but the money's not there anymore," Coldwell said. Others can't return to the workforce, even though they know the benefits that make up their only income are ending. Brooke Ganieany of The Dalles, Oregon, said she has no one to care for her toddler son if she were to find employment.

"I feel kind of screwed over," the 21-year-old told AFP. "I feel like they're doing this to make us have a plan and get back to reality, which is not exactly the slogan they should be using."—AFP

TotalEnergies signs \$27 billion oil, gas, solar deal in Iraq

BAGHDAD: French energy giant TotalEnergies has signed a \$27-billion contract to invest in oil, gas and solar energy production in Iraq, the country's oil minister said yesterday. The announcement of the deal, supposed in part to reduce Iraq's reliance on fossil fuels, came as minister Ihsan Ismail signed the contract at a Baghdad ceremony with TotalEnergies chief Patrick Pouyanné. TotalEnergies has not directly confirmed to AFP the value of the contract. "This is the largest investment in Iraq by a Western company," Ismail said. "Implementing these projects is the challenge we face now."

Iraq has immense reserves of oil and gas. But despite being the number two producer in the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, it is experiencing an acute energy crisis and chronic blackouts that fuel social discontent. Officials justify the lack of investment and the dilapidated state of its energy network by citing falling oil prices, which represent more than 90 percent of state revenue.

The country is highly dependent on neighboring Iran, which supplies it with a third of its gas and electricity needs. However, Baghdad currently owes Tehran six billion dollars for energy already supplied. The contract inked yesterday with TotalEnergies covers four projects, an Iraqi oil ministry source said ahead of the signing ceremony.

One of these aims to pipe seawater from the Gulf to southern Iraqi oilfields. Water is used to extract oil from subterranean deposits. Two projects focus on extracting and exploiting gas in southern Iraq, which is rich in fossil fuel deposits. The fourth project will see the installation of a solar farm in Artawi, near the southern port of Basra. The Iraqi source said that ultimately, the solar panels should produce "1,000 megawatts" of electricity, the equivalent of the energy produced by a nuclear reactor.

"Iraq will not pay anything," the source added. France's former Total, which has renamed itself TotalEnergies to symbolize a diversification into cleaner sources of power, is one of the world's top five energy companies. While still focused on oil and gas, the company has indicated that this year it will devote 20 percent of its growth investments to electricity and renewable energies.—AFP



Business

Cloud and Microsoft will create 13,100 jobs in Kuwait by 2024: IDC

Kuwait IT sector's annual growth to reach \$1.3 billion by 2024

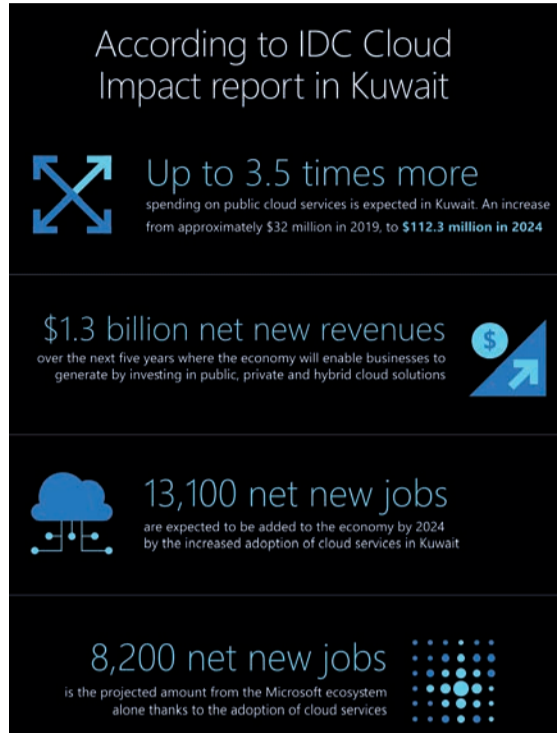
KUWAIT: Kuwait is accelerating its adoption of technology with large-scale investments that will create 13,100 new jobs in the economy, enabled through cloud and Microsoft's ecosystem, according to new research by the International Data Corporation (IDC). This expansion results from an expected 3.5 times rise in public cloud services in the country, from approximately \$32.0 million in 2019 to \$112.3 million in 2024.

This IDC White Paper discusses the impact that IT, cloud services, and the Microsoft ecosystem will have on Kuwait's economy during the 2019-2024 period. It builds on more than a decade of analysis around the economic impact of IT on local economies. The study finds that together with investments in public, private, and hybrid cloud solutions, the Kuwaiti economy will enable businesses to generate nearly \$1.3 billion in net new revenues over the next five years. The report further stated that Microsoft ecosystem is projected to add 8,200 net new jobs to the Kuwaiti economy.

"Cloud computing is a crucial pivot to successfully transitioning through the digital transformation. And we have dedicated ourselves to spreading the culture of the cloud and other impactful technologies such as AI, and data analytics, within the public and private sectors through the many tech-influenced initiatives," said Dr Ammar Al-Husaini, Deputy Director General at Central Agency for Information Technology. "The current workforce requires the best in training and skilling, as we equip them with the right tools, knowledge, and know-how to enrich their journey in growth and building a brighter future for the country." The implementation of today's smart tech will provide more job opportunities, improve customer experiences, and support the country's goals and vision for boosting the stability and strengthening of the economy as a whole. And we can achieve these heights with our knowledge, creativity, and innovation in practice," Al-Husaini added.

"The government of Kuwait has embarked on a path toward becoming a fully digitized nation by 2035. The journey to the cloud is considered an integral element of its 2035 digital strategy, with the aim of improving the government's performance and efficiency," said Alaedddine Karim, Country Manager, Kuwait. "Microsoft's efforts and investments in Cloud and AI are at the heart of Kuwait's journey to achieve Kuwait Vision 2035 - this is why Microsoft has collaborated with the Central agency of information technology (CAIT) and the Communication and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA), in the form of various MoUs and partnership agreements, as we empower the government of Kuwait to achieve more.

The IDC report finds that continued investments across Kuwait industries in digital services and emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence/machine learning (AI/ML), analytics, automation, and mobility are accelerating cloud adoption in the country. Consideration is also given to the ongoing focus on public, private partnerships, as well as



investments into small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and increasing interest in hybrid-cloud and multi-cloud strategies.

"The country has a very ambitious national development plans outlined as "New Kuwait" in Vision 2035 that strives to diversify its economy through various transformations and modernization initiatives. And the use of cloud and AI is considered an integral element of its 2035 digital strategy," said Manish Ranjan, Program Manager for Software & Cloud at IDC Middle East, Turkey and Africa (META). "Government authorities such as the Communications and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA) and the Central Agency for Information Technology (CAIT) have been phenomenal in driving ICT modernization initiatives and collaborating with technology solution providers to develop the ICT skill sets that will be required in the future. The need for innovation and the rising use of public and private cloud services will drive Kuwait's economic diversification, which will result in additional jobs," continued Manish.

Cloud and AI services have already given birth to new professions. As COVID-19 shifts the world into a "new normal," there is a strong need for workforce with digital skills, as companies are increasingly operating in a more digital and connected environment. This will, in turn, further drive rapid digital upskilling programs among non-technical workforce," concluded Ranjan.

NBK Money Market Report

US non-farm jobs report jolts markets

KUWAIT: The jobs report for August 2021 shocked markets with weaker than estimated jobs data fueling concerns over the pace of the economic recovery in the US. The data surfaced at a time when the Federal Reserve is considering a reduction in their stimulus program. The Labor Department report showed non-farm payrolls increased by 235K last month, a miss of 490K from expectations of a 725K increase. Nevertheless, the unemployment rate fell from 5.4 percent to 5.2 percent and average hourly earnings increased by 4.3 percent.

Following the release of the data, the US dollar fell to a 1-month low of 91.947 as the labor market wasn't as resilient as the markets were expecting. The single currency advanced to a 2 month high of 1.1909. Additionally, expectations for the Fed to hike interest rates fell to a 68 percent chance of a hike in December of 2022 while 3-month LIBOR dropped to an all-time low of 0.1155 percent on Friday as well.

Consumer confidence

Concerns regarding the spread of the delta variant and rising prices have weighed on American consumers outlook. The US Conference Board's index, which tracks consumer confidence, fell to 113.8 from a revised 125.1 in July versus expectations for a drop to just 123. Following the latest spike in COVID-19 infections, restaurant reservations, airline travel, and hotel occupancy have all been curbed as sentiment took a turn. The gauge of current conditions fell to its lowest since April at 147.3, while the expectations component dropped to a 7-month low of 91.4.

Activity in the US manufacturing sector inched higher in August, illustrating faster orders and production growth alongside continuous supply chain challenges. Adding to supply chain bottlenecks, manufacturers have also seen labor constraints which have lengthened delivery times. According to the

Institute for Supply Management's gauge, manufacturing activity registered at 59.9 following 59.5 in July, moving more comfortably away from the 50 mark which delimitates expansion and contraction.

Manufacturers struggle

German manufacturers struggled to keep up with demand in August due to rising prices and supply shortages for raw materials and components such as semiconductors. The IHS Markit's final Purchasing Managers' Index fell to 62.6 from 65.9 in July, marking the lowest level for the index in 6 months while remaining comfortably above the 50-expansion mark. As growth in new orders rises towards the highest on record, output has fallen behind an extent unseen in over 25 years. The German economy rebounded in Q2 of 2021, registering a growth rate of 1.6 percent compared to the previous three months alongside the easing of COVID-19 restrictions. Moving forward, the government expects growth of 3.5 percent this year and 3.6 percent for the next.

Eurozone inflation

Eurozone inflation surged to a 10-year-high this month with further rises still likely to come, challenging the European Central Bank's benign view on price growth and its commitment to look past what it deems a transient increase. Consumer prices in the 19 countries sharing the euro rose by 3 percent this month, after increasing by 2.2 percent in July, far above expectations for 2.7 percent and moving well clear of the ECB's 2 percent target. The increase was fueled by energy costs but food prices also surged, while there were also unusually large increases in the prices of industrial goods, said Eurostat, the EU's statistics agency.

OPEC to raise supply

Despite a call from the US Biden administration to increase production further, OPEC and its allies have decided to move ahead with their previous plan of gradually increasing oil output. The approved plan details an additional 400,000 barrels per day to its monthly overall production, until pandemic-related cuts are phased out. The White House had previously urged OPEC to boost production faster to meet global demand as countries around the world emerge from the pandemic. Meanwhile, OPEC delegates have said that it was still too early to accelerate supply as many countries around the world still struggle with the impact of the Delta variant.



شركة الصفاة للاستثمار
AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON
2 SEPTEMBER 2021

Market	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
Premier Market	30,163	7,458.81	0.2%	0.4%	23.3%	642,812,355	226,175,212	27,296	29.5	2.3	75.9%
Main Market	9,573	5,532.41	0.8%	0.5%	21.5%	947,546,653	88,237,162	29,984	20.9	3.9	24.1%
All Share	39,736	6,813.11	0.3%	0.4%	22.8%	1,590,359,008	314,412,374	57,280	27.4	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	23,166	1,568.82	0.2%	0.5%	24.3%	326,349,536	131,255,289	11,921	33.6	2.3	57.62%
BASIC MATERIALS	957	1,071.80	-2.4%	-1.0%	19.3%	3,737,100	2,610,575	889	23.7	1.5	2.38%
CONSUMER DISCRETIONARY	560	1,091.99	3.1%	0.2%	46.3%	43,280,903	9,142,128	3,027	9.4	45.0	1.39%
CONSUMER STAPLES	232	762.61	2.9%	3.1%	-6.8%	3,284,705	1,886,583	537	15.7	1.6	0.58%
ENERGY	286	1,370.68	0.8%	0.6%	7.3%	18,247,239	646,164	628	14.1	1.3	0.71%
FINANCIAL SERVICES	3,503	1,267.95	0.6%	0.6%	36.4%	412,830,979	58,947,689	14,577	8.7	1.6	8.71%
HEALTH CARE	396	797.41	-1.2%	0.7%	-3.5%	227,547	115,920	74	27.4	5.3	0.98%
INDUSTRIALS	4,153	1,170.63	0.4%	0.4%	31.4%	85,795,927	32,714,970	7,729	26.8	1.8	10.33%
INSURANCE	606	1,453.11	0.8%	-0.4%	25.7%	1,523,627	263,870	200	10.5	1.2	1.51%
REAL ESTATE	2,697	1,255.93	1.7%	1.0%	31.8%	563,096,399	52,398,699	13,802	26.8	1.3	6.71%
TECHNOLOGY	10	742.05	1.0%	1.8%	47.6%	346,815	35,044	37	-	0.9	0.02%
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	3,379	1,101.54	-0.3%	-1.1%	-0.1%	124,651,862	22,754,008	3,319	15.9	2.1	8.40%
UTILITIES	261	623.68	2.2%	1.7%	-14.4%	6,986,369	1,641,434	540	20.5	5.0	0.65%

Top Gainers

Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
GFC	44	13.7	64,590	2,606	31
THURAYA	96	12.4	49,816	4,206	39
TAMINV	311.0	12.3	482,395	143,699	91
MRC	145	11.5	111,828	15,101	76
INVESTORS	17.8	9.9	200,948,098	3,449,341	1,471

Top Losers

Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
ALKOUT	452	-32.5	46	27	11
KSHC	28	-18.3	45,950	1,325	14
PAPCO	50.0	-16.7	459	23	7
QIC	69	-14.3	140	11	5
ARGAN	95.0	-9.5	320,250	29,524	30

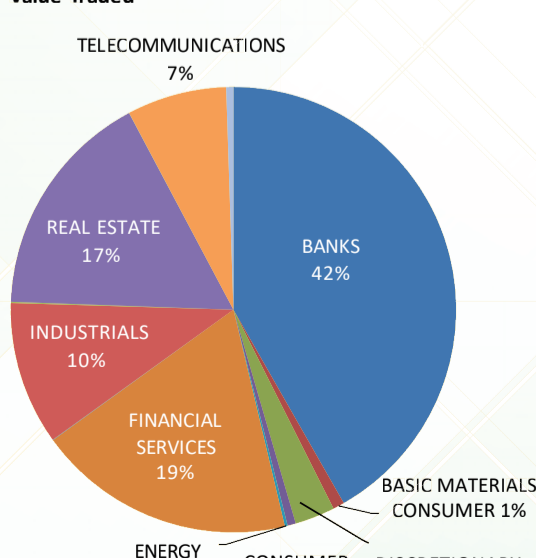
Top Volume

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
INVESTORS	18	9.9	200,948,098	3,449,341	1,471
KRE	144	2.9	123,782,783	17,772,879	3,238
AAN	15	3.6	89,018,377	1,267,986	867
MAZAYA	81	1.4	78,909,314	6,292,946	2,253
GBK	240	-0.8	69,480,780	16,756,585	834

Top Value

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
NBK	940	0.1	34,813,885	32,601,618	2,049
KFH	824	0.6	38,259,688	31,557,745	2,897
ZAIN	602	-0.5	34,214,022	20,931,353	2,179
WARBABANK	263	1.5	67,660,520	18,201,027	2,419
KRE	144	2.9	123,782,783	17,772,879	3,238

Value Traded



Market Summary:

- Both Premier and Main markets' volume have dropped 3% and 9%, respectively. The Main market value dropped 15%, but due to the increase in prices of the stocks listed in the Premier market the value increased 4%.
- All Share and Premier both reached the targets and retreated to retest the support levels. The Main market continued reaching higher levels but we might witness a small drop to rest the support level before heading to higher levels.
- Technically, the All-Share index support level at 6750 and 6700. Staying above 6750 will lead to 6905 passing the resistance at 6812. Premier index support levels at 7428, 7317, and 7274. Staying above 7430 will lead to 7590 passing the resistance at 7487. The Main index registered a new all-time high-level closing at 5532 creating a support level at 5495, 5467, and 5393. Staying above 5510 will lead to 5580 passing the resistance at 5550.

Business

Nissan Al-Babtain introduces first manufacturer-backed CPO program

Nissan Intelligent Choice caters to growing demand for CPO vehicles in Kuwait

KUWAIT: Providing buyers with safety, value for money and peace of mind, Nissan Al-Babtain is bolstering its Nissan Intelligent Choice fleet of Certified Pre-Owned (CPO) vehicles with the launch of first-of-its-kind manufacturer-backed warranty in the Middle East. Catering to a growing need for high-quality and cost-effective mobility, Nissan Intelligent Choice is an innovative program by Nissan that allows an increased number of buyers to partake in the joys of owning a certified pre-owned vehicle from the brand's extensive line-up and benefiting from the exciting performance, innovation, and reliability of a Nissan.

A global program that made its way to the region, Nissan Intelligent Choice covers the changing needs of customers in markets such as the UAE, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, Jordan and Lebanon. Recording a year-on-year increase in sales, over 5,000 Nissan Intelligent Choice of certified pre-owned vehicles have been sold across the region to date, signaling Nissan's commitment to leading the industry towards greater transparency when it comes to sales, aftersales support, pricing and servicing.

All CPO vehicles sold under the Nissan Intelligent Choice program pass a stringent 167-point inspection

and reconditioning process, focusing on the cosmetic and mechanical aspects of a vehicle, to offer customers the highest level of quality and assurance. Maintaining a distinctive and desirable CPO fleet is made possible by ensuring all vehicles are less than five years old, have a clean history, and an untampered mileage of under 150,000 kilometers.

In addition to offering exceptional value for money, Nissan Intelligent Choice offers buyers a range of benefits, including but not limited to, higher residual values and peace of mind with up to two-year or 60,000km manufacturer-backed warranty that offers regional coverage and is transferable to other owners. This warranty accompanies all certified pre-owned Nissan vehicles and is radically different to dealer-backed warranties provided by other CPO programs in the market.

Customers are welcome to visit and interact with sales teams at showrooms located in Ardiya - Al-Qurain markets, Al-Rai and KFH showroom or online, as well as browse the exciting range of Nissan Intelligent Choice vehicles at select Nissan showrooms in Kuwait. Along with a dedicated retail space within showrooms, Nissan Intelligent Choice offers customers the same convenience



and flexibility they are used to when purchasing a certified Nissan vehicle.

Customers with queries and interest in gather-

ing more information can contact the dedicated call center on 1804 888 or visit the official website www.babtai.com.

Three risks putting hybrid work models in danger and what to do about it

By Werno Gevers

After the COVID-19 pandemic emerged in early 2020 and countries around the world went into lockdown, organizations embarked on rapid digital transformation at an unprecedented scale. A global McKinsey survey found that companies accelerated the digitization of their customer and supply chain interactions and their internal operations by three to four years.

Roughly 18 months after the first lockdowns, most organizations follow a hybrid work model that sees some employees working from the office some of the time, in between periods of remote work. Unfortunately, a new picture is emerging. The global cybercrime industry - already experiencing a period of unrestrained growth and expansion thanks to new attack tools and the growing digitisation of our everyday lives - is pouncing on the opportunity to exploit vulnerabilities in hybrid work models.

Hybrid work models offer a plethora of potential attack surfaces, with remote working employees especially vulnerable due to the generally lower levels of protection against cyberattacks on home networks and personal devices. In a recent roundtable discussion hosted by Mimecast, security leaders across the Middle East detailed their challenges with securing their hybrid workforce. One security leader recounted how threat actors targeted his organization's finance and accounting department with a flurry of impersonation attacks as they worked from home.

For some participants, the increase in cyber threats

has been a catalyst for greater investment into new technologies such as artificial intelligence and LTE. Security leaders at the roundtable discussion also cited the need for new policies and processes to ensure employees can work remotely without compromising organizational defenses. As hybrid work models are likely to remain for the foreseeable future, it is vital that organizations stay abreast of the new security risks and challenges created by hybrid work models. According to Mimecast research and insights gained from members of the discussion, there are a few main risks - internal and external - threatening the defenses of organisations across the Middle East:



Werno Gevers

Risk 1: User Behavior

User behavior plays a major role in strengthening organizational defenses and building greater resilience against data breaches. However, employees working in isolation while dealing with the mental impact of a global health crisis were more psychologically vulnerable, increasing the rate of risky user behavior. One example is the use of work devices for personal matters: research conducted by Mimecast in 2020 found that 87 percent of respondents from the UAE stated they use their company-issued devices for personal use. More worryingly, while all UAE respondents said they were aware that links found in emails, on social media or within websites can infect their devices, six out of ten (61 percent) still admitted to opening emails they thought suspicious. With some studies estimating that nine of out ten successful data breaches involve human error, organizations should invest in ongoing awareness training to equip end-users with knowledge and skills that can help avoid risky behavior.

Risk 2: Online brand exploitation

Globally, a sharp rise in brand impersonation

attacks is a cause of concern. Mimecast threat intelligence detected a 44 percent rise in brand impersonation emails directed at Mimecast customers in 2020, reaching an average of 27 million such emails every month. Top brands were welcome targets of fraudsters and cybercriminals. According to Mimecast's State of Brand Protection report, companies on the Brandz Top 100 Most Valuable Global Brands 2020 index experienced a massive 381 percent increase in brand impersonation attacks in May and June 2020 compared to January and February, before the pandemic struck.

In the UAE, 36 percent of respondents to the Mimecast State of Email Security 2021 report saw an increase in brand impersonation via counterfeit websites, and two in five had a rise in malicious email spoofing. Organizations across the region will need to look beyond their own perimeters to protect customers and partners from attack. Tools such as DMARC are essential in protecting their own domains from compromise, but that's only one step in protecting a brand from exploitation.

Machine learning powered web scanning and analysis of key indicators - such as new domain registrations and the issuing of security certificates - could help organizations stop cybercriminals before they can take their impersonation attacks live.

Risk 3: Lack of defensive depth

An over-reliance on boxed security solutions that accompany popular business productivity tools such as Microsoft 365 could be leaving organizations vulnerable to sophisticated attack. If native security tools fail to halt an attack, another tool should be able to compensate, thereby keeping organizations - and end-users - safe. A defense-in-depth strategy can improve an organization's overall security posture. Such a strategy needs to provide protection and visibility within the organization, at the email perimeter, and beyond, where the aforementioned brand exploitation and impersonation attacks can wreak havoc on organizations and their supply chains.

cant strides with its digital transformation journey, drawing attention to its advanced and innovative financial services and products. The bank successfully launched the digital service "opening bank account online" for new customers; citizens and residents within minutes without having to visit the branch.

KFH rolled out various innovative financial solutions such as: Live FX service, which provides live dynamic foreign exchange prices with favorable margins 24 hours a day, every weekday, instant cross-border payments service to at KFHTurkey using Ripple's technology, the free of charge "SWIFT GPT" service to track local and international banking transfers electronically for individuals and corporate via KFHonline, Kuwait Clearing Company KCC dividend subscription, transfer to KFHTrade, deposit of cheques via mobile, Cardless cash withdrawal by (QR Code, Civil ID & Mobile Number), and a complete update of KYC request "Know your customer". In addition, KFH offers digital services of opening a gold account with options of selling, buying and trading online, Skiplino to book appointments electronically in the banking branches, KFHPay electronic payment service through which the customer can pay through the KFHonline mobile application or via the K-Net page, Chatbot, Push Notification service, Instant Cheque Printing and receiving gold biscuits instantly through XTMs available at the smart branches: KFH Go, in addition to many other highly efficient digital services.

Mohammad Al-Hajri.

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 250 to KD 500 or an interest-free loan for a period of up to five years and up to KD 25,000, Kuwaiti pensioner, along with expatriate customers who transfer their debt to the Bank will receive an instant cash gift of 1 percent from their transferred debt. 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.

Gulf Bank appoints Waleed Mandani as Deputy CEO

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank has announced the appointment of Waleed Khaled Mandani as Deputy CEO of Consumer Banking and Investments, starting yesterday. Mandani will be leading the Consumer Banking and Investment groups, while implementing the groups long-term consumer banking and investments strategy and maintaining its alignment with the digital transformation plan currently taking place at the bank.

Mandani brings to the table over 25 years of extensive banking and investment experience, having held numerous, prominent leadership roles across multiple, major financial institutions. Prior to joining Gulf Bank, Mandani held the position of Group Chief Retail and Private Banking Officer at the Kuwait Finance House Group.

Mandani received his Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration from the University of Arizona in the US in 1992. He successfully completed a specialized training course in Decision Making Strategies at Harvard Business School in 2015 and an Executive Program in Project Management & Leadership from Cornell University in the US in 2011.



Waleed Mandani

AUB congratulates winners of Al-Hassad draw

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank (AUB) held the weekly draw of 1 September 2021 of Al-Hassad Islamic account Al-Hassad Islamic account, the first Islamic prizes account in Kuwait which offers over 750 prizes over a 12 month period and provides numerous features. Such features include the simplest and easiest savings program, highest number of winners, largest prize value, loyalty multipliers, and unique account opening feature online with all ease with instant deposit option.

The bank announced 20 winners of KD 1,000 as follows: Mohalhal Khaled Al-Mudhaf, Schuster Otmar, Sanat Humoud Al-Rasheedi, Musthafa Unniyalukkal, Yousif Malallah, Saud Bu Haimad, Amir Abdulredha Al-Hussain, Islam Khan, Baheyyah Hetaimi Al-Dhafeeri, Israel Abu Husain, Khaled Saleh Majed, Mohammad Abbas Al-Ibrahim, Abdullah S A Al-Salbood, Mohammad Hajej Ghadhiban, Abdulaziz Yousef Al-Saffar, Mohammad Hamad Al-Enezi, Faisal Salem Al-Azmi, Luluwa Jaber Ahmad, Nessorin Abdul Ghafur and Sameerah Abdulaziz Al-Barouni.

The draws of Al-Hassad include several cash prizes, such as KD 100,000 each Eid and the grand quarterly draw of KD 250,000 prize which continues to be a key aspiration for customers who are wishing to fulfill their dreams. Al-Hassad offers 20 weekly prizes of KD 1,000 for each winner. Furthermore, for the first time in Kuwait, the AUB Al-Hassad presents the "Privilege Draw", which is a quarterly draw of KD 25,000 exclusively for Al-Hassad customers who maintained their balances for more than one year and have not won a prize in the past five years. For all draws, the clients are eligible for one draw chance for each KD 50 deposited in their Al-Hassad account.

KFH: Huge customers' demand on 'instant card issuance' service

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has witnessed huge customers demand on "instant card issuance" service that has been introduced by KFH as the first bank in the world using a Hybrid Solution powered by NCR's solution.

KFH customers can now initiate and complete the whole card issuance process using over 100 "Self Service" terminals installed in branches and shopping malls within 3 minutes. Customers at their convenient time can print their own banking cards 24x7 using a "Self Service" Solution or through KFH online using QR code or while visiting the branch where KFH Customer Support Representative can initiate the card printing using a tablet during the account opening process or card replacement request. This confirms KFH's ongoing keenness to adopt the latest financial technology while delivering superior customer's banking experience.

With this innovative solution, KFH demonstrates its commitment to transforming branches using self-service and assisted services technology to improve customer experience. KFH succeeded in making signifi-

CBK announces winners of Al-Najma draws

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

The results of the draws were as follows:

- 1- Al-Najma monthly draw - the prize of KD 20,000 went to the winner Eun Sang Choi.
- 2- Al-Najma weekly draw - the prize of KD 5,000 went to the winner Khalid Jamal Al-Abdallah.
- 3- Salary account campaign - the prize of up to KD 1,000 went to the winner Muneerah

Lifestyle | Features



Polish actor Piotr Witkowski poses during the premiere of his movie "Mistrz" (Master) based on the book by daughter of Pietrzykowski - Eleonora Szafran, Warsaw.



Director Maciej Barczewski (left) and Eleonora Szafran (right) - daughter of Auschwitz boxer Tadeusz "Teddy" Pietrzykowski and author of his biography are seen speaking with press during the premiere of the movie "Mistrz" (Master) based on the book, Warsaw.



Eleonora Szafran - daughter of Auschwitz boxer Tadeusz "Teddy" Pietrzykowski holds her book about her father during an AFP interview.

'Champion of Auschwitz': The boxer who brought hope



In this Handout picture taken in Warsaw before the World War II and released by Eleonora Szafran, Auschwitz boxer Tadeusz 'Teddy' Pietrzykowski poses in his sports' gear.

Polish boxer Tadeusz Pietrzykowski was known for his ability to dodge blows. Still, the odds were against him when he fought his first bout at the Nazi German death camp Auschwitz. Severely emaciated, Prisoner Number 77 was up against a much heavier German inmate—a "kapo" who oversaw other prisoners.

"From around me I got warnings and gestures that I was crazy: 'He'll kill you, destroy you,'" he said in his official account for the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum after the war. "But there was no time to think... There was bread to be won. I was hungry, my friends were hungry," said Pietrzykowski, the pre-war Champion of Warsaw in the bantamweight class. His courage paid off. With a successful left jab to the face, the 23-year-old Pietrzykowski drew blood from the kapo, Walter Duening.

The loser chose not to seek revenge for his loss and instead rewarded the boxer nicknamed Teddy with a loaf and some meat. Pietrzykowski went on to fight dozens of matches at Auschwitz, winning all but one or two, thereby scoring special privileges that ensured his and others' survival. Little known even in Poland, Teddy's story has inspired a movie, "The Champion of Auschwitz," which recently

had its premiere at home and will hit theatres abroad later this year.

Sports at Auschwitz

"It's an incredible story since very few people know there was boxing at Auschwitz, that there were sporting events," said Piotr Witkowski, the actor who plays Duening in the film. Witkowski told AFP that the boxer was a danger for the Germans "because he became the inmates' hope that it was possible to win against the system, to win against the evil Nazis". Pietrzykowski, who was Catholic, was sent to Auschwitz in June 1940 as a political prisoner after being caught trying to reach France to join the Polish army that was forming there. He was put on the first mass transport to the death camp.

Nearly a year into his internment, he was offered the chance to fight Duening. The Germans had grown tired of only sparing each other for fun and were looking for other opponents. "There was cheering from both Poles and the German prisoners. It was an interesting event, something new at Auschwitz. So this bout set off matches between inmates of different nationalities," said Renata Koszyk, curator of a new exhibition on sports at Auschwitz, which runs until March at the museum on the site of the former camp.

"Generally though, sports weren't a widespread phenomenon at Auschwitz. Most inmates were so exhausted from daily work that they couldn't afford to expend extra effort and sometimes didn't even have the strength to walk over to watch," she told AFP. Those who did catch the boxing matches included Nazi SS officers, who even placed bets on the winner.

'Bravery, benevolence'

In exchange for providing entertainment, Pietrzykowski received various perks. Not only was he able to secure an easier work assignment and added calories for himself, he also shared whatever extra food he received, according to testimonials from fellow inmates. The leeway he enjoyed as a star boxer at the camp enabled him to procure medication for others, pass information and fulfill other assignments for the resistance movement.

"My father lived, fought, and demonstrated this bravery and benevolence for his fellow inmates... and was helped in return too," his daughter Eleonora Szafran told AFP. When Pietrzykowski was lying sick with typhus at the camp hospital, word spread that the SS officers were planning to select patients to send to the gas chambers. To save the boxer's life,

his friends smuggled him out and hid him.

Szafran's book "Mistrz" ("Champion") has just been published featuring Pietrzykowski's wartime memories—among them, his assassination attempt against the camp's commandant and horrifying scenes he witnessed of Nazi brutality. A million Jews died at Auschwitz-Birkenau, along with tens of thousands of others including Catholic Poles, Roma and Soviet prisoners of war, between 1940 and 1945.

'Do the right thing'

Pietrzykowski survived both Auschwitz and a couple of other concentration camps—and tried to restart his boxing career after the war but was foiled by illness. He went on to become a beloved school gym teacher, pursuing his lifelong passion for painting on the side, and died in 1991 in his seventies.

The actor who portrayed him, Piotr Glowacki, said he hoped moviegoers would be inspired to "have the courage to follow Teddy's example and do the right thing." "To defend those who are segregated because of their race, nationality, sexual orientation, views... To side with the oppressed," he said. — AFP

'Last Night in Soho' brings MeToo to 1960s London

Romantic notions about Swinging Sixties London were slashed to pieces at the Venice Film Festival Saturday with the premiere of "Last Night in Soho". It is a very different role for Anya Taylor-Joy, the breakout star from last year's Netflix hit "The Queen's Gambit", who finds herself doused in gallons of blood in the new psychological horror. But at its heart, the movie has a serious point to make about our rose-tinted views of the past, director Edgar Wright told journalists in Venice.

"It's dangerous to romanticize the past," he said. "As you get further away from a decade, you tend to concentrate on the good things. The Sixties become about the fashion or Carnaby Street and reduced to, like, Austin Powers fancy dress. But everything bad that's happening now was happening then." Wright made his name with comedies "Shaun of

the Dead" and "Hot Fuzz" that played with the cliches of horror and action films. His new film, playing out of competition in Venice, takes a more serious approach. It features a modern-day fashion student (played by Thomasin McKenzie) transported back in time to 1960s Soho in central London.

Initially intoxicated by the glamour of the time, things take a dark turn as she discovers the brutal misogyny suffered by her alter-ego (played by Taylor-Joy). As it evolves into a slasher picture, the film keeps up a steady stream of classic songs from the period, which Taylor-Joy said was a particular pleasure for her. "The first music that I really fell in love was the music of the Sixties," she said at a press conference. "I tend to make playlists for my characters and for Sandy (her character) it was all the music I listened to when I was 16... It was a blast."

"Last Night in Soho" proved to be the last film for Diana Rigg, star of the iconic 1960s TV show "The Avengers", who died in September 2020. "It's desperately sad that I won't be able to have another gossipy brunch with Dame Diana Rigg. The only thing I can take away is how lucky I was to work with her," said Wright. "She had to finish her work on the movie—she was such a professional," he added. "We were told she needed to finish very urgently and we knew what that meant without asking." — AFP



(From left) British actor Michael Ajao, British director Edgar Wright, US-born Argentine-British actress Anya Taylor-Joy and British actor Matt Smith arrive for the screening of the film 'Last Night in Soho' presented out of competition during the 78th Venice Film Festival at Venice Lido. — AFP



(From left) Italian actress Teresa Saponangelo, actress Sofya Gershech, Italian actor Filippo Scotti, Italian actor Marlon Joubert, Italian actor Biagio Manna, Italian actor Toni Servillo, Italian actress Luisa Ranieri and Italian director Paolo Sorrentino arrive for the screening of the film 'E stata la mano di Dio' (The Hand of God) presented in competition during the 78th Venice Film Festival. — AFP

Sorrentino taps Naples boyhood in latest film at Venice

Turning 50 last year, Italian director Paolo Sorrentino found he was finally ready to put his heartbreaking story about growing up in 1980s Naples on film, in all its exuberance and anguish. "The Hand of God" is an autobiographical film that explores family, maturity, and a moment in time when the chaotic underdog city gained dignity and hope with the arrival of football legend Diego Maradona.

"At a certain point you take stock of the beautiful things that you've loved in your life," the director told journalists ahead of the film's premiere at the Venice Film Festival on Thursday. Renowned for his Oscar-winning "The Great Beauty" and Netflix hit "The Young Pope", Sorrentino

said he was partly provoked by a friend who accused him of avoiding personal films. "I realised there was a lot of love in my boyhood, even though one part was painful, and that all this could be told cinematographically," he said. If "The Great Beauty" was an ode to Rome, his latest is similarly a love letter to his home town.

"Naples in the '80s was like going on a safari on foot without the safety of a jeep," Sorrentino said. "It was very fun, very violent, very dangerous. It was like a jungle—you could meet a lion but you could also

meet beautiful birds." What every Neapolitan of that era remembers is the arrival of Argentine legend Maradona to play for the struggling local team. "For me as a boy, the most important thing that happened at that time was the fact that Maradona came to Naples," Sorrentino said.

The film's title refers to Maradona's infamous handball goal against England in the 1986 World Cup. It traces how the young Sorrentino, represented by alter-ego Fabietto (played by newcomer Filippo Scotti), was indirectly saved by the footballer, before he went on to pursue his dream of becoming a film-maker. "The message of the movie is that there is a future for everyone, regardless of the suffering and the pain you have experienced in life," he said. "I hope that young people can understand this because... they're more worried about the future than we were." — AFP



Italian director Paolo Sorrentino arrives for the screening of the film 'E stata la mano di Dio' (The Hand of God) presented in competition during the 78th Venice Film Festival. — AFP

VEHICLE CARRYING FAMED JAPANESE DIRECTOR TAKESHI KITANO ATTACKED WITH PICKAXE

A vehicle carrying acclaimed Japanese film director and actor Takeshi Kitano was attacked by a man with a pickaxe and a knife, media reports said. Kitano, 74, also a celebrated television comedian in Japan, was inside the vehicle on the premises of private network TBS in Tokyo when the attack took place late Saturday night, the station

reported. The attacker, a male in his 40s from the Chiba region east of Tokyo, cracked the windshield and beat other parts of the vehicle, TBS and other local media said.

Kitano, also known by his stage name Beat Takeshi, first drew acclaim for his raw depictions of the violent world of Japanese organized crime. He garnered internation-

al fame for his roles in gritty dystopian thriller "Battle Royale" as well as in the eponymous comedy game show "Takeshi's Castle". No one was injured in Saturday evening's attack, reports said, which national broadcaster NHK said took place after Kitano had finished filming a live news and entertainment show for TBS. Police arrested the man on the spot

and are interviewing him to determine his motive, NTV said. Tokyo Metropolitan Police declined to comment when reached by AFP yesterday. — AFP



Japanese director Takeshi Kitano



Ahmed Al-Damlakhi, a 65-year-old fabrics merchant, stands outside his shop in the 'Souq Khan Al-Harir' (Silk Khan covered market) in Syria's northern city of Aleppo. — AFP photos



People walk about in the reopened "Souq Khan Al-Harir" (Silk Khan covered market) in Syria's northern city of Aleppo.



An historic building undergoes restoration in the 'Souq Al-Habil' (ropes market) in Syria's northern city of Aleppo.

Shadow of Syria's exiled hangs over revived Aleppo souk

The historic Khan Al-Harir souk in war-torn Syria's erstwhile economic capital of Aleppo has reopened following restoration work, but much of the former workforce that energized it remains exiled. "Reconstruction works are done and this is great, but it's not enough," said Ahmed Al-Shib, a 55-year-old textile merchant who had hoped to pass his business onto his sons. "What we want is for our sons to return to these stores," he told AFP during the reopening of the covered market this week, showing pictures he had sent to his eldest who moved to Algeria three years ago to join his brother.

Khan Al-Harir (silk souk) - one of 37 markets surrounding Aleppo's famed citadel - attracted thousands of tourists and merchants before the onset of Syria's conflict in 2011. It was hit hard in fighting between rebels and regime forces that damaged as much as 60 percent of Aleppo's Old City, according to estimates by the UN's cultural agency, UNESCO. The market officially reopened on Sunday - five years after the Syrian government regained control of Aleppo.

Restoration works erased traces of some of the conflict's most brutal battles but it did little to console traders who have lost much more than just their stores. In Ahmed's fabric shop, a portrait of his father - the founder of the family business - adorns a freshly painted wall. Like many others in Khan Al-Harir, Ahmed fears the family's store may die with him. "My children live in Algeria, and the children of other traders are scattered between Egypt, Erbil" in northern Iraq and elsewhere, he said. "There are a lot of trades that will be threatened if our sons continue to emigrate."

Economic exodus

Syria's conflict has killed nearly half a million people, forced half of the pre-war population from their homes, and decimated the economy and infrastructure, with more than 80 percent of its residents now living below the poverty line. As a result, Aleppo, long considered one of Syria's main commercial hubs, has lost many of the merchants and businessmen who once gave the city its economic edge. Many have sought business opportunities elsewhere, with neighboring Iraq and Turkey popular destinations.

Ahmed al-Damlakhi took over a fabric shop in Khan Al-Harir from his brother who emigrated to Turkey with his children several years ago. Under a freshly renovated arch dotted with white and black stones, the 65-year-old greeted neighbors he hadn't seen in years. He started a video call with his brother in Turkey to show the scene in the market, where traders had gathered outside their shops amid a trickle of customers. "I am optimistic about the reopening of the market ... but we are missing merchants and investors who are now scattered across the Arab world and have established businesses there," he said.

Although he wished his brother was

of the Old City to the gates of the citadel in the east, covering an area of around 160,000 square meters. For centuries, they were the commercial heart of the ancient city and served as a key trading hub between the East and the West. Restoration works began two years ago after Syrian authorities signed a partnership agreement with the Aga Khan Foundation in Syria. The renovation of Khan Al-Harir - home to some 60 stores - took around a year to complete, and preparations are underway for two other markets to also be restored.

"The area was a pile of destruction, and today we can say that the market's infrastructure has been completely reha-



An historic building undergoes restoration in the "Souq Al-Habil" (ropes market) in Syria's northern city of Aleppo.

with him to celebrate the reopening, Damlakhi said the reasons that initially pushed him out had not changed. "We used to depend on tourists and visitors coming from the countryside and other provinces... but the economic situation is now very difficult," he said. "Western sanctions, meanwhile, create obstacles in relation to imports, exports and overall trade," Damlakhi added. "So long as the situation doesn't change, it will be hard for my brother and his sons to return."

Vacant shops

The vast souks, the oldest of their kind in the world, stretch from the western part

of the Old City to the gates of the citadel in the east, covering an area of around 160,000 square meters. For centuries, they were the commercial heart of the ancient city and served as a key trading hub between the East and the West. Restoration works began two years ago after Syrian authorities signed a partnership agreement with the Aga Khan Foundation in Syria. The renovation of Khan Al-Harir - home to some 60 stores - took around a year to complete, and preparations are underway for two other markets to also be restored.

"The area was a pile of destruction, and today we can say that the market's infrastructure has been completely reha-

Unfinished Beethoven symphony reimagined in a click

As conductor Guillaume Berney marks the opening downbeat, the first chords ring out in a Lausanne concert hall of what could conceivably be an extract of Beethoven's Tenth Symphony-if the great German composer had ever managed to complete the piece. The classical music world has often speculated what Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) would have gone on to write after his monumental Ninth Symphony. And a number of musicologists and composers have already ventured to orchestrate and complete some of the scraps of notation they believe were his first sketches for his next symphonic masterpiece.

But to mark their 10th anniversary season this year, Berney and the Nexus orchestra have decided to use artificial intelligence to create a four-minute extract which they have dubbed BeethovANN Symphony 10.1. "That is not a typo," Berney told the audience at the first night, with a second performance scheduled in Geneva on Friday. Berney explains that the ANN refers to the artificial neural network that created it, basically without human intervention.

"We don't know what it will sound like," Berney acknowledged to AFP ahead of the Lausanne concert. The final score was only generated and printed out hours before the performance, after computer programme designer Florian Colombo oversaw the final step in what for him has been a years-long process.

'Like watching a birth'

Seated in his small apartment with a view over the old city of Lausanne and the Alps in the distance, Colombo made a

couple small changes before clicking a button to generate the score. "It's like watching a birth," Berney said as he picked up the first pages emerging from the printer. The excitement was palpable as the freshly created sheet music was presented to the orchestra. The musicians

tor said, acknowledging though that "maybe it lacks that spark of genius." Colombo, a computer scientist at the EPFL technical university, developed his algorithm using so-called deep-learning, a subset of artificial intelligence aimed at teaching computers to "think" via struc-

gists believe could have been for a new symphony. "The idea is to just push a button to produce a complete musical score for an entire symphonic orchestra completely without intervention," Colombo said. "That is, except for all the work I put in ahead of time," added the computer

cal composition more accessible and for broadening human creation. While the program "can digest what has already been done and propose something similar," he said the aim was for "humans to use the tools to create something new."

"It is not blasphemous at all," Berney



Nexus orchestra performs in Lausanne.

eagerly began rehearsing for the evening concert, many smiling with surprise as the harmonies unfolded. "This is an emotional experience for me," said Colombo, himself a cellist, as the sound filled the hall. "There is a touch of Beethoven there, but really, it is BeethovANN. Something new to discover." Berney agreed.

"It works," he said. "There are some very good parts, and a few that are a bit out of character, but it's nice," the conduc-

tures modeled on the human brain or ANNs. To generate something that might possibly pass as an extract from Beethoven's Tenth, Colombo first fed the computer all of the master's 16 string quartets, explaining that the chamber works provided a very clear sense of his harmonic and melodic structures.

He then asked it to create a piece around one of the theme fragments found in Beethoven's sparse notes that musicol-

programmer who has been working for nearly a decade towards deep-learning-generated music.

'Not blasphemous'

Colombo said that using a computer to try to recreate something begun by one of the world's greatest musical geniuses was not encroaching on the human creative process. Instead, he said, he saw his algorithm as a new tool for making musi-

cal composition more accessible and for broadening human creation. While the program "can digest what has already been done and propose something similar," he said the aim was for "humans to use the tools to create something new."

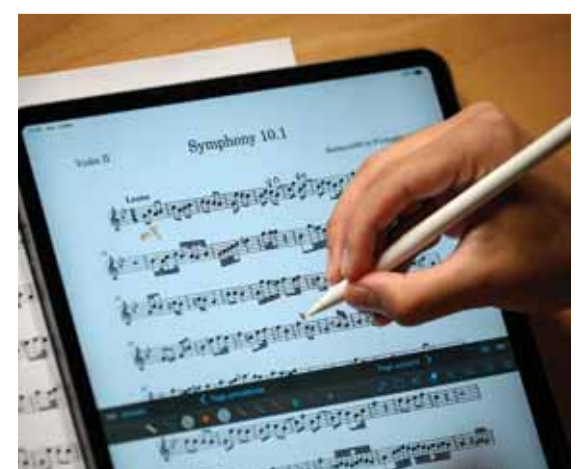
"It is not blasphemous at all," Berney



Computer program designer Florian Colombo (right) and conductor Guillaume Berney look at a music score on a computer screen in Lausanne. — AFP photos



Computer program designer Florian Colombo (right) and conductor Guillaume Berney look at a music score freshly printed in Lausanne.



A member of Nexus orchestra annotates a music score on his tablet computer during a rehearsal in Lausanne.



In this file photo models walk the runway at the Rodarte show during New York Fashion Week: The Shows in New York City. — AFP photos



In this file photo taken on February 13, 2019, models walk the runway for the Michael Kors Collection Fall 2019 runway show at Cipriani Wall Street during New York Fashion Week in New York City.

Fashion Week returning to New York with in-person energy

After a long hiatus due to the coronavirus pandemic, New York is opening its Spring/Summer 2022 Fashion Week with the return of in-person runway shows featuring big names like Tom Ford and Altuzarra. But COVID-related curbs will deprive the series of some of its usual international flavor as it rolls out this week. The pandemic overshadowed the last two fashion weeks, in September 2020 and February 2021, as both were dominated by virtual runway shows. Steven Kolb, chief executive of the Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA), says he sees room for both digital and in-person shows.

But "there is a real optimism and energy and enthusiasm about returning to live shows," he added. "There is, of course, nothing you can compare to a live show." In New York, whose fashion shows precede those of London, Milan and Paris, there is no shortage of iconic runway settings, as with Tommy Hilfiger's Apollo Theater show in 2019 or Michael Kors' Studio 54-themed event the same year. On Thursday evening, LaQuan Smith will present his collection atop the Empire State Building, capping a day including shows by Moschino, Sergio Hudson and Carolina Herrera.

On Tuesday, the founder of Collina

Strada, Hillary Taymour, will confirm her environmentally conscious approach with a show on a rooftop garden in Brooklyn. "This is an important moment for New York, and we're proud to support the city and the industry," said Michael Kors. "We're resilient," added Steven Kolb. "And we're optimistic."

The COVID factor

Fashion Week this year overlaps with the Metropolitan Museum of Art's own fashion extravaganza, a high point of the city's social calendar, set for today. This year's Met Gala has a distinctively youthful imprint, hosted by singer Billie Eilish, actor Timothee Chalamet, poet Amanda Gorman and tennis star Naomi Osaka, none of them older than 25. But in a city that has been slammed by COVID-19 — and again in recent days by historic flooding — the return to normal is coming slowly.

Fashion Week's organizers have announced a strict protocol: All guests and participants must be vaccinated, masks are recommended though not for runway models and audience sizes are limited. According to the CFDA, "a large percentage" of the 91 official events will take place outdoors, while some labels continue to rely on digital presentations. And with travel to the United States still

banned from many countries, "there will be many of our normal international guests... not getting to New York," Kolb told AFP. But he insisted that he has "no concern that the impact will not reach an international audience. It'll just reach them" virtually.

'Less routine'

Even before the pandemic, the

American fashion world faced some major defections, with onetime tentpoles like Ralph Lauren, Calvin Klein and Tommy Hilfiger dropping high-end lines or moving their shows elsewhere. New York had also lost designers like Pyer Moss, Rihanna and Victoria Beckham. This time, the CFDA has been touting the return of Thom Browne and Joseph Altuzarra, who earlier left New York for Paris.

The week gets fully underway tomorrow with Christian Siriano and Collina Strada. Also on the calendar are Liberian-American stylist Telfar Clemens, whose vegan leather shopping bag created a sensation, and Peter Do, the young designer who grew up on a small farm in Vietnam and is now taking part in his first Fashion Week. The week closes on Sunday with shows by big names Tory Burch, Oscar de la Renta and Tom Ford. Meantime, the pandemic, by at least temporarily de-emphasizing in-person shows, has left some designers with mixed feelings.

"I don't think designers necessarily feel the pressure to show every season, as some of them have maybe once felt," said Cathleen Sheehan, a professor at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York. "It's a tremendous relief for a lot of brands, because shows are incredibly expensive. It's less of an obligation and a routine. There's more freedom." — AFP

In this file photo taken on February 10, 2020, a model walks the runway for the Proenza Schouler fashion show during February 2020 - New York Fashion Week: The Shows at the Spring Studios in New York City.

Do tourist boats stress out whales? Researchers find out

Just off the northern coast of Iceland, scientists are collecting data from whales' breath to find out if they get stressed by whale-watching boats, an industry that has boomed in recent years. Researchers from Whale Wise, a marine conservation charity, are studying the whales' stress levels in their hormones. From their small sailboat, a drone lifts off. After six hours of waiting, the scientists have finally spotted a humpback whale. Attached to the flying device are two petri dishes-transparent cylindrical containers—that will collect water droplets from the whale's spray.



This aerial picture shows a humpback whale diving in Hestfjorour (Westfjords), Iceland. — AFP

The timeframe to collect the sample is short—the duration of a whale's breath. This time, the drone flies over the whale carefully, crossing through the spray coming from the whale's blowhole... and mission accomplished. It returns to the sailboat, delivering its precious cargo to the researchers. Once wrapped in paraffin and frozen, the samples will be sent to a laboratory for analysis. The researchers aim to collect samples before a whale watching boat arrives and then afterwards, then compare the two samples to determine the direct impact of that encounter on stress levels.

Tourists have been increasingly flocking to the waters of the North Atlantic off Iceland to admire the majestic creatures,

though 2020 was a quiet year due to the pandemic. More than 360,000 whale watchers were registered in 2019, three times the number a decade ago. Almost a third of them began their whale watching tour in the Husavik harbor, heading for the chilly waters of Skjalfandi Bay.

Feeding disruptions

Previous studies on tourism's impact on whales, which were based on behavioral observations, concluded that tourism caused only minor disruptions to the mammals. The most recent study, from 2011, found that whale-watching excursions were disrupting minke whales in the Faxa Bay near Reykjavik, in the south of the country. "We found that the minke whales were disturbed in their feeding, but it was only a short-term disturbance," one of the authors of the study, Marianne Rasmussen, director of the University of Iceland Research Center in Husavik, told AFP. "It didn't affect their overall fitness." The method used by Whale Wise this summer has been used elsewhere by biologists but this was a first for researchers in Iceland.

"From the samples, you can look at hormones such as cortisol, which is a stress-related hormone, and then you can determine the physiological stress levels of these whales," said Tom Grove, Whale Wise co-founder and a PhD student at the University of Edinburgh. Since 2018, 59 samples have been collected. While a minimum of 50 are needed for a proper analysis, he hopes to collect around 100. This summer, some of the samples were collected together with French environmental group Unu Mondo Expedition, which travelled to Iceland for a month-long expedition to study climate change issues. "The whales are important to us, for our lives, because they are part of the ecosystem on our planet," said Sophie Simonin, 29, the organization's co-founder.

"They also absorb enormous amounts of carbon dioxide," she added. According to a December 2019 study by the International Monetary Fund, a large whale captures an average of 33 tons of carbon dioxide. While whales are a tourist attraction, they are also hunted in Iceland. The International Whaling Commission banned commercial whaling in 1986, but Iceland, which opposed the moratorium, resumed its hunt in 2003. Iceland only bans the hunt of blue whales. But while the country has established an annual quota of 209 fin whales and 217 minke whales until 2023, no whales were hunted this year for the third straight year, as whalers say it is not financially viable. — AFP

Anonymous Myanmar photographer wins major photojournalism award

A Myanmar photographer won the top award Saturday at photojournalism's biggest annual festival for his coverage of the troubled nation's pro-democracy protests and bloody military crackdown. The photographer, who remained unnamed for security reasons, scooped the Visa d'Or for News, the most prestigious award handed out at the "Visa Pour L'Image" festival in Perpignan, southwestern France. Mikko Takkunen, the Asia photo editor for The New York Times, collected the prize on behalf of the photographer.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since the military seized power in a February 1 coup, with near-daily protests and a huge civil disobedience movement. "He is probably the strongest photographer in the country. He is extremely happy and honored to win this prize," Takkunen said. Takkunen said the photographer dedicated the prize to his peers in his country who are working under extremely difficult conditions. His photographs portray civilian protesters armed with stones, soldiers firing live bullets and grieving families mourning their dead.

Across Myanmar, more than 1,000 civilians have been killed in the ongoing military crackdown, according to an advocacy group. The press has been squeezed as the junta tries to tighten control over the flow of information, throttling internet access and revoking the licenses of local media outlets. The anonymous photographer said in a message that he



Visitors look at photos displayed at the exhibition 'Documenting India's Greatest Healthcare Crisis' by Indian Reuters photographer Danish Siddiqui during the 33rd edition of the Visa pour l'image international photojournalism festival, in Perpignan, southern France, on September 3, 2021.

was "on the streets every day since February 1. I encountered many difficulties, working between bullet shots, tear gas and deafening grenades."

"On the ground, we stopped working with helmets marked PRESS as we realized the soldiers were targeting photographers," he said. Among the others nominated was Greek photographer Angelos Tzortzinis from AFP for his work on the last days that migrants and asylum seekers spent at the Moria refugee camp on the island of Lesbos, which was cleared

after devastating fires. Also nominated was American Erin Schaff from The New York Times for photographs depicting the storming of the US Capitol in Washington. Indian Danish Siddiqui from Reuters was nominated for his work on the health crisis following the coronavirus pandemic in his country. Siddiqui was killed in July while covering fighting between the Taliban and Afghan forces. — AFP



French photographer Jerome Gence tells the stories behind his pictures displayed at his exhibition 'Telework'.



French photographer Agnes Dherbeys of the agency MYOP for the European Commission tells the stories behind the photos at her exhibition 'Crisis Upon Crisis - Refugees and the Pandemic'. — AFP photos

Sports

Djokovic moves on at US Open as top-ranked Barty ousted

Zverev, Barrettini advance; Kvitova out

NEW YORK: Novak Djokovic moved within four matches of completing the first men's singles calendar-year Grand Slam in 52 years on Saturday while top-ranked Ashleigh Barty was eliminated from the US Open by a stunning fightback from American Shelby Rogers.

World number one Djokovic defeated Kei Nishikori 6-7 (4/7), 6-3, 6-3, 6-2, taking his 17th consecutive victory over the Japanese star and improving to 18-2 in their overall rivalry. "I was very pleased with the focus," Djokovic said. "Maybe at some points I wasn't my best, but I was determined and focused and that made the difference."

With a fourth career US Open trophy, Djokovic would complete the first men's singles sweep of major titles in the same year since Rod Laver in 1969.

Reigning Wimbledon champion Barty won 11 of 14 games after dropping the first set, only for Rogers to capture five of the last six games for a shocking 6-2, 1-6, 7-6 (7/5) triumph. "I didn't want to leave," Rogers said. "I just said make balls, try to stay in this match, it can't get any worse, you've lost to her every time."

Rogers had dropped all five prior meetings with Barty but would not be denied, breaking the Aussie as she served for the match in the eighth and 10th games as the crowd went wild at Arthur Ashe Stadium. "I was just trying to stay in the point longer than Ash," Rogers said. "I was happy with myself for sort of problem solving. I'm just so excited to be moving on to the next round."

Rogers will next face 150th-ranked British qualifier Emma Raducanu, an 18-year-old who routed Spain's Sara Sorribes Tormo 6-0, 6-1 in 70 minutes.

Djokovic, meanwhile, marched toward a 21st career Grand Slam title, which would break the deadlock for the men's record he shares with Rafael Nadal and Roger Federer, both absent with injuries. The 34-year-old Serbian star advanced to a fourth-round matchup on Monday against 99th-ranked US wildcard Jenson Brooksby. "He was playing pretty solid," Nishikori said. "I couldn't break the wall. Very unfortunate I lost."

Djokovic, who had 52 unforced errors and 45 winners, dropped the last three points of the first-set tiebreaker, the last on a Nishikori service winner. "I don't think I started off very well," Djokovic said. "I was too passive. He was dictating the play, I was still trying to find the tempo. It took me a little bit of time to adjust to his game."

But Djokovic broke early in each set from there to seize command. In the fourth he grabbed a 3-2 lead and never dropped another game. "Big credit to Kei, who played on a very high level," Djokovic said. "He was quick. It was tough.

Great fight from him."

Tokyo Olympic champion Alexander Zverev defeated 184th-ranked Jack Sock 3-6, 6-2, 6-3, 2-1 when the American retired with a right thigh injury. "I know I'm playing OK but a lot of other guys are playing well, too," Zverev said. "I'm hoping to keep my form and give myself my best chance."

Fourth seed Zverev, the 2020 US Open runner-up, joined qualifiers Oscar Otte and Peter Gojowczyk as the first German trio in the US Open fourth round since 1994 and any Slam last 16 since Wimbledon in 1997. Wimbledon runner-up Matteo Berrettini, the Italian sixth seed, eliminated Ilya Ivashka of Belarus 6-7 (5/7), 6-2, 6-4, 2-6, 6-3. Next up is 144th-ranked Otte,



NEW YORK: Serbia's Novak Djokovic hits a return to Japan's Kei Nishikori during their 2021 US Open Tennis tournament men's singles third round match at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center in New York, on Saturday. —AFP

who beat Italy's Andreas Seppi 6-3, 6-4, 2-6, 7-5.

Sakkari beats Kvitova

Greek 17th seed Maria Sakkari, a French Open semi-finalist, ousted two-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova 6-4, 6-3, booking a fourth-round match against 2019 US Open winner Bianca Andreescu. Czech 10th seed Kvitova double faulted on the final point to hand Sakkari the victory after 81 minutes.

Canadian sixth seed Andreescu improved to 10-0 at

the US Open, advancing over 104th-ranked Belgian lucky loser Greet Minnen 6-1, 6-2. Tokyo Olympic champion Belinda Bencic, a 2019 US Open semi-finalist, defeated US 23rd seed Jessica Pegula 6-2, 6-4.

The Swiss 11th seed will next face Polish seventh seed Iga Swiatek, last year's French Open champion, who beat Estonian Anett Kontaveit 6-3, 4-6, 6-3. Czech fourth seed Karolina Pliskova, this year's Wimbledon runner-up and a 2016 US Open finalist, beat Australian Ajla Tomljanovic 6-3, 6-2. —AFP



Djokovic marches toward 21st Grand Slam



NEW YORK: Emma Raducanu of the United Kingdom celebrates after defeating Sara Sorribes Tormo of Spain during her Women's Singles third round match of the 2021 US Open on Saturday. —AFP

Qualifiers, teens making their mark at US Open

NEW YORK: A record week for success by US Open qualifiers and teen wonders saw Britain's Emma Raducanu and German Oscar Otte advance to the fourth round on Saturday. Otte, who was throwing up during two qualifying matches, became the third qualifier into the last 16 on the New York hardcourts, joining countryman Peter Gojowczyk and Dutchman Botic Van de Zandschulp. "I'm just really happy to be first time in my life in the second week of a Slam," Otte said.

And while Raducanu is the only women's qualifier into the fourth round, she joined fellow 18-year-olds Carlos Alcaraz of Spain and Leylah Fernandez of Canada, who ousted French Open runner-up Stefanos Tsitsipas and four-time Grand Slam champion Naomi Osaka, respectively.

"To have so many young players coming through is just really great for the game, because it just shows how strong this next generation is," Raducanu said. "Having so many young players, I think we all inspire each other to play better. I wanted to join them in the second week as well, so that was an extra bit of motivation."

Raducanu won't get her chance at a big upset. She next faces American Shelby Rogers, who ousted top-ranked Wimbledon champion Ashleigh Barty of Australia on Saturday. On the men's side, it's the first time three qualifiers have reached the last 16 since qualifying records were first kept in 1982.

Three qualifiers hadn't reached the men's fourth round at any Grand Slam since the 1995 French Open. It didn't hurt their cause that the men's side lacked 20-time Grand Slam winners Rafael Nadal and Roger Federer and defending champion Dominic Thiem. No US Open qualifier has gone past the quarter-finals and only five in other Slams have made the semi-finals, the most recent being Russian Aslan Karatsev at this year's Australian Open. Otte takes pride in his journey from throwing up in qualifying to showing up in the last 16.

"Qualifiers are always tough, especially the first two rounds. I wasn't in very good physical shape. I puked on the court in both deciding tie-breaks," Otte said. "I was just thinking, 'OK, doesn't matter what the score, how the match is going to end.' I just wanted to be off court out of the sun because it was so humid and hot. Yeah, it's a crazy ride. Just unbelievable. I didn't expect that I could come so far."

Suddenly Otte, who next plays Italian sixth seed and Wimbledon runner-up Matteo Berrettini, has faith in going even farther. "I have more trust in my game, and it's working really well. Let's see when this ends," he said. "I know if I play well and my game works really good, I can make a lot of damage to no matter who is my opponent. It was a long way, but I think it's still not the end." —AFP

Al-Sayer congratulates Kuwait's Al-Mutairi on Paralympic medal

KUWAIT: Mohamed Naser Al-Sayer and Sons and Toyota congratulated Kuwaiti Paralympic athlete, World record holder and Global Team Toyota Athlete Ahmad Al-Mutairi, who won the silver medal in class T33, 100-meter wheelchair racing in 2020 Tokyo Games.

Mutairi is part of Global Team Toyota Athlete and is under a strategic sponsorship contract with Mohamed Naser Al-Sayer and Sons since April 2019. There are 233 athletes that Toyota supports around the world. Of them, 123 athletes competed in the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020, and 57 athletes in the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games.

Global Team Toyota athletes are comprised of not only athletes that are also Toyota employees, but include athletes that have been selected from each country because they share Toyota's philosophies and values, such as "challenge," "continuous improvement," "sincerity," "teamwork," "humility and gratitude," "accountability and honesty," etc. The athletes put "Start Your Impossible" into practice when they compete in their respective sports, and they demonstrate courage and invigorate all of Toyota's stakeholders,

Plane flies through tunnel at 245 km/h, sets World Record

ZANDVOORT: Just after dawn on Saturday, professional race and stunt pilot Dario Costa of Italy wrote a new chapter in aviation history as he flew a raceplane through the narrow confines of two enclosed auto tunnels just outside Istanbul. Closely surrounded by the concrete arc of the walls, Costa executed a tricky takeoff inside the first tunnel, flashed through an open-air gap and then continued his flight at 245 km/h through the second tunnel, flying no more than one meter from the asphalt. Here's everything you need to know about Tunnel Pass:

- Costa, 41, won the top category of the Italian Aerobatic Championship and became first Italian pilot to join, and earn a race win in, the Red Bull Air Race Challenger Class. With over two decades of flying experience, and numerous aviation feats to his credit, he has flown more than 60 airplane models and logged over 5,000 hours in the air - more than half in high-performance aerobatics.

- Tunnel Pass was by far Costa's most demanding and complex undertaking yet, requiring a team of 40 people, especially developed training technology and more than a year of preparation. Throughout, the project was shrouded in secrecy to limit variables and distractions, allowing complete focus for a successful flight that was no more than a simple idea on paper 12 months ago.

- Located outside Istanbul on Northern Marmara Highway and initially put into service in March 2020, the dual *atalca* tunnels are state-of-the-art; but were designed for automobile traffic, not an aircraft in full flight.

- At the controls of his specially modified Zivko Edge 540 raceplane, Costa took off inside the first tunnel at 6:43 am local time (TRT), with the early hour putting the sun at the pilot's back and offering optimal ambient conditions. Limited overhead clearance meant that he had to keep the aircraft on a flight path just above the asphalt, while also managing a tight distance of barely four meters between each wingtip and the unforgiving tunnel walls. Complicating the trajectory were changes in tunnel

starting with our employees. Aside from the support Toyota provides for athletes as an employer, the company also offers support in equipment development, as a sponsor, and in a variety of other ways.

Akio Toyoda, CEO of Toyota, had delivered a video message to those who had arrived in Tokyo after going through various hardships and are finally heading to make their dreams come true in Tokyo 2020. "All the employees of Toyota and all our friends in the Japanese automotive industry are supporting you. That's over five and a half million people! Your journey may have begun as Start Your Impossible, but now it's time to Achieve Your Impossible! Then fight with all your spirit... and make your dreams come true!"

According to Mubarak Naser Al-Sayer CEO at Mohamed Naser Al-Sayer and Sons "We are proud of Ahmad's achievement for Kuwait in the most prestigious international competition. His hard work and dedication during such challenging and uncertain circumstances is remarkable. I also thank valuable contribution of Toyota Motor Corporation towards our long terms partnership with Ahmad as well as members at National Paralympic Committee Kuwait for their cooperation."

Mutairi expressed his happiness and appreciation towards Toyota and Al-Sayer, pointing that this long-term sponsorship will prepare him to accomplish the achievements in the coming competitions. He also thanked his coach, support team, the Kuwaiti Paralympic Committee and the Kuwaiti Sport Club for the Disabled for their constant support.



TOKYO: Ahmad Al-Mutairi poses with his silver medal at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics.

Naser Al-Ajmi, the Chairman of Board of Directors at National Paralympic Committee Kuwait praised Al-Sayer's effort to support interpreting the global partnership between Toyota and the International Paralympic Committee, providing a unique and distinctive model for the contribution of the private sector in supporting Kuwaiti disabled sport.

Al-Sayer Board of Directors stressed that the company would spare no effort in providing all aspects of support through the sponsorship agreement to enable the Kuwaiti champion to continue the march of brilliance towards more achievements and raise the name of Kuwait high in future Para Athletics competitions.



incline and shape.

- From take-off to exiting the second tunnel, the flight lasted 43.44 seconds, covering a distance of 2,260 m / 2.26 km and reaching an average speed of 245 km/h in the second tunnel.

- Changes to airflow, combined with the highly sensitive steering of the aircraft, required pilot reaction times of less than 250 milliseconds and fine hand movements of mere millimeters throughout the flight. One of most critical moments came at the 360 m gap between tunnels, which exposed the raceplane to cross winds as Costa prepared to thread it into the low, narrow opening of the second tunnel.

- Costa said: "Everything seemed to be happening so fast, but when I got out of the first tunnel, the plane started to move to the right because of the cross winds, and in my head, everything slowed down in that moment. I reacted and just focused on getting the plane back on the right path to enter the other tunnel. Then in my mind everything sped up all over again."

- When the raceplane shot out of the other side, Costa pulled it into a celebratory loop before landing. The ecstatic pilot said: "I'd never flown in a tunnel in my life - nobody had ever done it - so there was a big question mark in my head whether everything would go as we expected or if there would be

something to improvise. It was a big relief, of course, but big, big happiness was the main emotion. For me it's another dream come true."

- The achievement set a new Guinness World Record: Longest Tunnel Flown through with an Airplane (1,610 m). Four other notable records were: first airplane flight through a tunnel, longest flight under a solid obstacle (1,610 m), first airplane flight through two tunnels, first airplane takeoff from a tunnel.

- Costa was mentored by Hungarian aerobatic and racing pilot Peter Besenyei, 65, an aviation legend renowned for his role in developing and competing in the Red Bull Air Race. Besenyei is also well known for feats such as flying upside down under the Chain Bridge in Budapest.

- Besenyei said: "To fly in a tunnel is not a normal situation. The main point is the mindset. Because to fly straight at one meter off the ground and follow a center line is not really so difficult technically if you are over a runway. But in the tunnel, especially a dark tunnel, and to come out of the tunnel into the light and then back into another dark tunnel, it's different. And also there are air waves that can affect the flight, and you should expect some bumps. It's difficult in your mind because you know that if you make a mistake, the wall is hard."

Sports

France draw again as Dutch roll in World Cup qualifying

Haaland powers Norway past Latvia; Croatia, Russia win

PARIS: World Cup holders France stuttered again in their bid to qualify for the 2022 finals in Qatar after a 1-1 draw in Ukraine, while Memphis Depay inspired the Netherlands to a rout of Montenegro on Saturday.

France drew their fifth successive match as Anthony Martial scored his first international goal in five years to earn Didier Deschamps' side a point in Kiev. The Manchester United forward, who missed Euro 2020 with a knee injury, grabbed just his second goal in 29 caps to cancel out a magnificent first-half strike by Ukraine midfielder Mykola Shaparenko.

Les Bleus remain four points clear at the top of Group D but have played two games more than Finland, who they host in Lyon tomorrow. Joel Pohjanpalo's second-half effort clinched Finland a 1-0 victory over Kazakhstan.

"We are maybe not in a better situation than we were before the match, but it is not any worse either. It's just one more point when obviously our goal was to take all three," Deschamps told French broadcaster M6. Ukraine have now drawn all five of their qualifiers so far, including both matches against France.

Depay led the Netherlands to a 4-0 defeat of Montenegro in Eindhoven that kept Louis van Gaal's team right behind Group G leaders Turkey, who won 3-0 in

Gibraltar. Barcelona star Depay opened the scoring for the Dutch with a penalty and netted a second on the hour. Captain Georginio Wijnaldum added a slick third and Cody Gakpo bagged his first goal for the national team with a terrific curling shot.

"Once the first goal went in we played in a much more relaxed manner and produced some very good football," said Van Gaal, back for a third spell in charge of the Netherlands. "Memphis had an extraordinary game. He was undoubtedly the man of the match."

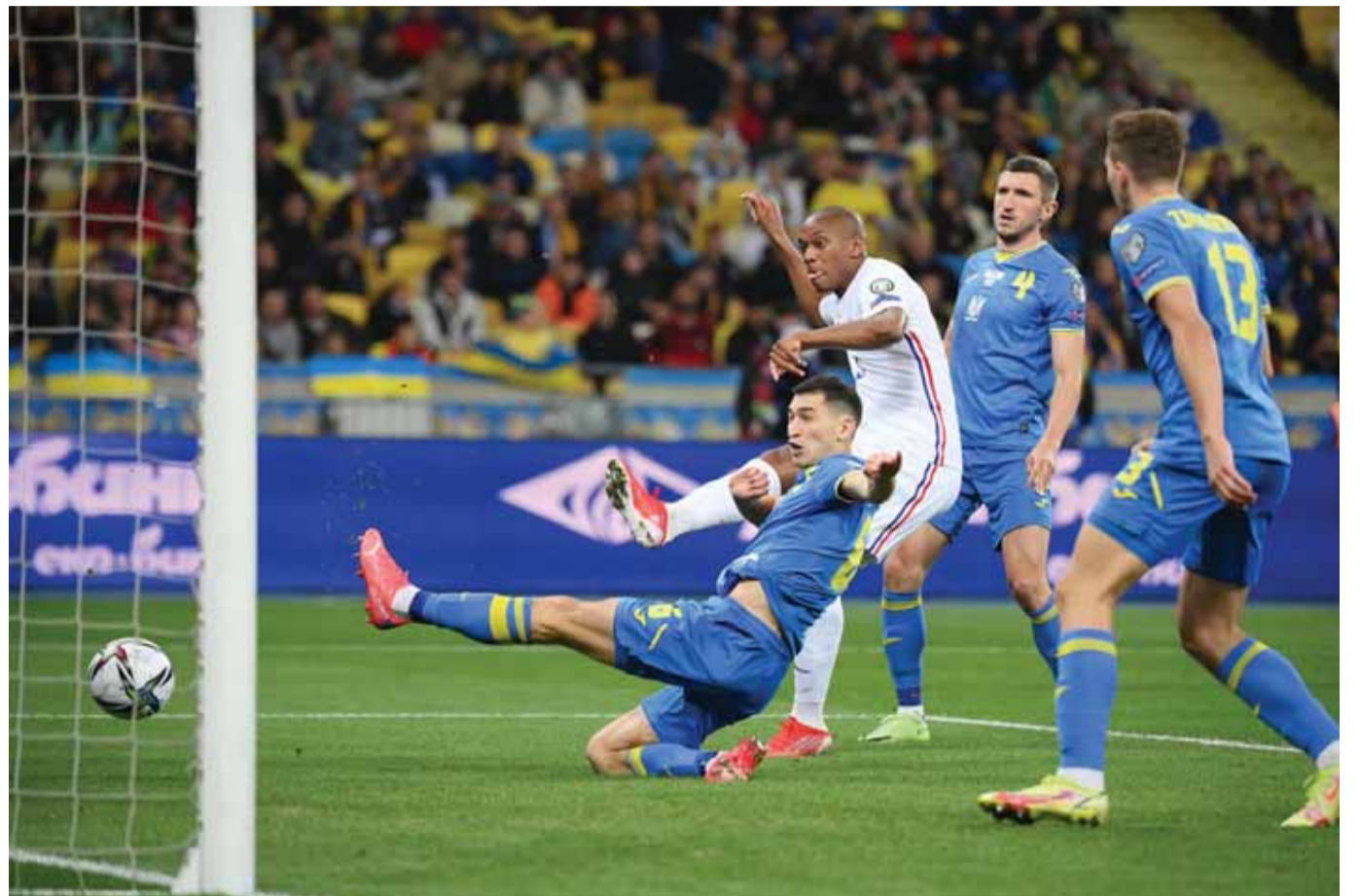
Haaland spot on

Erling Haaland converted a spot-kick as he scored for the second game running in Norway's 2-0 win against Latvia, with

Mohamed Elyounoussi also on target in Oslo. Norway and the Netherlands are both a point back of Turkey, who go to Amsterdam next week. "Now we must win on Tuesday against

Turkey. A victory would put us in an ideal position for qualification," added Van Gaal. Marcelo Brozovic's late goal gave Croatia a 1-0 victory away to Slovakia, ensuring the 2018 World Cup runners-up stayed level with Russia in Group H.

Russia beat Cyprus 2-0 away while Slovenia won 1-0 at home to Malta. Denmark needed an 85th-minute effort from Jonas Wind to see off the Faroe



KIEV: France's forward Anthony Martial (second left) shoots and scores his team's first goal during the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 Group D qualification football match between Ukraine and France at the Olympic Stadium in Kiev on Saturday. — AFP

Islands 1-0 and record a fifth win in as many outings in Group F. Scotland moved above Austria into third place as Lyndon Dykes' early strike sealed a 1-0

home win over Moldova.

Aleksandar Mitrovic struck twice as Serbia defeated Luxembourg 4-1 to edge above Portugal on goal difference

at the top of Group A. A late Shane Duffy equalizer salvaged the Republic of Ireland a disappointing 1-1 draw at home to Azerbaijan. — AFP

Serie A Salernitana say they are poised to sign Ribery

ROME: Franck Ribery, a free agent since the summer, will extend his playing career at Salernitana, a club promoted to Serie A this season, Italian media reported yesterday. The club confirmed there was an agreement in principle, but has yet to confirm the signing of the 38-year-old former French international and Bayern Munich star.

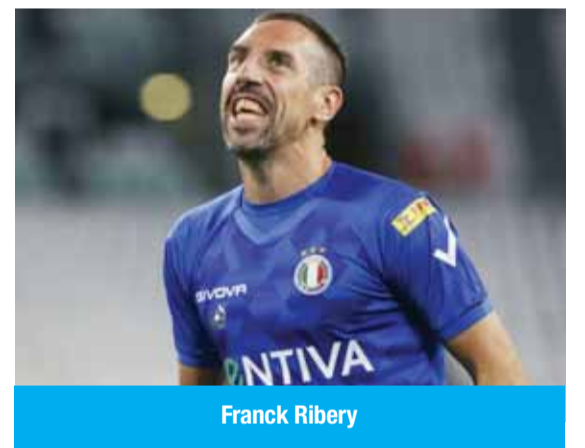
Ribery has been a free agent since Fiorentina chose not to renew his two-year contract in the summer. "FR7" will arrive in Salerno on Monday to undergo a medical examination and "then he will sign a contract that will bind him for one year to the Dark Reds, with an option of extension," said the Corriere dello Sport yesterday.

The Rome sports daily reported the club would pay Ribery 1.5 million euros (\$1.8 million) for the season and had lined up housing for him. "There is an agreement in principle, we are waiting for the ratification," said Angelo Fabiani, sports director of the club, quoted by Corriere dello Sport. "With his experience, he can be useful to the growth of Salerno, he can guide the group and help the coach. Having someone like

him always encourages others to give their best."

Ribery indicated that he wanted to stay in Florence, where he made 50 Serie A appearances scoring five goals, but since being cut loose on June 30, he has continued to train, for a while at Bayern, while awaiting offers.

Salernitana returned to Serie A this season for the first time since 1998-99 and have opened their campaign with two defeats. The possible signing has already inspired the appearance of black-market club shirts with his name in Salerno, south of Naples. On its website, Salernitana pointed out that "the player does not belong to the club" and warned that it "reserves the right to take legal action to protect its image." — AFP



Franck Ribery

India coach Shastri tests positive for COVID-19

LONDON: India head coach Ravi Shastri has been forced to remain in the team hotel after testing positive for COVID-19 during the ongoing fourth Test against England at the Oval, a Board of Control for Cricket in India statement said yesterday.

The BCCI said Shastri, bowling coach B Arun, fielding coach R Sridhar and physiotherapist Nitin Patel were all isolating as a "precautionary measure" following 59-year-old former India all-rounder Shastri's positive lateral flow test late on Saturday.

They have all undergone PCR testing, with the BCCI statement saying they will "remain in the

team hotel and not travel with Team India until confirmation from the medical team". A spokesman added later yesterday that Arun, Sridhar and Patel had all since tested negative.

Officials insisted it was safe for the match to continue as the remaining members of the Indian contingent had undergone two lateral flow tests, one on Saturday and another yesterday morning, all of which produced "negative COVID reports", and were allowed to go to the Oval for the fourth day.

But Shastri, Arun, Sridhar and Patel were not at the south London ground, as India resumed on 270-3 in their second innings, a lead of 171 runs, in a five-match series all square at 1-1. The fifth Test at Old Trafford, Manchester, is scheduled to start on Friday, September 10. The two teams have been in separate environments, with the only interactions taking place on the field during play.

Rahul fined for dissent

Meanwhile, India batsman KL Rahul has been

fined 15 percent of his match fee after showing dissent following his dismissal on Saturday. The opener was unhappy at being given out caught behind on review for 46 off the bowling of England great James Anderson.

After Alex Wharf reversed his decision, Rahul gestured to the on-field umpire that he had hit his pad with the bat, although the Decision Review System confirmed he had edged the ball before making any further contact. Rahul was found to have breached article 2.8 of the International Cricket Council code of conduct, which relates to "showing dissent at an umpire's decision during an international match".

The 29-year-old Rahul has also had one demerit point added to his disciplinary record for a first offence in a 24-month period. Rahul admitted the offence and accepted the sanction proposed by ICC match referee Chris Broad, the former England batsman, which meant there was no need for a formal hearing. — AFP



NOTTINGHAM: In this file photo taken on August 4, 2021 India's head coach Ravi Shastri looks on ahead of play on the first day of the first cricket Test match of the India Tour of England 2021 between England and India at the Trent Bridge cricket ground in Nottingham. — AFP

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144

Khalidiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401

CHANGE OF NAME

I, GAFFAR SYED HUSSAIN SHANAWAS TINDIVANAM hereby declare that I have changed my name as SYED SHANAWAS S/o SYED HUSSAIN TINDIVANAM. (C 0642)

I, SHABBIR TAHER BHAI SAMPLEWALA hereby declare that I have changed my name as SHABBIR TAHER BHAI RATLAMWALA. So, from now and in future I will be known by my new name, Shabir Taher Bhai Ratlamwala, Add: 501, Noorani Nagar, Dhar Road, Indore (M.P). (C 0643) 6-9-2021

EMERGENCY ☎ 112

Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is 1889988



TOKYO: Fireworks light up the sky during the closing ceremony of the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games at the Olympic Stadium in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

Tokyo bids colorful farewell to 'historic, fantastic' Paralympics

TOKYO: Tokyo bid a colorful farewell to the Paralympics yesterday after 12 days of stereotype-defying, record-shattering performances despite a year-long pandemic delay. International Paralympic Committee chief Andrew Parsons declared the Games closed on a cool night in the Olympic Stadium, saying they had "not just been historic, they've been fantastic".

It was a Games like no other, postponed a year because of the pandemic and dogged by difficulties and low public support in the build-up. But the action did not disappoint when it got underway, with a record 86 teams winning medals and 62 claiming at least one gold.

Parsons said the Games had "opened the door", and it was "time for us all to play our part to break down the barriers". "During our carnival of sport, we have celebrated difference, exhibited the best of humanity and shown unity in diversity," he said.

The closing ceremony, with fans locked out over virus fears but with roughly 2,000 athletes and officials in attendance, took "harmonious cacophony" as its theme. It featured a riot of neon-clad break-dancers, unicycling butterflies and strutting stilt-walkers, using materials recycled from the Olympic

opening ceremony for its vivid props.

Among the athletes carrying their nations' flags were Afghanistan's Hossain Rasouli and Zakia Khudadadi, who arrived in Tokyo with the Games already in progress after being evacuated from Taliban-controlled Kabul. The pair, wearing red and green team tracksuits, handed the flag over to a volunteer before joining other athletes in helping to decorate a replica of Tokyo's Skytree tower.

Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike handed the Paralympic flag over to Parsons, who passed it on to Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo, representing the 2024 hosts. Parsons then announced the end of the Games, bringing the curtain down after 539 gold medals across 22 sports, contested almost entirely behind closed doors because of the virus.

"I don't want to do this, but the time has come for me to declare the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games closed," he said. China finished on top of the

medal table with 207, including 96 golds, followed by Britain, the United States and the Russian team.

Charismatic figures

Highlights included cycling legend Sarah Storey becoming Britain's most successful Paralympian with her 17th gold medal, 29 years after her first. Charismatic figures like Italian wheelchair fencer Beatrice "Bebe" Vio and German long jumper Markus Rehm wowed TV audiences.

And Japanese wheelchair tennis player Shingo Kunieda delighted the home crowd on the penultimate day by claiming one of his country's 13 gold medals. There were also impressive performances from Britain's wheelchair rugby team, who won their first ever gold, while badminton and taekwondo made their Paralympic debuts. The Games featured 163 delegations — one fewer than the London 2012 record, despite several teams withdrawing because

of pandemic difficulties.

The final day's action began with the early morning marathon events, with Swiss wheelchair master Marcel Hug defending his T54 crown. "Silver bullet" Hug opened up an early gap on the field, and moved away from silver medalist Zhang Yong over the last two uphill kilometers. "I don't know how to feel. I'm just tired. Empty," said Hug, who won the sixth Paralympic gold of his career in a time of 1hr 24min 2sec.

In the women's T54 marathon, Australian Madison de Rozario clung on to finish ahead of Swiss great Manuela Schaefer, winning the gold by just one second. "That was the longest 500 meters of my life," de Rozario told reporters after finishing in a Paralympic record of 1:38.11. "That finish line couldn't have come quick enough."

Organizers had urged local residents to stay home and watch the action on TV, but sweet shop owner Atsushi Nishimura told AFP in Tokyo's Asakusa district that he was glad he saw it live. "We could have enjoyed the Olympics and Paralympics differently if they weren't during a pandemic, but I think it was good for us that we could host the events," he said. — AFP



Record 86 teams won medals

Brilliant Verstappen storms to home Dutch Grand Prix triumph

ZANDVOORT: Home favorite Max Verstappen snatched the world championship lead from Lewis Hamilton yesterday as the Red Bull driver produced a scintillating performance to win the first Dutch Grand Prix since 1985. A week after the farcical washout in Belgium, pole-sitter Verstappen controlled the race from the start in bright sunshine at a circuit set in coastal sand dunes at the beach resort of Zandvoort.

His seventh win in 13 races this season turned a three-point deficit into a three-point lead over seven-time world champion Hamilton ahead of Monza next weekend. Hamilton came in second, setting the fastest lap on the final lap to earn a consolation bonus point, with Mercedes team-mate Valtteri Bottas a distant third.

"As you can hear already, it's just incredible," said Verstappen, roared on by some 70,000 orange-clad fans at a venue where the last winner was Niki

Lauda for McLaren 36 years ago. "Expectations were high going into the weekend. I'm so happy to win here. It's such an amazing day, the whole crowd, incredible."

Verstappen, who earned half points for his win over two laps behind the safety car at Spa last Sunday, pulled away on the opening lap here, keeping Hamilton in his rear-view mirror and surging clear. A narrow track with punishing deep gravel traps made overtaking difficult, prompting Mercedes to use varying strategies for Hamilton and Bottas to ramp up the pressure on Verstappen.

Hamilton pitted on lap 21, inducing Red Bull to immediately call Verstappen in and leaving Bottas briefly at the head of the field. Verstappen retook the lead as he burst past Bottas down the final straight on lap 31 to the sound of bellowing roars from the grandstand, but with the Finn having allowed Hamilton to eat

away at the gap to the Dutchman.

Verstappen delights home crowd

Hamilton again came in on lap 40 to switch to medium tires, needing to pick his way through traffic as he returned to the track. A nerveless Verstappen continued to frustrate his title rival who feared his tires wouldn't last to the finish.

As Verstappen cruised towards the line, igniting jubilant celebrations along the North Sea coast, Hamilton entered the pits for the third time in a successful last-ditch attempt at the quickest lap. On a day that began with Verstappen showing Dutch King Willem-Alexander and Queen Maxima around the Red Bull garage, Hamilton though simply had no answer to a regal display from the 23-year-old.

"Max did a great job, congratulations to him. I gave it everything, they were just too quick for us," said Hamilton, again frustrated in his bid to become the first man to win 100 Grands Prix. "They had that upper edge, and it's very hard to follow here. The last lap was one of the best parts of the race for me - single lap, low fuel. This is now one of my favorite tracks."



ZANDVOORT: Red Bull's Dutch driver Max Verstappen (right) holds the winner's trophy as Mercedes' British driver Lewis Hamilton (left) applauds on the podium of the Zandvoort circuit after the Netherlands' Formula One Grand Prix in Zandvoort yesterday. — AFP

Pierre Gasly took fourth in his AlphaTauri ahead of Ferrari's Charles Leclerc. Fernando Alonso made up three places on the grid to finish sixth followed by Carlos Sainz in the second Ferrari.

Sergio Perez, who began the race in the pit lane after an engine change, came home eighth with Alpine's Esteban Ocon and Lando Norris of McLaren completing the top 10. — AFP