



3 Woman jumps to death in first causeway suicide



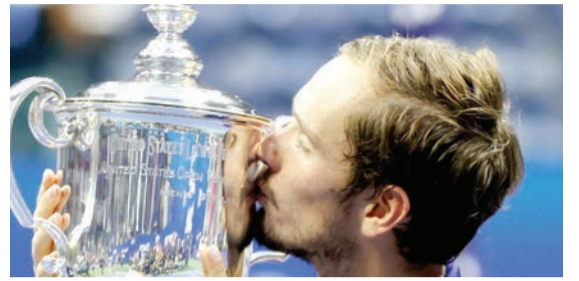
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Assembly committee, MoI discuss rights of bedoons

MP renews call to deport expats with psychiatric illness

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The National Assembly committee on stateless people or bedoons yesterday discussed basic civil rights for thousands of bedoons with Interior Minister Sheikh Thamer Al-Sabah and head of the bedoons' central agency Saleh Al-Fadhlah. Head of the committee MP Marzouk Al-Khalifa said the minister expressed readiness to issue travel documents to bedoons who need medical treatment and education abroad.

But this needs legislation to allow the minister to issue such travel documents within the framework of the law, said Khalifa. The lawmaker said the committee plans to hold regular weekly meetings to debate how to provide bedoons their civil rights with various ministries and government agencies. He expressed hope that a number of legislations will be issued shortly to resolve this humanitarian issue.

Khalifa said that the committee also approved proposals to treat bedoon teachers, doctors and medical staff on equal footing with their counterparts from Gulf and Arab countries - especially

with regards to wages and end of service indemnities. The panel also approved another proposal calling to allow bedoons who served in the army and the police force to stay at so-called popular houses provided free of charge by the government even after retirement.

In a related issue, MP Abdulkarim Al-Kandari yesterday asked Education Minister Ali Al-Mudhaf why the Ministry has recruited teachers from outside the country while there are Kuwaiti and Bedoon graduates waiting for jobs in the country.

In the meantime, MP Bader Al-Humaidi yesterday renewed calls for deporting expats who have records with the psychiatric hospital, saying they pose danger to society. Humaidi said he had raised the issue several months ago, recalling that he had drawn the attention of authorities that about 37,000 expats have records at the psychiatric hospital. He had also called for deporting some of them. The lawmaker asked the Interior Minister how many of those expats had been deported. If the answer was negative, he asked the minister to state reasons for not deporting them even though they pose danger to society.



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti artist Maitham Abdal's sculpture named 'Spoon of Freedom', to honor Palestinian prisoners who reportedly used a spoon to dig a tunnel from where they escaped from an Israeli maximum security prison, in his workshop in his home in Kuwait City yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Zionist PM meets Sisi in historic trip

CAIRO: Zionism's Naftali Bennett met Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi yesterday, on the first visit to the North African country by a prime minister of the Jewish state in over a decade. Sisi was hosting Bennett in the Red Sea resort of Sharm El-Sheikh to discuss "efforts to revive the peace process" between the Zionists and Palestinians, presidential spokesman Bassam Radi.

Egypt, the Arab world's most populous country, in 1979 became the first Arab state to sign a peace treaty with Zionists,

after decades of enmity. In May, it played a key role in brokering a ceasefire between Zionists and the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas that rules the Gaza Strip, after 11 days of deadly fighting. Egypt regularly receives leaders of Hamas as well as of its political rival the Palestinian Authority led by Mahmud Abbas, while maintaining strong diplomatic, security and economic ties with Zionists.

Zionist Foreign Minister Yair Lapid on Sunday proposed improving living conditions in Gaza and building new infrastructure in exchange for calm from Hamas, aiming to solve the "never-ending rounds of violence". But "it won't happen without the support and involvement of our Egyptian partners and without their ability to talk to everyone involved", he said.

Bennett's visit comes about 10 days

after Abbas was in Cairo for talks with Sisi. Yesterday's talks mark "an important step in light of the growing security and economic relations between the two countries, and their mutual concern over the situation in Gaza", Cairo-based analyst Nael Shama said. It also fits with "Egypt's plans to revive the political talks between Zionists and the Palestinian Authority", he added.

The last meeting between an Egyptian president and a Zionist premier dates back to January 2011 when Hosni Mubarak received Benjamin Netanyahu, weeks before Mubarak was toppled in a popular revolution. In the political turbulence that followed, relations between the two countries deteriorated as protests were staged outside the Zionist embassy in Cairo in 2011. The one-year reign of Egypt's Islamist president Mohamed Morsi from

Continued on Page 2



SHARM EL-SHEIKH: Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi (right) meets with Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett in the Egyptian Red Sea resort town of Sharm El-Sheikh. — AFP

The Philippines 'learning crisis'



MANILA: Petronilo Pacayra Sr signs school documents while his children (aged nine and ten) look on at their home in Quezon City, suburban Manila. — AFP

MANILA: Classrooms in the Philippines were silent yesterday as millions of school children hunkered down at home for a second year of remote lessons that experts fear will worsen an educational "crisis". While nearly every country in the world has partially or fully reopened schools to in-person classes, the Philippines has kept them closed since the start of the coronavirus pandemic, the UN says.

President Rodrigo Duterte has so far rejected proposals for a pilot reopening of primary

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No need for a vaccine third jab booster

PARIS: Vaccines are effective enough at preventing severe COVID-19 that there is no current need for the general population to be given third doses, according to a report in The Lancet published yesterday. Some countries have started offering extra doses over fears about the much more contagious Delta variant, causing the World

Health Organization to call for a moratorium on third jabs amid concerns about vaccine supplies to poorer nations, where millions have yet to receive their first jab.

But a report by scientists, including from the WHO, concluded that even with the threat of Delta, "booster doses for the general population are not appropriate at this stage in the pandemic". The authors, who reviewed observational studies and clinical trials, found that vaccines remain highly effective against severe symptoms of COVID-19, across all the main virus variants including Delta, although they had lower success in preventing asymptomatic disease.

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SYDNEY: A health worker injects the first dose of Pfizer vaccine to a member of the local Sikh community inside a Glenwood Sikh Temple in Sydney. — AFP

Zionist FM proposes Gaza plan

JERUSALEM: Zionist foreign minister has proposed improving living conditions in Gaza in exchange for calm from the enclave's Hamas Islamist leaders, aiming to solve "never-ending rounds of violence" as the two sides exchanged fresh fire over the weekend.

The plan, which includes infrastructure and employment benefits, aims to show Palestinians in the Zionist-block-

aded enclave that Hamas's campaign of violence against Zionists is "why they live in conditions of poverty, scarcity, violence and high unemployment, without hope", Yair Lapid said Sunday. He stressed that he was not calling for negotiations with Hamas, as "Zionist entity doesn't speak to terror organizations who want to destroy us".

Lapid, due to take over as premier in two years as part of a rotation agreement, conceded that his plan does not yet amount to official policy in Zionists' eight-party coalition government, but said it had support from Prime Minister Naftali Bennett. In the first stage of the plan, the

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GAZA: Palestinian men ride horses at the beach in Gaza City yesterday. — AFP

Local

Foreign minister receives credentials of France's ambassador, UNHCR envoy



KUWAIT: Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah meets France's Ambassador to Kuwait Claire Le Flecher. — KUNA photos



Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah meets the UNHCR Representative to Kuwait Nasreen Al-Rubaian.



Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah receives the credentials of France's Ambassador to Kuwait Claire Le Flecher.



Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah receives the credentials of the UNHCR Representative to Kuwait Nasreen Al-Rubaian.

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah received yesterday at the Foreign Ministry the

credentials of France's Ambassador to Kuwait Claire Le Flecher. The Foreign Minister wished the new ambassador success and progress in her work and wished further progress and pros-

perity to the bilateral ties between both nations. He also received the credentials of the representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to Kuwait

Nasreen Al-Rubaian. The minister wished her success in her work, and further progress and prosperity to the bilateral ties between Kuwait and UNHCR. — KUNA

Zionist FM proposes...

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infrastructure in Gaza—an impoverished territory of two million people—would receive a sorely needed upgrade, Lapid said in a speech at the Reichman University in Herzliya.

"The electricity system will be repaired, gas will

be connected, a water desalination plant will be built, significant improvements to the healthcare system and a rebuilding of housing and transport infrastructure will take place," he said. "In exchange, Hamas will commit to long-term quiet," he added, noting the international community would play a role in the process, especially Egypt, to Gaza's south.

"It won't happen without the support and involvement of our Egyptian partners and without their ability to talk to everyone involved," Lapid said. "Any breach by Hamas will stop the process or set it back," he warned. If the first stage were to go smoothly, Gaza would then see the construction of an

artificial island off its coast that would allow the construction of a port, and a "transportation link" between Gaza and the West Bank would be created.

Lapid said he had presented the plan to "partners in the Arab world," as well as to the United States, Russia and the European Union. "There is still work to do, we're still on the drawing board, but if this plan has a chance to succeed and gains widespread support, I'll propose it to the government as the official position," he said.

Just hours after Lapid's remarks, the specter of renewed violence flared. The Zionist army said it had intercepted a rocket launched from Gaza towards

southern Zionist entity, the third such incident in as many days. Overnight yesterday, Zionists returned the attack, its fighter jets striking four Hamas military compounds and a tunnel in the Palestinian enclave, the Zionist army said in a statement.

There was no report of injuries, according to AFP's team in Gaza. Zionists and Hamas fought their last full-scale war in May, the fourth since 2008. The conflict ended in an Egyptian-brokered ceasefire. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights said in late May that Zionist air strikes on the territory had resulted in "the widespread destruction of civilian infrastructure". — AFP

No need for a vaccine third...

Continued from Page 1

"Taken as a whole, the currently available studies do not provide credible evidence of substantially declining protection against severe disease, which is the primary goal of vaccination," said lead author Ana-Maria Henao-Restrepo, of the WHO. She said vaccine doses should be prioritized to people around the world still waiting for a jab.

"If vaccines are deployed where they would do the most good, they could hasten the end of the pandemic by inhibiting further evolution of variants," she added. Countries like France have started distributing third jabs to the elderly and people with compromised immune systems, while Zionist entity has gone further, offering children 12 and older a

third dose five months after full vaccination.

The Lancet study concluded that the current variants had not developed sufficiently to escape the immune response provided by vaccines currently in use. The authors argue that if new virus mutations did emerge that were able to evade this response, it would be better to deliver specially modified vaccine boosters aimed at newer variants, than those based on the existing vaccines. WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has called on countries to avoid giving out extra COVID jabs until the end of the year.

The UN health agency has set a global target of seeing every country vaccinate at least 10 percent of its population by the end of this month, and at least 40 percent by the end of this year. It wants to see at least 70 percent of the world's population vaccinated by the middle of next year. But Tedros complained that while almost all wealthy countries have hit the 10-percent mark, and more than 70 percent have reached 40 percent, "not a single low-income country has reached either target". — AFP

Day War. Egyptian forces have for years fought an insurgency in the Sinai, led mainly by a local affiliate of the Islamic State group. The two neighbors have also deepened their ties in the field of energy. Since last year, Egypt has received natural gas from Zionists to liquefy it and re-export it to Europe.

Bennett's visit follows on from a "long working relationship" that Sisi maintained with Netanyahu, said Shama, author of a book on Egypt's foreign policy. The right-wing religious nationalist Bennett took office in June, ending Netanyahu's 12 straight years as Zionist premier. "Cairo intends once again to signal to the Biden administration its indispensable role in stabilizing the Palestinian-Zionist conflict," Shama said.

Popular sentiment on the ground in Egypt has also toned down from being resolutely hostile towards Zionists, amid a more severe crackdown on dissent under Sisi. "Sisi has succeeded in taming the opposition and absorbing other political movements," said Cairo University political science professor Mustapha Kamel Al-Sayyid. Zionists last year signed normalization deals with the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan under the aegis of Donald Trump's administration. — AFP

The Philippines 'learning...

Continued from Page 1

and secondary schools for fear children could catch COVID-19 and infect elderly relatives. "I want to go to school," seven-year-old Kylie Larrobbis said, complaining she cannot read after a year of online kindergarten in the tiny slum apartment in Manila she shares with six people. "I don't know what a classroom looks like - I've never seen one."

Larrobbis, who enters first grade this year, cries in frustration when she cannot understand her online lessons, which she follows on a smartphone, said her mother, Jessielyn Genel. Her misery is compounded by a ban on children playing outdoors. "What is happening is not good," said Genel, who opposed a return to in-person classes while the Delta variant ripped through the country.

A "blended learning" program involving online classes, printed materials and lessons broadcast on television and social media was launched last October. It has been plagued with problems: most students in the Philippines don't have a computer or internet at home.

More than 80 percent of parents are worried their children "are learning less," said Isy Faingold, UNICEF's education chief in the Philippines, citing a recent survey. Around two-thirds of them support the reopening of classrooms in areas where virus transmission is low. "Distance learning cannot replace the in-person learning," Faingold said. "There was already a learning crisis before COVID... it's going to be even worse."

Fifteen-year-olds in the Philippines were at or near the bottom in reading, mathematics and science, according to OECD data. Most students attend public schools where large class sizes, outdated teaching methods, lack of investment in basic infrastructure such as toilets, and poverty have been blamed for youngsters lagging behind. Enrolments fell to 26.9 million in the 2020 school year and were down a further five million days before lessons restarted yesterday, according to official figures.

Faingold fears many students may "never return". "We hope in the next days the enrolments continue

to accelerate," Faingold said. Remote learning is also taking a toll on children's mental health and development. "Long-term social isolation is closely related to loneliness and physiological illness in children," said Rhodora Concepcion of the Philippine Society for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. "With the disruption of face-to-face learning and social interaction, regression in formerly mastered skills may be observed in children."

Petronilo Pacayra is worried about his sons, aged nine and 10. Like most children in the Philippines, they rely on the printed worksheets supplied by their school. "Their reading skills really deteriorated," the 64-year-old single parent told AFP in the cramped and dimly-lit room they share. Pacayra helps them with their school work in between doing odd jobs to make ends meet. "I don't like reading, I prefer to play with my mobile phone," said his youngest child, nicknamed RJ, who is starting second grade.

Their school principal Josefina Almarez claimed "no children were left behind" in the first year of remote learning. But she admitted some "need special attention". Younger children were especially impacted by school closures, said Faingold, describing the early years of schooling as "foundational". "If you don't have a strong basis in numeracy and literacy it's going to be very difficult to learn the other subjects that are part of the primary, secondary or even tertiary education," he said.

University of the Philippines education professor Mercedes Arzadon said it was "ridiculous" to keep schools shut indefinitely when other countries, including virus-ravaged Indonesia, had shown it was possible to reopen them safely. "Our youth's future and well-being are at stake, and so is national development," Arzadon said in a statement. An "optimistic scenario" was for schools in the Philippines to reopen next year, said Faingold.

But that could depend on the pace of vaccinations with only around 20 percent of the targeted population so far fully inoculated against COVID-19. Children have not yet been included in the program. Jessy Cabungeal, whose seven-year-old daughter is enrolled in a Manila private school and uses an iPad and desktop computer for online learning, agrees with Duterte's decision to keep classrooms shut. She explained: "You could see he is afraid because he cannot assure us that the children will not catch the virus." — AFP

Zionist PM meets Sisi in...

Continued from Page 1

2012 also proved to be icy, with Zionist suspicions of his Muslim Brotherhood's close ties to Hamas.

Sisi has again positioned Egypt as a regional bulwark of stability, echoing the frequent peace summits overseen by Mubarak before his ouster. Zionists and Egypt are two of Washington's main allies in the Middle East and are the largest recipients of US military aid, and they have worked together on security issues. Sisi, in a 2019 interview on CBS, acknowledged Egypt's army was working closely with Zionists in combating "terrorists" in the restive North Sinai.

He underscored Cairo's "wide range of cooperation with the Zionists". The relationship developed after Egypt regained sovereignty over the Sinai Peninsula, which Zionists occupied in the 1967 Six-

Local

Woman leaps to death from Kuwait's Jaber Causeway

First reported suicide off bridge since inauguration

KUWAIT: A woman jumped to her death from Jaber Causeway yesterday in a case that Kuwait police are investigating as a suicide. Firemen headed to the scene in response to an emergency call reporting that a woman jumped from the bridge. Shuwaikh and Salmiya sea rescue men recovered the woman's dead body from the waters, Kuwait Fire Force said in a statement. The woman was not identified in the statement, and the motive was not immediately known either as the case remains under investigation.

This is the first documented successful suicide case on the suspended bridge to be reported by authorities in Kuwait since the causeway was inaugurated two years ago. However, there has been several reported unsuccessful suicide attempts from the bridge in the past. In July, the Interior Ministry said that a traffic policeman had stopped a woman from jumping from the causeway in an apparent suicide attempt.

The Traffic Department had published a video showing a police officer stepping in and catching a woman while she was trying to climb off the bridge, bringing her back to safety before he and other officers are seen attending to her in her car. The officer was on patrol on the causeway when he approached the vehicle that had stopped on the side of the road, as seen in the video which is dated on July 19th. He checked on the driver then waited for the vehicle to move, but instead the woman walked out of the car and approached the railing,

then he ran towards her and caught her while she started climbing it.

Yesterday's incident follows a string of reported suicide cases in Kuwait recently. A local report a couple of days ago had indicated that police opened an investigation in the death of a man who allegedly committed suicide in his family's home in Abdullah Al-Mubarak. Preliminary investigations indicated that the 27-year-old Kuwaiti man died by hanging inside his room. In the meantime, a similar investigation was opened in the death of a Hawally resident who had allegedly committed suicide by jumping. According to the police report, the 26-year-old Indian man leaped from a 10th floor apartment in a building in the area in the early hours of Saturday morning. The man was going through financial troubles that had likely driven him to end his life, according to preliminary investigations.

Motive unknown as case under investigation



KUWAIT: This handout photo released by Kuwait Fire Force yesterday shows firemen looking on as rescuers remove a dead body from a rescue boat shortly after it was recovered from the waters.

ities, the ministry noted.

Last week, a local report indicated that the public prosecution ordered the arrest of several Kuwaiti citizens who brought in 400 expats of various nationalities to supposedly work at five "non-existent" hotels, in what is considered the largest human trafficking case in the country. The prosecution's order was made after immigration detectives learned about the visas used to bring in workers for the bogus hotels. The workers confessed to paying KD 1,500 each to come to Kuwait. Detectives were instructed to intensify their investigations after discovering the use of a Kuwaiti woman's signature, although she is out of the country for a long time, as documents were forged without her knowledge.



This handout photo released by Kuwait Fire Force yesterday shows rescue boats carrying out a search following a report about a woman jumping from the Jaber Causeway.

News in brief

Kuwait ruling family denies leadership academy rumors

KUWAIT: Kuwait's ruling Al-Sabah family denied yesterday media reports alleging it seeks to establish a special academy that would help prepare its members for leadership roles, saying such plans are not even under consideration. Ruling family members do not enjoy any special privileges and are entitled to the same rights as ordinary citizens, said the family's acting deputy council chief Dr Salem Jaber Al-Sabah.

COVID patients in ICUs down to 32

KUWAIT: The number of COVID-19 patients in intensive care units has dropped to 32 yesterday from 36 the previous day, according to the Ministry of Health. Kuwait's daily coronavirus cases rose by 58 to 410,842, while deaths increased by one to 2,432, the Health Ministry said yesterday. The number of patients in COVID-19 wards stood yesterday at 89, while another 1,148 are receiving regular treatment, ministry spokesperson Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad said yesterday. Some 14,661 swab tests were conducted over the past 24 hours, taking the total to 3.9 million as of yesterday, he noted. Meanwhile, total recoveries reached 407,262 as 117 fresh recoveries were announced yesterday.

Smart meters in one week

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Electricity and Water is a week away from launching the first stage of smart electric meters in the presence of Minister of Electricity and Water and Renewable Energy Mashaan Al-Otaibi. The ministry considers the smart meter project a solution to two most important problems it faces - power and water wastage and not paying dues on time. Al-Qabas Arabic daily reported yesterday. The first stage will see 90,000 meters installed in Salmiya, followed by Hawally and Farwaniya, as these are the areas where investment residence and commercial activities are concentrated, in addition to high consumption.

Nearly 18K arrive from Egypt, India

KUWAIT: A week after the resumption of direct flights between Kuwait and each of India and Egypt, informed sources at the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) said airport traffic is smooth and according to plan without any problems. Increasing the capacity to 10,000 passengers daily contributed to operating direct flights after lifting a travel ban on many countries, the sources told Al-Rai Arabic daily. They said that last week there were 89 flights from Egypt and 85 from India. The number of passengers on these flights were 10,261 from Egypt and 7,582 from India. The sources said airport employees apply health protocols on all passengers without exceptions, adding that no passenger will be allowed into Kuwait unless all conditions are met.

Eighty firemen battle massive Amghara blaze



KUWAIT: Kuwait Fire Force said four fire stations battled a blaze in a storage area in Amghara at dawn yesterday. Firemen found the warehouses contained lumber, electronic devices and various other items. Eighty firemen fought the fire and kept it from spreading. KFF indicated that the fire occurred in three storage buildings covering an area of 2,500 square meters. Investigations were launched to determine the cause of the fire.



General Assembly to focus on COVID-19 ramifications, vaccine: Kuwait's envoy

NEW YORK: The 76th UN General Assembly will focus on the ramifications of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on the world as well as finding balanced means to distribute vaccines globally, said a Kuwait diplomat yesterday. Arab officials would focus in their participation on trying to solve crises and issues pertaining to the Middle East especially the plight of the Palestinian people. Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UN headquarters in New York Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi indicated in a statement to the press. World leaders will bring upon the most important current issues namely the developments in Afghanistan in addition to the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Glasgow, Scotland, in November, said the Ambassador.

This year's General Assembly will allow leaders and top figures to return to meetings on

September 21-27 in person or pre-record their speeches as was the case last year, indicated Ambassador Otaibi. He revealed that the General Assembly, presided over by the President of the current sessions the Maldives, would be held under the theme "Building resilience through hope - to recover from COVID-19, rebuild sustainability, respond to the needs of the planet, respect the rights of people, and revitalize the United Nations". He added that an estimated 70 to 90 heads of states and governments as well as foreign ministers would be taking part in the meetings. He pointed out that the Kuwaiti delegation will be headed by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and will include Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs and Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr. Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad amongst others.

Kuwait's speech, to be delivered by the Prime



Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi

Minister, will be on September 24th and it will touch on issues of multifaceted themes, the Ambassador affirmed that the Kuwaiti delegation will be holding a multitude of sideline meetings including heading the consultative meeting for the Arab foreign ministers at the headquarters of the Kuwaiti mission. He said that the UN General Secretariat would announce the schedule for meetings and participation soon. —KUNA

Kuwait, World Bank ink partnership memo

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Finance Minister and Minister of State for Economic and Investment Affairs Khalifa Hamadah and Regional Director of the World Bank for Saudi Arabia and the Arab Gulf Countries Esam Abo-Sulaiman signed yesterday a memorandum of partnership. The document is complementary to Kuwait Vision 2035 and the national development plan 2021-2025, according to a press release from the Ministry of Finance. During his meeting with Abo-Sulaiman, the minister lauded the distinguished relations the State of Kuwait and the World Bank Group maintained over the last six decades.

Meanwhile, World Bank Group's representative appreciated Kuwait's contributions to the enhancement of the relationship. He said the World Bank Group was ready to share experience with Kuwait and help the Kuwaiti cadres realize the targets of Kuwait Vision 2035 and the



KUWAIT: Kuwait's Finance Minister Khalifa Hamadah (left) and the World Bank's Regional Director Esam Abo-Sulaiman sign the memorandum of partnership. —KUNA

national plan 2021-2025, the statement noted. Also attending the meeting were Resident Representative of the WB Office in Kuwait Ghassan Alkhoa, President of the General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning

and Development Dr Khaled Mahdi, Director of the Finance Ministry's Department of Arab and Gulf Economic Cooperation Talal Al-Nemsh and Director of the National Debt Department Abdulaziz Al-Mullah. —KUNA

Local

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ACK collaborates with authority for health, safety drives

KUWAIT: Align with the community outreach program at the Australian College of Kuwait (ACK), the Health and Safety Department hosted the Public Authority for Housing Welfare and shared their milestone in building an effective health and safety management system for the college.

During the visit, the Health and Safety Department at ACK enlightened the visiting team by key elements of the College's health and safety program, safety plans and risk control measures, and shared ACK's COVID-19 safety monitoring system to help the Public Authority for Housing Welfare refine their own health and safety management system at their workplace.

It is worth mentioning that a health and safety management system involves the introduction of processes designed to decrease the occurrence of injury and illness in the employer's operation. Successful implementation of the system requires management commitment to the system, effective allocation of resources, and a high level of employee participation. The scope and complexity of a health and safety management system will vary according to the size and type of workplace.

"Sharing our story in building an effective health and safety management system is so much more than simply stating the historical facts. It's an effective communication tool that can take communication from intellectual to visceral and experiential," said Mariam Al-Maraghi, health and safety manager at ACK. "The efforts we have been making for many years now and our cumulative experience have produced positive results. These results are encouraging, and we hope they can help create safer workplaces in the country."



KUWAIT: Gulf Bank honors the NUKS USA President.

Gulf Bank welcomes new trainees across various departments

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank hosted a celebratory event last week in celebration of its 40 field trainees, who have successfully completed their internship program across various departments in the Bank. The event was held in the presence of Gulf Bank's CEO, Tony Daher, and the Deputy CEO of Consumer Banking and Investments, Waleed Khaled Mandani, in addition to representatives from multiple higher education institutions such as the American University of the Middle East (AUM), and the Gulf University for Science and Technology. Representatives from local student organization, LOYAC, also attended, in addition to the president of the National Union of Kuwaiti Students (NUKS), Abdulaziz Al-Kandari, and the Dean of the School of Engineering at the Australian College of

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti artist Maitham Abdal works on a sculpture named "Spoon of Freedom", to honor Palestinian prisoners who reportedly used a spoon to dig a tunnel from where they escaped from an Israeli maximum security prison, in his workshop in his home in Kuwait City yesterday. - Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat (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, in addition to a description showing the picture's location and date taken)

Alghanim Industries supports KRCS local and regional efforts

KUWAIT: Driven by Executive Chairman Kutayba Y Alghanim's commitment to humanitarian aid and social responsibility, Alghanim Industries, one of the region's largest private companies, continues to support the Kuwait Red Crescent Society, funding several key initiatives inside and outside Kuwait. The joint efforts of Alghanim Industries and KRCS serve a medley of philanthropic purposes focused especially on education, charity, youth-focused projects, in addition to relief efforts.

Alghanim Industries renewed its joint support for a joint initiative with KRCS in financially supporting lower income students through scholarships with Arab Open University. Since the launch of this initiative in 2019, it has covered tuition fees and provided financial support for more than 50 students, enabling them to pursue their college education at the Arab Open University.

Executive Chairman Kutayba Y Alghanim stressed the importance of facilitating pathways to higher education as a key element to the company's philanthropic work and service to the community. Better educational opportunities for younger generations are both a basic human right and a cornerstone to a more fruitful future for society, the chairman explained. As education is tied to better financial prospects for the individual, these scholarships not only provide access to college degrees, but also enable students to gain jobs that will improve their overall quality of life.

"We're proud of this solid partnership with Kuwait's Red Crescent Society," said Chairman Alghanim. "Our formidable relationship and shared values empower us to further enhance our collective efforts in Kuwait and the region."

"When it comes to education, a major component of Alghanim Industries' philanthropic mission, Palestine is a historic beneficiary of the company's support. The West Bank's Birzeit University is both a longtime recipient of financial support and an institution held dear by Executive Chairman Kutayba Y. Alghanim - in 1985, the chairman supported the establishment of the Yusuf



Kutayba Y Alghanim



Dr Hilal Al-Sayer



Ahmed Alghanim Library with Birzeit University, which hosts over 50,000 books for Palestinian students.

Most recently, Alghanim Industries solidified this alliance with a timely donation in support of KRCS's efforts in Lebanon. The devolving economic situation in Lebanon, coupled with the chairman's longtime adoration for the Levantine country, prompted Alghanim Industries to revitalize KRCS' "With You, Lebanon" campaign. After the August 2020 Beirut port blast, the campaign launched an immediate relief initiative to counteract the tragedy and its effects which still echo today. The ongoing campaign recently provided medical supplies and an array of necessities along with camping provisions for Syrian and Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. Additionally, the campaign's aid package provides baby formula, medicine, supplies, and funding for the reconstruction of hospitals and homes damaged by the explosion.

"What bleeds in Lebanon, bleeds in Kuwait. The wound is one," said Chairman Alghanim. "Extending and renewing our support to the victims of the Beirut blast is not only a humanitarian responsibility but a national duty from one country to another sibling country. We haven't forgotten the honorable and fearless stand Lebanon made when Kuwait suffered the Iraqi invasion, and we're

just as proud to provide support as we were 30 years ago when we were supported."

Dr Hilal Al-Sayer, Chairman of the Kuwait Red Crescent Society, lauded the longstanding relationship between the KRCS and Alghanim Industries, valuing the charitable donations of the company to help KRCS in its various activities, whether in Kuwait or abroad. He noted that Alghanim Industries spares no effort to support the KRCS activities, reflecting the true Kuwaiti values of generosity and solidarity.

Beyond Lebanon, the Alghanim-KRCS collaboration also provides regional support to Palestine with both humanitarian aid and educational empowerment. In May, KRCS launched their #WithYouPalestine campaign in solidarity with the Palestinian people during the latest episode of aggression by the Israeli Occupation.

Collaborating with the Palestinian Red Crescent Society, KRCS provided affected Palestinian territories with dire need of necessities and medical supplies. Alghanim Industries supported the campaign with donations, making way for an array of more purposeful equipment catering to specific ailments with medical aid and ambulances.



Gulf Bank CEO with the HR team.



Some of the interns.



The audience.

Kuwait, Dr Mohammed Abdul-Niby, who spoke during the event and thanked Gulf Bank for its ongoing support and empowerment of the Kuwaiti student body.

During the event, the National Union of Kuwaiti Students expressed their appreciation for Gulf Bank's sponsorship of this year's new student orientation for high school graduates who are planning to study in the United States. This year, Gulf Bank's Training and Development department offered all student attendees (including those who are majoring in relevant majors) the opportunity to receive a paid internship opportunity in the fields of data science and cyber security.

This event was held in celebration of the employees' successful completion of Gulf Bank's integrated training program, which wrapped up in August 2021. The training program encompasses the basics of banking, and prepares trainees for their future banking careers, highlighting the different functions of the Bank's various departments. The program also serves to bridge the gap between trainees' theoretical university training and the practical, hands-on work experience that the modern day workplace requires.

During the course of their training, the trainees took advantage of several occasions to meet and network with the Bank's leaders, gaining valuable experience. After successfully completing the training period, each candidate was then matched with the department that was the most suited for their prospective career paths, and the most aligned with their skills and aspirations. With the training period complete and having gained a holistic understanding of the Bank's multiple departments, each candidate will now officially start working at the department of his or her choice.

Gulf Bank's General Manager of Human Resources, Salma Al-Hajaj emphasized the value and uniqueness of the Bank's training program, saying: "Gulf Bank's Internship Training Program is one of the most important programs at the Bank, in part since it represents a tangible transition in the trainee's life - from a budding university student to an experienced banking employee. I am extremely proud of our trainees and this program, which has proven its value year after year in successfully training countless leaders in the banking sector. I would like to take this opportunity to invite our young graduates to

learn about the multitude of training opportunities available to them, and to encourage them to pursue the unparalleled banking experience that can only ever be offered at Gulf Bank, a bank that is moving steadily towards leadership in the banking sector."

The trainees have been assigned to several departments at Gulf Bank, including Corporate Banking, Marketing, Corporate Communications, Strategy Department, Human Resources, Retail Banking, Central Sales, Cyber Security, Data Science, Data and Analytics, and CPD. The trainees also included interns from LOYAC and the National Union of Kuwaiti Students (NUKS), who spent several weeks interning at multiple departments within the bank and were eventually appointed to work at the departments.

To learn more about Gulf Bank's various initiatives, customers can visit one of the Bank's branches, or visit the Gulf Bank website at www.e-gulfbank.com. Customers can also use the WhatsApp service on 1805805 for round-the-clock assistance from Gulf Bank representatives or call the Customer Contact Center on the same number.



Greenpeace: 'Insane' vision that took flight 50 years ago

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Canada snap election up in the air with one week to go



KABUL: A Taliban fighter stands guard as a Pakistan International Airlines plane, the first commercial international flight to land since the Taliban retook power last month, takes off with passengers onboard at the airport yesterday. — AFP

First foreign commercial flight leaves Kabul

UN chief urges donors to give Afghans 'lifeline' • Baradar releases audio statement after death rumors

KABUL: An international commercial flight left Kabul yesterday, the first since the Taliban retook power last month, offering some hope to Afghans still desperate to leave the country. The capital's airport was left trashed after US-led forces finished a chaotic evacuation of more than 120,000 people, and the Taliban have since scrambled to get it operational with technical assistance from Qatar and other nations.

Yesterday morning, a Pakistan International Airlines jet touched down in Kabul, before making a return flight to Islamabad. Around 70 people were on the flight to the Pakistani capital, mostly Afghans who were relatives of staffers with international organizations such as the World Bank, according to airport ground staff. "I am being evacuated. My final destination is Tajikistan," said a 35-year-old World Bank evacuee, who did not want to give her name. "I will come back here only if the situation allows women to work and move freely."

A 22-year-old university student said he was taking a one-month trip to Pakistan. "It's like a vacation. I am sad and happy. Sad about the country, but happy to leave for some time," he said. The resumption of commercial flights will be a key test for the hard-

line Islamist group, who have repeatedly promised to allow Afghans with the right documents to leave the country freely.

As passengers prepared to board, airport staff went about their duties, although working under the new regime is marred by fear and confusion for women. "I don't know if we will be killed or not for working here," one of two women handling the security scanning machine told AFP.

'Great moment'

Many NATO nations admitted that they had run out of time to evacuate thousands of at-risk Afghans before the withdrawal deadline - agreed between the United States and the Taliban. A PIA spokesman said at the weekend that the airline was keen to resume regular commercial services, but it was too soon to say how frequently flights between the two capitals would operate.

Jawad Zafar, the head of operations at PIA, told AFP yesterday: "This is a great moment for me after a long time since the change of the establishment in Kabul." AFP staff observed only a handful of people on the flight from Islamabad to Kabul. Qatar Airways operated several charter flights out of Kabul last

week, carrying mostly foreigners and Afghans who missed out on the evacuation.

An Afghan airline resumed domestic services on Sept 3. "This is a big moment. We are very excited," said one airport employee. "It's a hopeful day. Maybe other airlines will see this and decide to come back." Passenger halls, air bridges and technical infrastructure were badly damaged in the days after the Taliban rolled into Kabul on August 15, when thousands of people stormed the airport in the hope of fleeing.

Tens of thousands of Afghans fear reprisals for helping foreign powers during the 20-year US-led occupation, but the Taliban insist they have granted a general amnesty to everyone-including the security forces they fought against. The Taliban have promised a milder form of rule this time, but have moved swiftly to crush dissent, including firing in the air to disperse recent protests by women calling for the right to education and work.

UN chief Antonio Guterres yesterday called for the international community to provide desperately needed aid to Afghans, and to support women and others whose rights appear threatened by the Taliban. "After decades of war, suffering and insecurity, they face perhaps their most perilous hour," he said at the UN's

European headquarters in Geneva. "Afghan women and girls want to ensure that gains are not lost, doors are not closed and hope is not extinguished."

The UN rights chief Michelle Bachelet also criticized the new interim government yesterday, saying she was "dismayed by the lack of inclusivity of the so-called caretaker cabinet, which includes no women and few non-Pashtuns". She added there was "well-founded" information showing the Taliban had gone against their commitment to a more moderate brand of government, pointing in particular to "credible allegations of reprisal killings" of former members of the Afghan national security forces.

Meanwhile, Taliban co-founder and now deputy prime minister Abdul Ghani Baradar released an audio statement saying he was alive and well after news of his supposed demise went viral on social media. Baradar, who was last week named as a number two to Mullah Mohammed Hassan Akhund, blamed "fake propaganda" for the death rumors in an audio message posted by the Taliban. Social media has been in a frenzy over the speculation - particularly in India, where rumors swirled that he had been mortally wounded in a shootout between rival Taliban factions at the presidential palace. — AFP



BAABDA, Lebanon: Lebanon's Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, President Michel Aoun and Prime Minister Najib Mikati pose for a group photo with the newly formed government at the presidential palace yesterday. — AFP

Lebanon's new cabinet holds first meeting

BEIRUT: Lebanon's newly-formed government held its first meeting yesterday to discuss ways of rescuing the country from one of its worst ever economic crises. The meeting, during which a ministerial statement is to be drafted to be submitted to a confidence vote in parliament, opened in the presence of President Michel Aoun. Aoun said in a statement he hoped the committee tasked with drafting the statement would include the pursuit of negotiations with the International Monetary Fund.

Talks with the IMF on financial assistance are key to rescuing Lebanon, which defaulted on its debt last year and has since been sliding into poverty. More than three out of four Lebanese are now considered to be under the

poverty line, mains electricity is only available a handful of hours a day while petrol, bread and medicine shortages are sowing chaos across the country.

"We will tackle solutions to the fuel and medicine shortages in order to end the humiliation" to the population, Prime Minister Najib Mikati said during the meeting. The new lineup was unveiled by Mikati after protracted horse trading, 13 months after the previous government resigned following the deadly explosion at Beirut port in Aug 2020.

In the interim, the economic collapse in Lebanon has become one of the worst on record worldwide, with the currency losing more than 90 percent of its value and foreign partners seeing no sign of political change. Mikati, the country's richest man and a third-time premier, succeeded where his two predecessors failed in clinching a political agreement for a new lineup. His team was met with skepticism if not scorn by many in Lebanon who argue that the same parties and political barons that have ruled for decades were unlikely to deliver major change. — AFP

Qatar urges 'reconciliation' in Afghanistan

DOHA: Qatar's foreign minister called for "national reconciliation" in Afghanistan as a "safety valve" for the country's stability during a meeting with his French opposite number in Doha yesterday. Qatar has long acted as a mediator on Afghanistan, hosting the Taliban's talks with the United States under former president Donald Trump, and then with the now deposed pro-western Afghan government.

Qatar would "support all efforts that would achieve national reconciliation in Afghanistan," said Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani. "We believe that national reconciliation is the only safety valve for Afghanistan's stability in the future," he added. Sheikh Mohammed on Sunday became the most senior foreign leader to visit the Taliban government, meeting new Prime Minister Mullah Mohammad Hassan Akhund according to the Taliban.

Yesterday Sheikh Mohammed said that discussions about whether the Taliban should

be recognized diplomatically were redundant and the emphasis should be on engagement. The Taliban has yet to receive formal recognition from any United Nations member state, including Qatar. French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said that questions remained about the Taliban's promises on women's education and rights. "There have been (Taliban) declarations but no action yet," said Le Drian. "We are keeping up pressure at all levels for them to deliver on their promises."

Tensions have simmered in Afghanistan since the US completed its withdrawal last month, with sporadic street protests erupting in cities and armed resistance to Taliban rule persisting in the Panjshir valley. Alongside its engagement with the Taliban, Qatar has also supported tens of thousands of Afghans who were evacuated in the final weeks of the US presence as they are processed before heading to other nations.

Dozens of French nationals have been evacuated from Afghanistan via Doha on Qatari planes, prompting Le Drian to thank the Qatari government. He confirmed that there were "very few" French nationals still stranded in Afghanistan, saying that they only numbered in the tens. Some 2,800 people were evacuated from Afghanistan by France, including 2,600 Afghans, Le Drian said. — AFP



KABUL: Qatari Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani meets Afghanistan's new Prime Minister Mullah Mohammad Hassan Akhund on Sunday. — AFP

International

Canada snap election up in the air with one week to go

Trudeau hoping to again secure ruling majority in House of Commons

MONTREAL: Will Canada's Liberal leader Justin Trudeau win a third term as prime minister or will Conservative leader Erin O'Toole ruin his plans? With a week to go before crucial snap legislative elections called by Trudeau himself, the two parties are virtually tied. As the last week of campaigning kicks into high gear, the most recent polls show the Liberals and Conservatives each with 30-34 percent of the vote, and the leftist New Democratic Party with about 20 percent. Smaller parties account for the remainder.

By calling for elections well before the usual end of his term, the 49-year-old Trudeau is hoping to again secure a ruling majority in the House of Commons, which he lost when voters went to the polls in 2019. But after a month of campaigning for the Sept 20 vote, that goal seems "unattainable", according to Andre Lamoureux, a professor of political science at the University of Quebec in Montreal. "He could once again end up with a minority government, but he's playing with fire," Lamoureux told AFP.

Trudeau, the son of former prime minister Pierre Trudeau, swept to power in 2015, unseating the Tories, who had been

in office for nearly a decade. If neither the Liberals nor the Tories - who have alternated as the ruling party since 1867 - are able to secure a majority of the 338 seats in the lower house of parliament, the winner will have to form a minority government.

Ultimately, the election will be a referendum on the policies of Trudeau because the Conservatives' ideas "are not

recent weeks that the campaign was a useless one as parliament is working fine - though Trudeau has called it dysfunctional - and the country should instead be focusing on the fourth wave of COVID-19 cases. "Now is not the time for an election. Why in the middle of a pandemic did you call an election?" O'Toole asked Trudeau in last week's debate.

End of Trudeaumania

Worn out after six years in office, and weakened by a series of political scandals, the one-time golden boy of Canadian politics has lost some of his luster. On the campaign trail, he has been dogged by protesters, many of them enraged by his policies for handling the coronavirus pandemic, including mandatory vaccines. One demonstrator has been charged with assault for throwing stones at the premier.

In late August, he was forced to cancel a campaign event for security reasons. "We cannot afford four more years of Justin Trudeau," said NDP leader Jagmeet Singh, calling the current leader a "big talker but little doer" on climate change and the environment. "The 'sunny



Liberals and Conservatives virtually tied

more popular than they were before", says Genevieve Tellier, a professor of politics at the University of Ottawa. Voters have realized that "Justin Trudeau's decision to put himself back on the campaign trail was grounded in very strategic calculations," Tellier told AFP.

His rivals have repeatedly said in



GATINEAU, Canada: In this photo taken on Sept 8, 2021, Conservative leader Erin O'Toole (left) and Canadian Prime Minister and Liberal leader Justin Trudeau discuss a point during the federal election French-language leaders debate at the Canadian Museum of History. — AFP

ways' promised by Trudeau in 2015 seem well far off, and all many voters see are empty words," Tellier said.

Regional politics at play

But Trudeau has hit back at his critics in recent days, casting himself as the only credible leader among the candidates and saying O'Toole doesn't have

the bona fides to run the Group of Seven nation, which is also the world's fourth largest oil producer. He has portrayed O'Toole as weak and ineffective, said his policies on climate change are insufficient and labeled him as an extremist for caving to the anti-abortion, climate skeptic right wing of the Conservative party. — AFP

California burning: Wildfires heat up governor recall vote

SOUTH LAKE TAHOE, California: California is burning. Wildfires are tearing through the US state at an alarming rate and heating up the vote on recalling the embattled governor. Democrat Gavin Newsom's detractors blame him for all of California's ills: From the housing crisis to the march of COVID-19. And the record-breaking fire season - shaping up to be the worst ever - is another stick with which to beat him.

"This is about the failure of government to do the most basic things, like manage our forests," Republican candidate Kevin Kiley said. With hundreds of homes already lost and thousands of people forced to flee encroaching flames, it might seem like a winning strategy. But even those who have seen their property reduced to ashes say the problem is bigger than the 53-year-old politician at California's helm.

"I voted for Newsom and I don't plan to recall him," said Tim Close, who learned of the destruction of his family's cabin near South Lake Tahoe

when he saw an AFP photograph of it burning. "I just think that the fires have increased. We're in a drought," Close said. "You can just look over what's happened in the last five or six years. And it seems like you know, every season is getting worse."

Scientists say man-made climate change is making the western United States hotter, drier and more vulnerable to destructive fires. The blazes are a natural part of the forest cycle, but their increased regularity and ferocity is down to the rise in global temperatures caused by the burning of fossil fuels.

Anger

Californians are voting on whether to oust Newsom in a recall election prompted by Republicans angered by mask mandates, a high cost of living and sky-rocketing homelessness in the wealthiest and most populous state in the union. The two-part vote asks first if Newsom should be removed. If a majority agree, then whoever gets the most votes out of 46 candidates - regardless of how



SAN LEANDRO, California: In this photo taken on Sept 8, 2021 California Governor Gavin Newsom speaks during a campaign rally against his recall election at the IBEW-NECA Joint Apprenticeship Training Center. — AFP

few votes he or she receives - will take Newsom's place.

But despite Republican claims, the fires are unlikely to play a decisive roll at the ballot box, says Jack Citrin, professor emeritus at the University of California, Berkeley. "I don't think there's been much discussion or evidence of this. Obviously, the people

who are affected by the fires and who have lost homes and so forth are angry, but then the question really is, whom do they blame?" Citrin said. "It's hard to know, it's the generalized anger that one might feel about this, if one is a victim and forced to evacuate. (But) it doesn't really lead in any direct way... to the governor." — AFP



Alexandre Benalla

Macron's former bodyguard on trial for beating protesters

PARIS: President Emmanuel Macron's former bodyguard appeared in court yesterday on charges of assaulting two young demonstrators during an anti-capitalist protest in 2018, an incident that caused deep embarrassment for a president who promised an "exemplary republic". Macron, who had made integrity in office a cornerstone of his 2017 election campaign, was forced to fire Alexandre Benalla after a video emerged showing him striking a young man and grabbing a young woman by the neck at a May Day protest in Paris.

The former bouncer, now aged 30, was wearing a police helmet, even though he had only been given leave to attend the protest as an observer. The presidency was accused of a cover-up for failing to report Benalla to the police until French daily Le Monde revealed the existence of the video two months after the incident. "Benallagate" ballooned into the first major test for Macron, who swept to the presidency with a pledge to restore faith in public authorities.

His government survived two no-confidence votes in parliament, but a Senate investigative panel that questioned key Macron aides found "major flaws" in the administration's handling of the affair. Benalla was charged with assault as well as unauthorized interference in police matters. Wearing a dark suit and a face mask, he made no statement to the dozens of journalists waiting as he arrived at the Paris courthouse.

He has denied the charges, saying he acted "by reflex" to help officers arrest unruly protesters. "Mistakes were made obviously, by me of course, but I can put up with a lot. And I'm far from being the only one responsible for this shipwreck. I'm the scapegoat for the people in power," he wrote in a 2019 book, "What They Don't Want Me To Say."

From confidant to liability

Also on trial is Benalla's friend Vincent Crase, the former security head of Macron's centrist party, who was also filmed roughing up protesters at the demo. Two police officers, accused of illegally providing Benalla with surveillance footage in a bid to claim his actions were justified, will also be in the dock. Benalla started working as a bodyguard for Macron in 2016 during what many considered his dark horse bid for the presidency, winning over the politician and his wife Brigitte with his boundless energy.

He was promoted to a senior security role after Macron's May 2017 victory, becoming a trusted confidant and right-hand man seen at Macron's side in countless photos. "He got noticed as someone who could fix all the practical problems very efficiently," a former senior campaign official said. "He thought of everything, he was our Swiss Army knife." — AFP

Would-be German chancellors go head-to-head

POTSDAM, Germany: Famous for its palaces that once housed Prussian kings, the German city of Potsdam on the outskirts of Berlin has also become the arena for a battle for Angela Merkel's crown in the run-up to September's election. Two of the leading candidates in the race to replace Merkel-Annalena Baerbock of the Greens and Olaf Scholz of the center-left Social Democrats (SPD) - are running in constituency 61, which includes Potsdam.

The battle marks the first time in German history that two chancellor candidates have gone head-to-head in the same constituency - a far cry from the "safe seat" route often favored by past political heavyweights. As seats in the German parliament are filled through a combination of direct mandates and party lists, Scholz and Baerbock could still become MPs even if they lose in Potsdam - but winning a direct mandate would be the icing on the cake.

"Constituency kings and queens have a special legitimacy in the Bundestag," Karl-Rudolf Korte, a professor of politics at the University of Duisburg-Essen, told AFP. "Both candidates have their place secured via the list. Nevertheless, the competition is more than just symbolic." While Potsdam is the cap-

French far-right pundit edges closer to presidential bid

PARIS: Top French far-right commentator Eric Zemmour announced yesterday that he would be stepping down from his TV show, increasing speculation that he will run for the presidency next year. Zemmour, known for his anti-immigration and anti-Muslim rhetoric, has teased his political ambitions since the start of the year and is to begin a national book tour this week "to meet the French people"

The loss of his role at his ratings-topping show on the CNews channel came after France's CSA media regulator classified him last week as a politician rather than a journalist. "I'm sad," Zemmour



BERLIN: (From left) Candidates for chancellor Olaf Scholz, Annalena Baerbock and Armin Laschet attend an election TV debate on Sunday. — AFP

ital of former East German state Brandenburg, it is more affluent than many other ex-communist cities, with lush gardens and lakes making it a popular bolthole for wealthy Berlin commuters.

The city also has a celebrity quality as it is home to the Babelsberg film studios, as well as many prominent politicians, from the far-right AfD's co-leader Alexander Gauland to the liberal FDP's former secretary general Linda Teuteberg.

'New beginning'

Scholz only moved to Potsdam from Hamburg in 2018, when he joined Merkel's cabinet as finance

told the channel on Monday, while declining to rule out having political ambitions. "I think it was inevitable."

The 63-year-old author and pundit, who has been convicted for inciting racial hatred, is seen as competition for the established far-right leader Marine Le Pen, who has already announced her candidacy for next April's election. Polls currently show President Emmanuel Macron as the narrow favourite in the race, but analysts say the election remains highly unpredictable.

Paris' Socialist Mayor Anne Hidalgo announced her intention to stand on Sunday, while the rightwing Republicans and the Green party are yet to announce their candidates. The CSA monitors French television channels to ensure that all political currents are equally represented. The decision to classify Zemmour as a politician meant that CNews would have had to give over more air time to rival politicians to compensate for his appearances on



Eric Zemmour

the hit "Face à l'Info" show, which airs from Monday to Thursday. "I've always been involved in politics. I tell you, journalism is politics," he said last Thursday after the CSA's decision. — AFP

International

Greenpeace: An 'insane' vision that took flight 50 years ago

Global warming added to group's long list of campaign battles

PARIS: "Insane" - that was teenager Barbara Stowe's reaction 50 years ago when her parents and the other founders of Greenpeace decided that they would send a boat to halt US nuclear tests. But their conviction won over Stowe and her brother Robert, who witnessed these pathbreaking meetings in the family home in Vancouver to send a ship to Amchitka in Alaska.

"I have to say that my dad, my parents, the Bohlens, Bob Hunter, Ben Metcalfe, they were visionaries, they were empowered with the idea which is somewhat crazy that a single individual or a small group of individuals can actually effect change that can change the world," said Robert Stowe, a 66-year-old neurologist. "For them it was partly an issue of the fact they felt they had to take a stand, regardless of whether or not it would be effective."

On Sept 15, 1971, a crew of 12 Canadians and Americans who had left their country after the Vietnam war, set out from Vancouver Island in an 80-foot boat called the Phyllis Cormack, which was renamed Greenpeace. Their mission was to steam to the Aleutian island of Amchitka and protest, or even prevent, the detonation of an underground nuclear test.

The boat didn't make it to Amchitka. US president Richard Nixon delayed the test and the crew were arrested in the Aleutian port of Akutan by the US Coastguard on a technicality. At this time Greenpeace - now one of the best known names worldwide - was called Don't Make a Wave but a name change was decided at a meeting to flesh

out the daring and unprecedented mission to Alaska.

'A green peace'

"Bill Darnell was leaving the meeting and my dad flashed the peace sign, and Bill said 'make it a green peace'," Robert Stowe said. "Barbara and I were arguing with him at the breakfast table saying 'Come on dad, Greenpeace is no word'. He said 'No I think that's it.' That's how the name was formed. Initially it was two words, but when we had the buttons (badges) printed, the space between the two words was taken out."

Barbara Stowe, a 65-year-old writer, said her first reaction to the Alaska mission was "This is insane. And then I saw it could be done," she said.

"My father said we'll have a rock concert and again I thought it was insane. But when he got Joni Mitchell and raised 17,000 (Canadian) dollars (to rent the boat), I had to start seeing that the impossible could be done and it was really exciting seeing the energy rise."

Institution committed to non-violence

'Pacifism is a discipline'

The boat was intercepted by the US Coastguard and the mission foiled but the media coverage and the "mindbomb" paid off for Greenpeace, which has now added global warming to its long list of campaign battles. Robert Stowe said the Quaker principles and unshakeable faith that helped shape the movement had paid rich dividends. "If you have deep conviction that something is wrong and needs to be stopped or changed, and speak from the heart, people will lis-

ten to you," he said. "We have maintained our activism over the years although perhaps not as intensely as when we were teenagers," Stowe admitted. "I'm really moved by the action of Greenpeace activists in countries like China or Russia, where they risk long jail sentences."

Barbara Stowe underscored the institution's underlying commitment to non-violence. "Pacifism is a discipline, difficult to apply when you're young



AMSTERDAM: A picture shows a flag at the headquarters of the NGO Greenpeace on Sept 10, 2021 ahead of the 50th anniversary of the group's founding. —AFP

ten to you," he said. "We have maintained our activism over the years although perhaps not as intensely as when we were teenagers," Stowe admitted. "I'm really moved by the action of Greenpeace activists in countries like China or Russia, where they risk long jail sentences."

Barbara Stowe underscored the institution's underlying commitment to non-violence. "Pacifism is a discipline, difficult to apply when you're young

but the minute you use violence it's going to come back against you," she said. When the French secret service "bombed the Rainbow Warrior to the bottom of the Auckland harbor and killed the photographer Fernando Pereira, that gave Greenpeace the biggest boost it ever had, its popularity rose enormously," she said, of the infamous July 10, 1985 operation against the Greenpeace vessel. —AFP

In Tajikistan, Afghan exiles fear for loved ones left behind

DUSHANBE: Loud, patriotic music at recent independence day celebrations in the capital of Tajikistan was of little solace to Abdulbasher Yusufi, still reeling from the Taliban's takeover of his country, neighboring Afghanistan. Yusufi escaped to the mountainous Central Asian country on Afghanistan's doorstep last month, securing last-minute visas and flights for his family, just as the Taliban arrived at the gates of Kabul.

As the high-tempo music played in a central square of Dushanbe, the 43-year-old explained that his friends and relatives faced death at the hands of the Taliban in

Panjshir, the last province to fall to the group. "I'm so worried for them," Yusufi, a former resident of the northern city Mazar-e-Sharif, told AFP. A doctor who worked with the German army and a British pharmaceutical firm before that, Yusufi says he cannot contemplate a return home with his family. "If we go back to Afghanistan there is a threat to our lives," he explained.

Rather than remain in Tajikistan, Yusufi is hoping to be granted refuge in the West. The Taliban's rapid sweep of Afghanistan as foreign troops drew down after 20 years sparked a frenzied exodus - particularly among Afghans who worked alongside foreign militaries - that centered on the airport in Kabul.

Tajikistan, a secretive and authoritarian ex-Soviet state close to Russia and China, has not provided figures for the number of Afghans who have arrived there since the Taliban began its takeover in May. But Interior Minister Ramazon Hamro Rahimzoda said earlier this month that the country could not admit around

80 Afghan families camping out on its border with Afghanistan, saying it lacked the infrastructure to house them.

Tajik leader Emomali Rakhmon then criticized international institutions for their "indifference" to the fate of Afghans, but he made no commitments to house refugees in his own country. For Afghans who have made it to Tajikistan, the government's notable anti-Taliban positioning might be a good sign.

While other neighboring countries, like Uzbekistan, began developing ties with the Taliban long ago, Tajik authorities have repeatedly criticized the group and refused to engage with it. Strongman Rakhmon has complained of the build-up of "terrorist groups" on Tajikistan's southern border since the Taliban gained control of it. He has bestowed posthumous honors on anti-Taliban commander Ahmad Shah Massoud and late former president of Afghanistan Burhanuddin Rabbani. —AFP

Malaysian PM, opposition in deal to boost stability

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's new government signed an agreement to cooperate with the opposition yesterday in exchange for a promise of reforms, a bid to bring stability after intense political turbulence. Less than a month after taking office following the collapse of his predecessor's short-lived government, Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob has extended an olive branch to his rivals.

The new administration's arrival has lowered the political temperature - at least in the short term - and fuelled hopes that officials will be able to focus on fighting a serious coronavirus outbreak. Ismail Sabri and representatives of the opposition, led by

Anwar Ibrahim, signed the agreement in parliament, as the legislature convened yesterday for the first time since the new premier took power.

The premier said in a statement that his administration and the Pact of Hope opposition alliance had made "national history" with the deal. It covers areas including fighting COVID-19, parliamentary reform, ensuring judicial independence, among other things, and is aimed at helping to "put aside political differences", the statement said. There were few immediate further details.

Ismail Sabri had previously proposed reforms including a law to block political defections, and limiting the premier's term to 10 years, although it was not clear if these would be included. The premier has only a slim majority in parliament, and the deal will help to shore up his support. In his opening address to parliament, the king, Sultan Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah, said he "appreciated the efforts towards realizing a new bipartisan approach involving all sides, that will build a new political landscape". —AFP



KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's King Sultan Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah receives documents from Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob during the opening ceremony of the 14th parliamentary sessions yesterday. —AFP

Vaccinated Sydney residents picnic as lockdown relaxed

SYDNEY: Virus lockdown rules were relaxed for fully vaccinated people in Sydney yesterday, with small groups allowed to meet for picnics for the first time in months. Families and friends gathered in parks and at beaches, reuniting 11 weeks after an outbreak of the Delta variant brought Australia's biggest city to a virtual standstill.

The rules remain strict, with just five fully vaccinated people allowed to gather outdoors for up to an hour, while tougher rules are in place for virus hotspots. Across Sydney, a five-kilometer travel limit remains in place. Though only a slight easing of restrictions, carer Lisa Doyle welcomed the change, saying it would make lockdown "a lot easier". "I

think with the restrictions easing today it gives me greater peace of mind that we can go out and we're allowed to get together," she told AFP.

Stay-at-home orders are set to be lifted for the fully vaccinated across Sydney and surrounding New South Wales state when the double-dose vaccination rate hits 70 percent - likely in October based on current trends. Damien Carr, who is semi-retired, said the rule change was "great", but like many was looking forward to the day when more rules are lifted.

"I can catch up and be with more mates but I'd love to see both my kids. I haven't been able to see my daughter in over two months and she only lives 10 kilometers from here. That's actually been the toughest thing for me in the lockdown, I think for a lot of people, just not being able to see your family. Whether they are 20 kilometers away or 2,000 kilometers, it's tough."

Sydney residents are cautiously hoping the rule changes signal the beginning of the end of 18 months of on-off restrictions. "Most people I know,



SYDNEY: Residents jog along the Sydney Harbor yesterday after some relaxations in COVID-19 restrictions by New South Wales state. —AFP

they want to go to restaurants, they want to celebrate, they want to have birthdays," Carr told AFP. "I think it will be a huge party but I don't think we're out of it." —AFP

Peru's dilemma over body of Maoist guerrilla

LIMA: Peruvian officials faced a dilemma Sunday over what to do with the body of Abimael Guzman, the late founder of the brutal Shining Path guerrilla group, amid concerns his remains could be a rallying point for supporters. Guzman,

leader of the group that spread terror across Peru in the 1980s and 1990s, died on Saturday in a military prison, aged 86.

By law, prisoner's remains should be turned over to a direct relative, but Guzman had none except his wife Elena Iparraguirre, the Shining Path's former second-in-command, who is also serving a life sentence for terrorism. Iparraguirre has given power of attorney to former prison mate Iris Quinonez to retrieve the body for burial. The public prosecutor's office in the city of Callao said Sunday afternoon the petition to release the body "will be evaluated in the next hours."

It said Guzman died of pneumonia and his body is being held in the city morgue under police guard awaiting a legal ruling. There is widespread support for Guzman's body to be cremated and the ashes spread in the Pacific Ocean, lest a gravesite serve as a rallying point for supporters.

"The remains of this genocidal killer should not be delivered to relatives, and since his wife can't receive them because she's imprisoned, the logical and reasonable step would be to cremate the body and throw the ashes in the sea," political analyst Fernando Rospigliosi told AFP. "No place of worship should be created for his followers." —AFP

News in brief

Vietnamese found in truck

HANOI: Fifteen people including a seven-year-old boy have been found inside a refrigerated truck in Vietnam after they tried to escape areas of the south badly hit by COVID-19, state media said yesterday. On Sunday police in Binh Thuan province discovered the group of 15 inside a vehicle that had aroused suspicion as it tried to pass a virus checkpoint on its way north, Ho Chi Minh City's Phap Luat online newspaper said. —AFP

Unwell Suu Kyi skips hearing

YANGON: Ousted Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi skipped the resumption of her coronavirus-delayed trial in a junta court because she felt ill, her lawyer said yesterday. Her trial on charges she violated coronavirus restrictions during elections her party won last year, and for illegally importing walkie-talkies, was due to resume yesterday after a two-month pause. But Suu Kyi returned home after a pre-hearing meeting with her legal team as she had "car sickness", her lawyer Min Min Soe said. —AFP

Gunmen free 240 inmates

ABUJA: Heavily armed gunmen stormed a jail in Nigeria's central Kogi state overnight, freeing scores of inmates, a prison authority spokesman said yesterday. It was unclear who the gunmen were but central and northwest Nigeria have been terrorized by criminal gangs for years. "The medium Security Custodial Centre in Kabba, Kogi State, has been attacked by yet to be identified gunmen and 240 inmates forcefully released," Nigeria's correctional service spokesman Francis Enobore said in a statement. —AFP

Abducted students freed

ABUJA: Nigerian gunmen have freed dozens of schoolchildren kidnapped earlier this month in northwest Zamfara State, according to a local government source and a video showing state officials with the children. The release of the Kaya school students on Sunday came after the army began a crackdown on criminal gangs in the state and local authorities shut down telecoms in Zamfara to disrupt communications between armed groups. —AFP

Fresh hearings in Liberia trial

MONROVIA: New witnesses testified yesterday in a war crimes case in Liberia's capital, a police investigator said, in the latest stage of a landmark trial against ex-rebel Gibril Massaquoi. The hearing before a Finnish court marks the second time its judges have travelled to Monrovia in the case against Massaquoi, who is accused of committing rape and ritual murder during Liberia's brutal civil war. A Sierra Leone national, Massaquoi was a senior commander of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). —AFP

Business

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2021

Fleeing Afghans sell wares at Kabul's busy flea markets

UNDP warns poverty line could rise to 97% by middle of next year

KABUL: Kabul's flea markets are packed with the belongings that desperate Afghans have sold at rock-bottom prices to fund their escape from Taliban rule, or just to pay for food. Plates, glasses, and kitchen appliances are piled high on makeshift tables at the outdoor bazaars, alongside 1990s television sets and old Singer sewing machines, while rolled-up carpets are propped up on second-hand sofas and beds.

Since the Taliban stormed to power in mid-August, Afghans say job opportunities have dried up and they are only allowed to withdraw \$200 per week from their bank accounts, meaning cash is in short supply. "We don't have anything to eat, we are poor and we are forced to sell these things," said Mohammad Ehsan, who lives in one of Kabul's hillside settlements and came to the bazaar lugging two blankets to sell. Ehsan said he used to work as a laborer, but building projects have been cancelled or put on hold.

"Rich people were in Kabul, but now everybody has escaped," he said. He is one of many Afghans who come to the flea markets to sell what they can spare directly to buyers, carrying their possessions on their backs or rolling them along on rickety street carts. He has lived through "change after change" in Afghanistan, and says he is wary of the Taliban's claims of peace and prosperity, as basic food prices skyrocket-like they did when the Taliban were last in power from 1996 to 2001.

"You can't believe any of them," Ehsan said.

Impoverished Afghanistan was already facing a drought, food shortages, and enormous pressure on its health service caused by the COVID-19 outbreak before the Taliban took control, sparking western nations to clamp down on aid that props up the Afghan economy.

The United Nations Development Programme warned last week that the percentage of people living under the poverty line could rise from 72 percent to 97 percent by the middle of next year, without rapid action.

'Helpless and poor'

Further into the bazaar, people work to repair electrical goods such as stereos, fans and washing machines before selling them on. Teenage boys press carrot or pomegranate juice on mobile stalls,

“Our society got turned upside down”

while others weave through the crowds with bananas, potatoes and eggs in wheelbarrows. Ragmen-the shopkeepers who buy and sell used goods-said they have never been so busy. Mostafa, speaking from his shipping container that serves as his shop, told AFP that many people he had bought from were travelling to the borders in hope of leaving the country.

"In the past, we would buy stuff from one or two households in a week. Now, if you have a big shop you can have the contents of 30 households at once. People are helpless and poor," he told AFP.



KABUL: Buyers browse second-hand household items for sale at a market in the northwest neighborhood of Khair Khana in Kabul.—AFP

"They sell their stuff that is worth \$6,000 for about \$2,000," he added. Mostafa, who said he has no plans to leave, said buyers at his shop were often those who had fled rural provinces for the safety of the capital when the Taliban launched their sweeping offensive. Another ragman, who did not want to be named for fear of his safety, told

AFP he had only set up his stall in recent weeks. "I was a trainer in the military for 13 years," he said, adding he lives in fear of the Taliban as a consequence. "Unfortunately, our society got turned upside down, so we were forced to do other things. 'I became a ragman-we had no other option,'" he said. —AFP

SpaceX to launch private, all-civilian crew into Earth orbit

WASHINGTON: SpaceX is set to launch four people into space tomorrow on a three-day mission that is the first to orbit the Earth with exclusively private citizens on board, as Elon Musk's company enters the space tourism fray. The "Inspiration4" mission caps a summer that saw billionaires Richard Branson and Jeff Bezos cross the final frontier, on Virgin Galactic and Blue Origin spaceships respectively, a few days apart in July.

The SpaceX flight has been chartered by American billionaire Jared Isaacman, the 38-year-old founder and CEO of payment processing company Shift4 Payment. He is also a seasoned pilot.

The exact price he paid SpaceX hasn't been disclosed, but it runs into the tens of millions of dollars. The mission itself is far more ambitious in scope than the few weightless minutes Virgin Galactic and Blue Origin customers can buy.

The SpaceX Crew Dragon will be flying further

than the orbit of the International Space Station.

"The risk is not zero," said Isaacman in an episode of a Netflix documentary about the mission. "You're riding a rocket at 17,500 miles (28,000 kilometers) per hour around the Earth. In that kind of environment there's risks." SpaceX has already given no fewer than ten astronauts rides to the ISS on behalf of NASA-but this will be the first time taking non-professional astronauts. Lift-off is scheduled for Wednesday from 8:00 pm Eastern Time (0000 GMT) from launch pad 39A, at NASA's Kennedy Center in Florida, from where the Apollo missions to the Moon took off.

Are we going to the Moon?

In addition to Isaacman, who is the mission commander, three non-public figures were selected for the voyage via a process that was first advertised at the Super Bowl in February. Each crew member was picked to represent a pillar of the mission. The youngest, Hayley Arceneaux, is a childhood bone cancer survivor, who represents "hope."

She will become the first person with a prosthetic to go to space. "Are we going to the Moon?" she asked, when she was offered her spot. "Apparently people haven't gone there in decades. I learned that," she laughed, in the

documentary. The 29-year-old was picked because she works as a Physician Assistant in Memphis for St. Jude's Hospital, the charitable beneficiary of Inspiration4. One of the donors secured the seat of "generosity": Chris Sembroski, 42, is a former US Air Force veteran who now works in the aviation industry. The last seat represents "prosperity" and was offered to Sian Proctor, a 51-year-old earth science professor who, in 2009, narrowly missed out on becoming a NASA astronaut. She will be only the fourth African American woman to go to space. —AFP



documentary.

Alipay's parent company Ant Group is China's biggest payments services provider. Regulators pulled the plug on the fintech conglomerate's record \$37 billion stock market launch in November, after founder Jack Ma criticized officials for stifling innovation. Ma's business empire has been targeted in a wider crackdown on tech firms aimed at breaking monopolies and strengthening data security, that has wiped billions off companies' valuations. The outspoken billionaire has largely remained out of the limelight since the crackdown began.

After separating its payment and loan businesses Alipay will have to hand over customer data used to make its lending decisions to a new credit scoring joint-venture that is partly state-owned, two sources familiar with the arrangement told the Financial Times. Alipay did not immediately respond to AFP's questions on how the order would affect its business.

Regulators have also asked Ma's e-commerce platform Alibaba and other internet firms to stop blocking links to rival services, Zhao Zhiguo, a spokesman for Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, said at a briefing yesterday.

China's market regulator last month announced rules

est warning level-and urged residents to "stop outdoor activities and large-scale meetings". Footage from CCTV showed workers in plastic ponchos going from door to door to warn residents of the storm on Sunday night. Subway trains have been suspended, and the city government has ordered all elementary and middle school students to stay home from yesterday afternoon to today.

The storm travelled up the eastern coast of Taiwan on Sunday without making landfall, prompting authorities there to suspend ferry services and shut down public venues. Scientists have long warned that typhoons are becoming more powerful, and strengthening more rapidly, as the world becomes warmer because of man-made climate change. —AFP



to bring down so-called "walled gardens" built by tech companies that aim to lock users into their services. "It is unreasonable to restrict.. access of website links, which not only affects the user experience, but also damages rights and interests of users and disrupts the market order," Zhao said. "Users have responded strongly against this." —AFP

Aluminum hits 13-yr high amid inflation fears

LONDON: Aluminum reached \$3,000 a ton for the first time in 13 years yesterday, ratcheting up soaring inflation concerns that in turn are boosting the dollar as traders eye higher interest rates to tame runaway prices. Asian equities traded mixed as investors weighed hopes for better US-China trade relations against further regulatory clampdown from Beijing on the Chinese tech sector.

Europe's main stock markets advanced and Wall Street opened higher. Sentiment has been lifted by news that US President Joe Biden held talks on Friday with Chinese leader Xi Jinping in a bid to smooth relations between the superpowers.

At the same time, market caution persisted after data showed inflation of goods leaving US factories had soared in August to an all-time high of 8.3 percent. The reading was fuelled partly by a sharp rise in commodity prices, a concern highlighted by news that aluminum has hit \$3,000 a ton for the first time in 13 years on global supply issues.

"Soaring commodity prices show little sign of letting up," noted Joshua Mahony, senior market analyst at IG trading group, as oil prices won another one percent yesterday. After hitting the \$3,000 mark, aluminum fell back to \$2,924 in afternoon trading on the London Metal Exchange. Surging inflation concerns ramped up speculation about the Federal Reserve's plans for monetary policy.

Its boss Jerome Powell has already indicated that the US central bank would likely start tapering its vast bond-buying program-which has been a key driver of the economic and equity markets recovery-by the end of the year. But the latest US inflation figures could cause officials to bring forward their timeline and raise interest rates. The release today of US consumer inflation has now taken on more significance, according to analysts.

China's tech crackdown

In trading yesterday, Hong Kong led the losers, with tech firms again taking much of the heat on lingering concerns about China's crackdown on the sector. Market heavyweight Alibaba plunged more than four percent after Chinese regulators ordered sweeping changes to the country's biggest payment app Alipay.

Alipay-with more than a billion users in China and other Asian nations-was told to spin off its profitable micro loan business, the Financial Times reported. The firm's parent company Ant Group is China's biggest payments services provider and part of the Alibaba empire.

Traders were keeping tabs also on the Korean peninsula after the North test-fired a new "long-range cruise missile" over the weekend, calling it a "strategic weapon of great significance".

The US military described the move as posing "threats" to the country's neighbors and beyond. Oil prices rose, with the OPEC oil cartel forecasting global demand will surpass pre-pandemic levels next year. —AFP

China to target app Alipay in tech crackdown

BEIJING: Chinese regulators have ordered sweeping changes to the country's biggest payment app Alipay, as the ruling Communist Party attempts to rein in "the unruly growth" of the tech giants. Alipay-with more than one billion users in China and other Asian nations including India-was told to spin off its profitable micro loan business, the Financial Times reported yesterday, citing a person with knowledge of the matter.

Currently the app allows users to pay with a traditional credit card linked to their bank or offers small unsecured loans to buy anything from toilet paper to laptops. "The government believes big tech's monopoly power comes from their control of data," the source close to financial regulators told the newspaper. "It wants to end that."

Flights cancelled as Typhoon Chanthu nears Shanghai

SHANGHAI: Hundreds of flights were grounded and tens of thousands of residents evacuated in Shanghai yesterday as Typhoon Chanthu brought strong winds and rain to the eastern Chinese metropolis. City authorities have moved at least 28,000 people from at-risk neighborhoods, with the storm expected to make landfall later, state broadcaster CCTV reported.

Business

Oil sector in balance as Norway votes; 'Red-Green' opposition seen winning

Green Party leading the charge in calling for an immediate halt to oil exploration

OSLO: Norwegians voted yesterday in a parliamentary election broadly expected to see the "Red-Green" opposition win, potentially influencing the fate of oil activities in the largest producer in Western Europe. Polling stations opened at 9 am (0700 GMT) and first estimates based on advance ballots were to be released when voting ends at 9 pm.



Oil sector accounts for 14% of gross domestic product

According to opinion polls, a clear majority is emerging to unseat Prime Minister Erna Solberg's center-right government, which has ruled the Nordic country for the last eight years. The leader of Norway's Labour Party Jonas Gahr Store, a 61-year-old millionaire who has campaigned against social inequality, seems well placed to succeed her, but the exact shape of the coalition needed to pave his way to office is still unclear.

His party's preferred allies are the agrarian Centre Party and the Socialist Left Party, but if they are unable to reach a majority on their own they might depend on the support of the Green Party and the communist Red Party, potentially complicating negotiations. According to an average of opinion polls conducted between August 2 and September 11 and published late Sunday by TV2, Store's preferred three-

party coalition was due to get 85 of 169 seats in parliament, giving it the narrowest possible majority.

The center-right was seen garnering 67 mandates, while the Red Party was predicted to take nine and the Greens eight. "I have a good feeling," Store said as he cast his ballot at a school in Oslo on Sunday, with voting opening a day earlier in the major cities. More than 1.6 million Norwegians, or 42.3 percent of the electorate, had made use of early voting opportunities.

Overcoming addiction

The August "code red for humanity" report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) put the issue at the top of the agenda for the election campaign and forced the country to reflect on the oil that has made it immensely rich. The report energized those who want to get rid of oil, both on the left and, to a lesser extent, the right.

The Green Party is leading the charge in calling for an immediate halt to all oil exploration and a 2035 deadline for exploitation. That ultimatum has been rejected by Store, a former foreign minister.

Like the Conservative Party, the other dominant political force in the country, Labour instead advocates a gradual withdrawal from oil. The oil sector accounts for 14 percent of gross domestic product, as well as 40 percent of its exports and 160,000 direct jobs. In addition, the cash cow has helped the country of 5.4 million people amass the world's biggest sovereign wealth fund, today worth close to 12 trillion kroner (almost 1.2 trillion euros, \$1.4 trillion). "The demand for oil is on a downward path. This is happening by itself, by market forces. We don't need to decree it... but instead build bridges to future activities," Labour's energy chief Espen Barth Eide told AFP. "We will con-



OSLO: Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg, leader of the Conservative Party Høyre, casts her vote for the 2021 parliamentary elections at Skjold School in her home town of Bergen yesterday. — AFP

tinue to have oil activities but we have to admit that the best oil years are behind us," he said.

Arctic exploration in question

According to many observers, a compromise will depend on the success of the parties with environmental leanings and could involve cutting off certain waters for oil exploration, particularly in the Arctic. For voter Fredrik Wessel, a 62-year-old lawyer at an insurance company, the main issue in the election was to "maintain good economic policy".

"And then of course I'm concerned about the cli-

mate, that we consider everything we can to improve our climate," he told AFP as he left an Oslo polling station. After eight years in power, and multiple crises including migration, falling oil prices and COVID-19, Solberg is likely to pass the baton.

"If you think things are going well in Norway, vote Conservative," the 60-year-old said yesterday as she cast her ballot in her home town of Bergen. Asked what stood next on her agenda, the popular leader said she was heading home to "empty (her) suitcases" after seven weeks of election campaigning and "do laundry". — AFP



JUBA: In this file photo, refugee mothers from Sudan's Blue Nile State wait at a clinic in South Sudan to have their children measured for malnutrition and to vaccinate them against measles.

WFP to slash food aid to 100,000 in South Sudan

JUBA: The UN World Food Programme will suspend food aid to over 100,000 displaced people in South Sudan, as funding shortages force the agency to make "painful decisions", it said yesterday. The cuts will start next month and last until January, affecting 106,000 people living in the capital Juba as well as Bor South county and the town of Wau. WFP said, warning of further reductions unless funding was increased.

"Drastic times call for drastic measures. We are forced to take these painful decisions and stretch our limited resources to meet the critical needs of people," WFP representative and country director Matthew Hollingworth said in a statement. "If funding levels continue to drop, we may have no choice but to make further cuts as the needs of vulnerable communities continue to outpace available resources," he said, with

the agency calling for an additional \$154 million (131 million euros) in assistance.

The announcement comes shortly after the UN's humanitarian agency OCHA reported that 380,000 people had been affected by heavy flooding, which deluged farmland, submerged homes and displaced families in the impoverished nation. OCHA last month also warned of a funding shortfall, having received only 54 percent of the \$1.7 billion required to fund programs in the country.

Four out of five of South Sudan's 11 million people live in "absolute poverty", according to the World Bank in 2018, while more than 60 percent of its population suffers from severe hunger from the combined effects of conflict, drought and floods.

Since achieving independence from Sudan in 2011, the young nation has been in the throes of a chronic economic and political crisis, and is struggling to recover from the aftermath of a five-year civil war that left nearly 400,000 people dead. Although a 2018 ceasefire and power-sharing deal between President Salva Kiir and his deputy Riek Machar still largely holds, it is being sorely tested, with little progress made in fulfilling the terms of the peace process. — AFP



WELLINGTON, New Zealand: New Zealand's Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern (second right) and Police Commissioner Andrew Coster (second left) arrive for a press conference in Wellington following the country's first COVID-related death in six months. — AFP

NZ extends lockdown in virus-hit Auckland

WELLINGTON: New Zealand's largest city of Auckland will remain in strict COVID-19 lockdown for at least another week as a Delta variant outbreak "rumbles along", Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said yesterday. Ardern said the city's two million residents needed to abide by stay-at-home orders because of the emergence of several "mystery cases" which had not yet been linked to existing clusters.

"These mystery cases are still coming through and the fact we're finding them through surveillance and community testing, rather than contact tracing, is what we're concerned about," she said.

New Zealand imposed a national lockdown on August 17 when the first case of the highly transmissible Delta variant was found in the community. But

stay-at-home orders were lifted outside Auckland last week as it became apparent that all new cases were emerging in the city. Ardern ruled out lifting Auckland's hard lockdown before September 21 but said the city should then move down an alert level on the country's four-tier coronavirus response system.

With 33 new community cases recorded in the city yesterday, Ardern said she was wary of lifting restrictions too early. "(Case) numbers are rumbling along and this has been evident in the last three days," she said. "This doesn't mean our collective efforts in Auckland are not making a difference."

New Zealand is pursuing a "COVID zero" elimination strategy—which has resulted in just 27 deaths in a population of five million throughout the pandemic. It had been free of community cases for six months before the August outbreak, with residents enjoying a near-normal domestic life alongside tight restrictions on international borders. The Delta infection prompted immediate lockdowns because of low vaccination rates, with data this week showing only about a third of the eligible population are fully jabbed. — AFP

Death stalks Colombian defenders of nature

TORIBOO, Colombia: As the sound of gunfire erupts near her office, Celia Umenza takes the briefest of pauses from discussing her battle against farming expansion and mining that threaten indigenous land and water in Colombia. Death is a constant companion for indigenous defenders of nature in the violence-ridden country, and Umenza has already survived three attempts on her life. While speaking to AFP, bursts of gunfire and explosions reverberate in the mountains near her office in Toriboo, in the rural Cauca department. She stops speaking for just a moment before resuming the interview, seemingly indifferent to the looming threat that has become a part of life for many in Colombia. In a report released Sunday, the non-governmental group Global Witness said Colombia was the most dangerous country for land and environment defenders for the second year in a row in 2020, accounting for 65 of the 227 killings reported worldwide. "We have the threat of government repression, of retaliation by the guerrillas and also by the paramilitaries," said Umenza, 48.

The most recent attack on her life was in 2014.

"A neighbor was driving me in a van... they riddled the van with bullets," she said. According to Global Witness, 2020 was the deadliest year on record for environmental activists since 2012, when its records begin. A third of deadly attacks were on indigenous peoples, and many were linked to opposition to logging, mining, agribusiness, hydroelectric dams and other infrastructure threatening natural resources that communities have relied on for generations.

Preserving the water

Since the 1970s, the indigenous peoples of the Cauca region of southwest Colombia have been fighting an expansion by sugarcane growers they say are driving them from the fertile lowlands they rely on for survival, and destroying the forest. "We no longer have those forests that used to exist, we no longer have that fauna, that flora. It is really worrying," said Umenza.

The dispute is also about water, she said. Unlike the native vegetation, she explained, the sugar cane "draws a lot of water and little by little" has been drying up the streams. In its report, Global Witness said 17 people worldwide were killed in 2020 for their activism against agribusiness, and 20 in disputes over water and dams. "Companies have been acting irresponsibly for decades, contributing to, and benefiting from, attacks on land and environmental defenders," it noted.

In the crosshairs

Near Toriboo, where Umenza lives and works, illegal gold mining contaminates water with mercury. Further north, pesticides used in the cultivation of marijuana poison the soil.

Both illegal activities finance dissident FARC guerrillas, who rejected a peace pact with the government in 2016 to end a near six-year civil war, as well as fighters of the last remaining rebel group the ELN and paramilitary forces that are still active. According to the Global Witness report, paramilitary and criminal groups have increased their control of rural areas through violence.

"Those seeking to protect their land and environment are increasingly being caught up in the crosshairs of this violence—with those protecting indigenous land particularly at risk," it said.

Frequently the victims are community members seeking to benefit from a government program to convert illegal coca crops, from which cocaine is derived, into legal ones. The situation was worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic, with official lockdowns leading to defenders being targeted in their homes, and government protection measures being cut.

To make matters even more complicated, Umenza says legal companies benefit from the illegal gold extraction, buying at low prices. She is protected by the Indigenous Guard, a self-defense organization that confronts perceived intruders armed with batons and two-way radios, but no guns.

"In the indigenous territories we have fortunately managed to keep mining out," said Umenza. But the price is high, with one member of the Guard killed every week so far this year, she added.

'A moving target'

Umenza says she has received countless death threats since 2001. The first attempt on her life came in 2005, she says by FARC guerrillas, who shot at her while she was walking in the countryside.

Five years later, continued threats forced her to move—the first of several involuntary relocations, the most recent of which was in January this year. In 2011, the government's National Protection Unit assigned a vehicle escort to protect Umenza and four other threatened people in the Toriboo region.

A few months ago, it offered her a bodyguard and a bullet-proof vest.

She "did not accept because walking around in the vest makes me feel more vulnerable," like a moving target, she told AFP. Since 2009, Umenza's three children have been living far away for their own safety, and she says their father left her because he "could not stand" the constant threats, attacks and regular uprooting. She has a new partner today—but she is realistic about her happy ever after. "It is not easy living with someone who today takes you on the run, and tomorrow, who knows," she said. —AFP



TACUEY, Colombia: Colombian indigenous environmentalist Celia Umenza, 48, touches a tree in Tacueyo, department of Cauca, Colombia. — AFP

Business

NBK succeeds in pricing \$1.0bn in senior unsecured bonds

Large demand from global fixed income investors led to a \$1.7bn final orderbook

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) succeeded in issuing Rule 144A/Reg S \$1.0 billion Senior Unsecured notes under the bank's \$5.0 Global Medium Term Note program, representing the largest USD-denominated issuance amongst Kuwaiti financial institutions.

The issuance will further enhance the bank's liquidity position, while supporting relevant regulatory ratios and further diversifying NBK's sources of funding. Global investors' confidence in NBK was further endorsed with the peak order book reaching \$1.7 billion (1.7x oversubscribed).

The notes have a 6-year maturity and first call date after 5-years. The issuance is also the first fixed to floating callable structured senior unsecured notes from the CEEMEA region; pioneering an innovative solution to optimize their contribution to the Bank's Net Stable Funding Ratio. The robust global demand allowed NBK to price the notes at 95 bps over US Treasuries, the equivalent of a 1.726 percent reoffer yield. The notes were issued at a discount and had a final coupon of 1.625 percent, fixed with semi-annual coupon payments until their first call date, followed by a floating rate of SOFR + 105 bps paid quarterly thereafter.

The Issuance achieved a globally diverse orderbook; lead by US investors (43 percent) followed by Asia (26 percent), Europe (12 percent), Middle East

(10 percent) and UK (9 percent). Asset Managers lead allocation at 69 percent, followed by Banks at 22 percent, while Governments, Insurance and Pension Funds combined for 9 percent.

The issuance represents NBK's fourth issuance under both Rule 144A and Regulation S formats, asserting itself as the only global financial institution issuer in the region. NBK Capital, Citigroup Global Markets Limited and J P Morgan Securities



Largest US dollar FIG issuance from Kuwait

plc acted as Global Coordinators on the issuance. The Bank also appointed NBK Capital, Citigroup Global Markets Limited, HSBC Bank plc, J.P. Morgan Securities plc, Standard Chartered Bank, Goldman Sachs International, Merrill Lynch International, and MUFG Securities EMEA plc as



joint bookrunners and joint lead managers. NBK Capital is a leading advisor and arranger of debt securities in the region, having advised on more

than \$32 billion of global and local conventional and Islamic debt capital markets mandates and restructuring assignments to date.

Burgan Bank announces winner of KD 125,000 cash prize in Yawmi draw

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced Mhret Ghirmay Splain as the new KD 125,000 cash prize winner in the Yawmi quarterly draw. The winner expressed his excitement for being the winner of the rewarding cash prize with Yawmi Account from Burgan Bank.

The Yawmi quarterly draw offers customers chances to win higher rewards, entitling one lucky customer to win KD 125,000 cash prize every three months. To enter Burgan Bank's Yawmi quarterly draws, customers should maintain a minimum

amount of KD 500 in their account for two months prior to the draw date. Additionally, every KD 10 in the account will entitle customers to one chance of winning.

The Bank has continuously improved its performance over the years through an expanded revenue structure, diversified funding sources, and a strong capital base. The adoption of state-of-the-art services and technology has positioned it as a trendsetter in the domestic market and within the MENA region. Burgan Bank's brand has been created on a foundation of real values - of trust, commitment, excellence and progression, to remind us of the high standards to which we aspire. 'People come first' is the foundation on which its products and services are developed.

The bank was re-certified with the prestigious ISO 9001:2008, making it the first bank in the GCC, and the only bank in Kuwait to receive such accreditation for the third consecutive year. The Bank also

has to its credit the distinction of being the only Bank in Kuwait to have won the JP Morgan Chase Quality Recognition Award for twelve consecutive years. Burgan Bank, a subsidiary of KIPCO (Kuwait Projects Company), is a strongly positioned regional Bank in the MENA region.

CBK bonds and related Tawarruq

KUWAIT: The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) announced the most recent issues of CBK bonds and related Tawarruq at a total value of KD 290 million for 3 months with a rate of return at 1.125 percent.

Countdown to AUB's KD 250,000 prize Hassad draw begins

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank (AUB) announced the start of countdown to the quarterly KD 250,000 grand prize for the winner, in Al-Hassad Islamic prizes Program. The draw is scheduled to take place on 30 September 2021 with full compliance with all preventive measures and guidelines set by health authorities. This grand prize is a lifetime opportunity for the winners through which they can reshape their life and achieve their dreams.

On this occasion, Hanadi Khazal, Head of Retail Distribution at AUB called on customers to seize this chance to win the quarterly grand prize, and to promptly increase their account balances in Al-Hassad Islamic program by expediting opening Al-Hassad Islamic account with a minimum of KD 100 which qualify the customer for two chances to enter the draw, with a maximum of 30,000 chances per draw, in addition to annual profits for all participants. Every KD 50 invested for at least 15 days entitles the customer to one chance in each draw. The longer the customer keeps his balance the bigger the changes of participation in the draw.

Khazal added, "We are delighted to continue to exceed the expectations of our valued customers through Al-Hassad Islamic Program, which continues to present valuable prizes to our customers, affirming that AUB has always been keen to improve its customer banking experience, and facilitate the process of qualifying to enter the draws so that all customers can have a chance to achieve their dreams with us."

Khazal emphasizes that AUB is the best choice for customers to multiple their savings and achieve their dreams with Al-Hassad Islamic Program, which has been enhanced to meet the requirements of customers and increase their chances of winning large and attractive prizes, in addition to enjoying the latest banking features that AUB provides to them.

It worth mentioning that Al-Hassad Islamic account is 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.

In addition to quarterly KD 250,000 grand prize, Al-Hassad Islamic program included 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.

In addition to this attractive package of rewards, Al-Hassad Islamic account incorporates a Wakala contract for projected annual profits, making this account unique and attractive to all society segments that are aspiring to build their short and long-term savings through a unique savings account with many advantages.

The plant invaders posing a headache for conservationists

PARIS: The tall and attractive stranger has showy plumes and can make itself at home at the coast, in the city or even in your garden. But conservationists warn that Cortaderia selloana-or pampas grass-is a damaging invasive species menacing parts of southern Europe.

Also known as "feather duster", pampas grass is sold as an ornamental plant despite appearing in a rogue's gallery of a hundred of the worst invasive species in Europe.

At the world congress of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), winding down this week in Marseille, a motion called for "urgent action" to restrict and ultimately eradicate the plant outside its native South American habitat.

Conservation groups and ministries, many from Spain, said they were "alarmed because today its seeds can be bought easily and cheaply anywhere in the world, without legal constraints, through different internet platforms". The case highlights the difficulties of halting the spread of invasive plants in the face of low awareness and a massive international online trade offering exotic species at the click of a button.

"You see more clearly the impact of animals-they are a predator destroying a prey. But plants can have a very severe effect," Piero Genovesi, who heads up the IUCN's Invasive Species Specialist Group.

"It's less visible in the beginning, but then it



SAINTES-MARIES-DE-LA-MER, France: This photograph shows a Baccharis invasive plant, at the "Domaine des Grandes Cabannes du Vaccares sud" protected area, in Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, southeastern France. — AFP

becomes huge." Genovesi told AFP that in Europe most invasive plants are introduced by being sold for gardens. "Pampas grass is beautiful, but it spreads very rapidly, so once it's out, it's very difficult to contain it," he said.

The plant is "very aggressive", according to the EU-backed LIFE Stop Cortaderia project, warning that it has expanded across urban and industrial areas and squeezed out native species in Atlantic coastal areas of France, Spain and Portugal.

It featured on a European inventory of a hundred

of the worst invasive species-an awareness-raising effort to highlight problem species. Now the IUCN is going a step further with a new global classification system called the Environmental Impacts Classification of Alien Taxa. It has scientific criteria to measure the relative threats posed by different harmful species-animals and plants-to help governments prioritize their responses. The first few have already been added, but the organization is aiming for hundreds, as a complement to its Red List of Threatened Species. —AFP

IUCN calls for protecting 30% of Earth, 80% of Amazon

MARSEILLE: The world's most influential conservation congress passed resolutions Friday calling for 80 percent of the Amazon and 30 percent of Earth's surface-land and sea to be designated "protected areas" to halt and reverse the loss of wildlife.

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), which is meeting in Marseille, does not set global policy, but its recommendations have in the past served as the backbone for UN treaties and conventions. They will help set the agenda for upcoming UN summits on food systems, biodiversity and climate change.

Saving the Amazon

An emergency motion calling for four-fifths of the Amazon basin to be declared a protected area by 2025 — submitted by COICA, an umbrella group representing more than two million indigenous peoples across nine South American nations-passed with overwhelming support. "Indigenous

Peoples have come to defend our home and, in doing so, defend the planet. This motion is a first step," said Jose Gregorio Diaz Mirabal, general coordinator of COICA and a leader of the Curripaco people in Venezuela.

Over the last two decades, the Amazon has lost roughly 10,000 square kilometers every year to deforestation, much of it through fires set deliberately to clear land for commercial agriculture or cattle grazing. This destruction combined with climate change, scientists have warned, could push the world's largest tropical forest irretrievably past a "tipping point" into a savannah-like landscape.

'30 percent by 2030'

Another hotly debated measure that was accepted in a vote of IUCN members-government agencies, NGOs and indigenous people's organizations-says that 30 of the planet's land and ocean area should have protected status within a



MARSEILLE, France: In this file photo, a group of indigenous people from Columbia and Peru hold a banner reading "Casino is deforesting Amazonia, indigenous people denounces you" demonstrate in front of a Casino supermarket in Marseille, southeastern France. —AFP

decade. The zones selected must include "biodiversity hotspots" teaming with animal and plant life, and be backed up by rigorous monitoring and

enforcement, the resolution says. Many scientists and conservationists advocated for an even more ambitious "half-Earth" target. — AFP



This picture shows handlers training dogs which were left behind during last month's chaotic evacuations from Afghanistan, in a makeshift training center at the airport in Kabul. — AFP photos



A dog, which was left behind during last month's chaotic evacuations from Afghanistan, rests inside a pet cage.

Dogs of war: Afghan mutts find new home after missing US evacuation

In a makeshift training center at Kabul airport, dozens of dogs that were left behind during last month's chaotic evacuations from Afghanistan have found a new home—and new handlers. While it is unclear who the dogs belonged to, many were found in the section of the airport that was used by American forces, and some were trained to sniff out explosives, their new handlers say. They are among the remnants of the two-decade American intervention which ended with the hurried airlift of more than 120,000 people from Kabul as the Taliban returned to power.

Handler Hewad Azizi, who works for a company handling security at the airport, said he went out looking for abandoned dogs as soon as the last US soldier left. "When I saw (the soldiers leaving) I went to save the dogs," he told AFP at the training center, which faces hangars that were used for US planes and military equipment. He found 30 — half of them in the area that was controlled by US forces. More were found in zones that belonged to former Afghan police. The dogs are now being fed, cared for and trained by Azizi and his colleagues at the security company's training center, housed in two converted shipping containers separated by a weed-strewn strip of earth. The United States pulled its final troops out of Afghanistan on August 30,

ending America's longest war just ahead of the anniversary of the September 11, 2001 attacks that prompted the US-led invasion.

quickly denied that US military personnel abandoned some of their dogs at the airport. "To correct erroneous reports, the US military did not leave any dogs in

used for exactly," he explained, adding that they have realized "they are bomb dogs". Azizi's favorite dog, Rex, a dark brown Malinois, is one of the recent dis-

reward. "We train them to see how we can use them," explained Mohamad Mourid, a supervisor at the centre which operates under the umbrella of GAAC,



'Bomb dogs'

Hours after the last soldier left, animal rights group PETA said in a statement that 60 bomb-sniffing dogs and 60 other "working dogs" were left behind by the US forces. The group appealed to President Joe Biden "to take immediate action", warning that the dogs were "suffering in the heat without adequate access to food or water". The Pentagon

cages at Hamid Karzai International Airport, including the reported military working dogs," Pentagon spokesman John Kirby tweeted.

Azizi and his colleagues are not sure about the identity of the previous owners. All they are focusing on now is how to put them back to work when the airport returns to normal. "We have done training with them to find out what they are

coveries. Every day, he takes Rex for a walk in a small deserted area a few meters away from three old Afghan Air Force planes.

In a small stretch of land littered with bullet cases and empty bags of US military meal rations, he hides a box that smells like explosives and sends Rex to find it. Seconds later, Rex returns with the box and is given a ball to play with as

the UAE-based company handling ground and security operations at the airport since last year. "We feed them, give them water, and clean them." Soon the dogs will be put to work as the airport, which shut for repairs after the evacuations, gradually reopens. — AFP

Britney Spears engaged to boyfriend Sam Asghari



In this file photo Britney Spears (left) and Sam Asghari arrive at the premiere of Sony Pictures' "One Upon A Time...In Hollywood" at the Chinese Theatre in Hollywood, California. — AFP

Pop princess Britney Spears on Sunday announced her engagement to her boyfriend Sam Asghari via social media. Spears, 39, showed off a diamond ring in an Instagram micro-video post and wrote "I can't believe it!!!!!!!" By her side in the video is her boyfriend-now fiancé-Sam Asghari, whom she turns to and kisses on the cheek. "Look at that-you like it?" Asghari, 27, asks. "Yeah!" Spears squeals in

delight. Congratulations poured in and over 1.6 million people had liked the post by Sunday night. "Congratulations love!! So happy for you! Welcome to the club!" said celebrity heiress Paris Hilton in a comment on the video.

Asghari's Instagram page has a simple picture of him kissing Spears as she lifts her hand-and ring finger-to show off her new bling. Spears and Asghari met in 2016 when they co-starred in a music video for her single "Slumber Party." Spears has two children with former husband rapper Kevin Federline, and had a brief Las Vegas marriage to childhood friend Jason Alexander that was annulled after just 55 hours. The star rocketed to fame in her teens with hits like "...Baby One More Time," but suffered a highly public 2007 breakdown, attacking a paparazzo's car at a gas station. That led to her being placed under a court-ordered conservatorship largely governed by her father, Jamie Spears. She swiftly returned to performing, released three albums, appeared on various television shows and even took up a Las Vegas residency. — AFP

Branagh delves into childhood troubles with Oscar-tipped 'Belfast'

Kenneth Branagh's Oscar-tipped "Belfast"—a love letter to the hometown he fled as a child—comes at a poignant time when peace remains fragile in Northern Ireland, the director said Sunday at the Toronto Film Festival. The deeply personal, black-and-white dramedy, which hits theaters in November, captures the late-1960s outbreak of the province's violent "Troubles" from the perspective of Buddy, a nine-year-old boy. At that same age, Branagh and his family moved to England to escape escalating violence which for the next three decades would rip apart communities along religious and nationalist fault lines.

"A story like this tries to see that even in the midst of extraordinary danger and chaos and violence, there's still amazing qualities in that town," the actor-director told AFP on the red carpet. People in Belfast are resilient and "have come through an amazing number of challenges-of which the latest is sort of in the air," he added. Northern Ireland has suffered some of its worst unrest in recent years after Britain's decision to leave the European Union highlighted enduring divisions, particularly over the fate of the island's land border. "Bomb scares every weekend when you're trying to meet your mates in town—that sort of stuff that became so sort of normal to us... now in hindsight is insane," recalled star Jamie Dornan, who also drew on his childhood growing up in Belfast.

"There's always going to be unrest in Northern Ireland, that's the craic sadly," he said. "But people for the most part have lived harmoniously—for the most part—for 23 years now," he added, saying Brexit now posed a threat to the fragile peace in place since the 1998 Good Friday Agreement.

'Violence'

The movie begins with a scene of street violence in the summer of 1969, when Protestant gangs attack Catholic families to force them out of streets where the two groups had lived side by side. British troops are deployed, and Buddy's father is confronted with the difficult decision of whether to uproot his family from the tight-knit community they call home. But the violence in "Belfast" is viewed through the eyes of a child (Jude Hill) who has only a partial grasp of its gravity, and the film fea-

tures plenty of humorous moments. Branagh was able to field a stellar cast including Dornan, Judi Dench, Caitriona Balfe and Ciaran Hinds.



(From left) Jamie Dornan and Kenneth Branagh attend the 'Belfast' Premiere during the 2021 Toronto International Film Festival at Roy Thomson Hall in Toronto, Ontario. — AFP

His film has earned rave reviews and received a raucous standing ovation at Toronto, leading many to already tip it as a strong Oscars contender next March. "It feels like there's a good momentum to the film. But what can you do? You can't really get carried away with all that," Dornan, widely known for erotic romance "Fifty Shades of Grey" and TV crime series "The Fall," told AFP. Branagh, whose acclaimed career ranges from Shakespeare to superhero movie "Thor," said he had been planning "Belfast" for decades, but finally began writing it during Britain's first pandemic lockdown of March 2020. "It seemed that 18 months ago we were beginning to understand that kind of disorientation... not with violence, but with this threat of this very serious virus which locked us all down and I think made us all very introspective," he said.

Elsewhere at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) on Sunday, Jessica Chastain's "The Eyes of Tammy Faye" had its world premiere. Beneath layers of Faye's trademark heavy makeup, the Oscar-nominated "Zero Dark Thirty" star is transformed into the eccentric and compassionate US televangelist, whose husband Jim Bakker was jailed for defrauding their millions of followers. —AFP



These undated handout photos show vets wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) while collecting swab sample from an orangutan for COVID-19 coronavirus testing at the Sepilok Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre in Sandakan on the Malaysian island of Borneo. — AFP photos



Testing times: Borneo orangutans get COVID swabs

Dozens of critically endangered orangutans in Malaysia have been tested for the coronavirus, with vets in protective suits undertaking the tricky task of giving the apes nasal swabs. The antigen tests on 30 of the red-haired creatures in Sabah state on Borneo island were conducted last Tuesday, and all came back negative, wildlife officials said. They were the first virus tests on orangutans in the

Southeast Asian country, and were ordered after staff at a rehabilitation center and wildlife park became infected.

"Testing for COVID-19 has been a vital tool in helping us get through this pandemic, and it is similarly important for this orangutan population," said Sen Nathan, assistant director of the Sabah Wildlife Department. "The disease could prove vastly detrimental to their health and set back their rehabilitation." Vets will continue to closely monitor the apes and tests will be conducted regularly, officials said. Animals have become infected with COVID-19 on occasion. At the weekend, a zoo in Atlanta announced that several of its gorillas had tested positive. Domestic cats, dogs and at least one ferret have also been infected.

Malaysia is fighting a serious COVID-19 outbreak driven by the highly conta-

gious Delta variant, and has been recording thousands of cases and hundreds of deaths each day. Sabah, on the northeastern tip of Borneo and home to vast tracts of jungle and a kaleidoscope of rare animals, has also faced a surge in cases. Bornean orangutans are classified as "critically endangered" by protection group the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

Their populations have declined by more than 50 percent over the past 60 years, according to the WWF, as the animals' forest habitat has been progressively cut down to make way for agricultural plantations. Borneo is shared between Malaysia, Indonesia and Brunei. — AFP

Lifestyle | MTV Video Music Awards



US rapper Lil Nas X performs on stage during the 2021 MTV Video Music Awards at Barclays Center in Brooklyn, New York. — AFP photos



US rapper Lil Nas X accepts the award for Video of the Year for "Montero (Call Me By Your Name)" during the 2021 MTV Video Music Awards.



US singer Olivia Rodrigo accepts the Best New Artist award on stage.

Lil Nas X, Olivia Rodrigo clean up at Video Music Awards



Canadian singer Justin Bieber accepts the Artist of the Year award.



US rapper Travis Scott accepts the Best Hip-Hop award for "Franchise".



US singer Machine Gun Kelly accepts the award for Best Alternative for "My Ex's Best Friend" on stage.

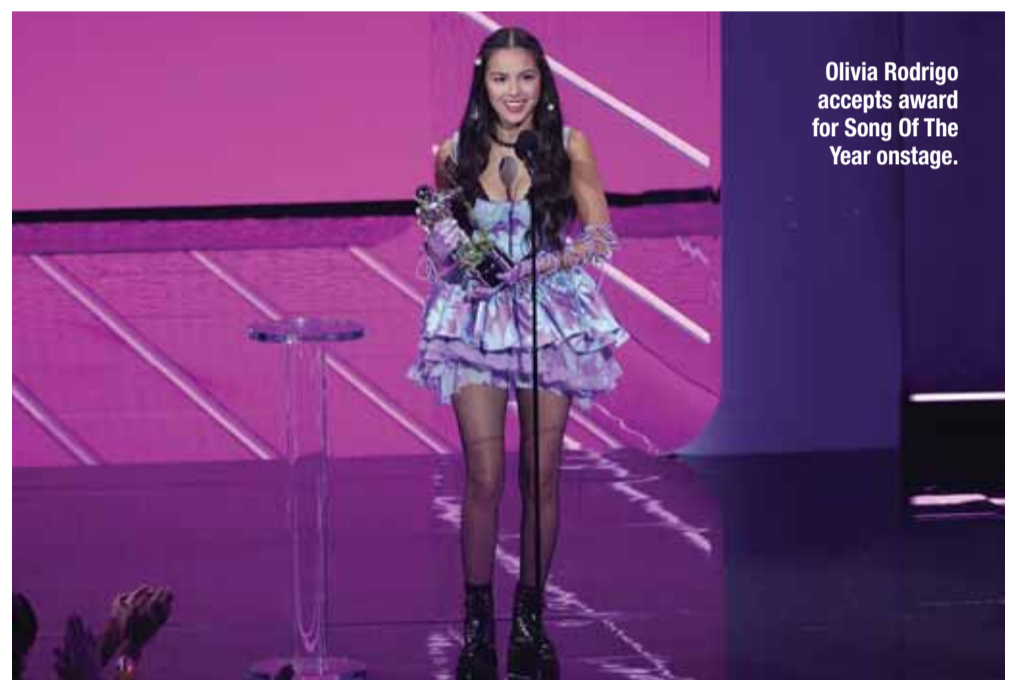
A stacked slate of artists lit up MTV's 40th annual Video Music Awards on Sunday, returning in full force to Brooklyn's Barclays Center after last year's scaled-back pandemic show. The 2021 VMAs—a show known more for ostentatious performances, made-for-Twitter moments and wild costumes than the actual awards—was back with its signature elaborate performances before a masked full audience after a 2020 show that saw many celebrities accept prizes via video stream. The show opened with a pre-taped clip from none other than Madonna, who made VMA history at the 1984 inaugural show with a show-stopping performance of "Like A Virgin," which kicked off the show's reign as a platform for headline-grabbing antics. "They said we wouldn't last, but we're still here," she said after strutting onto the stage, dropping an expletive while wearing a dominatrix-esque black leather thong corset. "Happy 40th, MTV."

Lil Nas X scored the night's top award, Video of the Year, for "Montero (Call Me by Your Name)" not long after a sensual performance just days before his album is set for release September 17. His winning video had set off social media hype that saw the artist exchange disses with a sitting US governor, who took issue with the seductive clip in which the artist gives the devil a lap dance.

'Amazing outlet' of music

Doja Cat hosted Sunday's show, also performing "Been Like This" and "You Right" while descending from the rafters in an aerial act. But it was Normani's performance of "Wild Side" that stole the night. The R&B pop star stunned with her always-on-lock choreography before grinding on Teyana Taylor, with that performer strapped to a metal platform in an homage to past acts by Janet Jackson. Lil Nas X also performed, debuting the live version of his single "Industry Baby" with co-performer Jack Harlow and a marching band, before launching into a revival of his music video's prison shower set.

And Billie Eilish introduced a head-banging performance from Foo Fighters, thanking them for "carrying the torch of rock and roll" before they received the show's Global Icon Award. In addition to performing pop, sensation Olivia Rodrigo scored three awards, including Song of the Year for "Drivers License" and Best New Artist. "I just feel so grateful that I get to make music and do stuff that I love



Olivia Rodrigo accepts award for Song of the Year onstage.

and call it my job," said the 18-year-old whose debut album "Sour" soared to the top of charts. Justin Bieber meanwhile won Artist of the Year along with Best Pop for "Peaches."

"Music is such an amazing opportunity and an amazing outlet to reach people and to bring us all together," Bieber told the audience. Korean heavyweight boy band BTS snagged Best K-pop for "Butter," as the decorated Eilish's "Your Power" won the award for Video For Good. "We all have power and we must remember not to abuse it," Eilish told the cheering crowd. The eligibility period for this year's videos ranged from July 2020 to June 2021.

Sunday's show kicks off a packed month of cultural events slated to return to New York after the pandemic wreaked havoc on the entertainment calendar. The glittery Met Gala, a star-studded event that raises money for the Metropolitan Museum's Costume Institute, is set for Monday evening, with co-hosts to include Eilish. The three-day Governor's Ball music festival is meanwhile scheduled for the weekend of September 24 in Queens.—AFP



US rapper Doja Cat (left) and US singer SZA (right) accept the Best Collaboration award for "Kiss Me More".



US singer Machine Gun Kelly celebrates with the audience after winning the Video for Best Alternative award for "My Ex's Best Friend" on stage.



Canadian singer Justin Bieber and US singer Giveon accept the award for best pop song for "Peaches" on stage.



US singer Billie Eilish accepts the Video for Good award for "Your Power" on stage.



US singer Cyndi Lauper walks on stage during the 2021 MTV Video Music Awards.



US musician Dave Grohl (center) alongside the Foo Fighters accept the Global Icon award on stage.

MTV Video Music Awards 2021 Full list of winners

Video of the Year

Lil Nas X - 'Montero (Call Me By Your Name)'

Artist of the Year

Justin Bieber

Song of the Year

Olivia Rodrigo - 'Drivers License'

Best New Artist, Presented by Facebook

Olivia Rodrigo

Push Performance of the Year

May 2021: Olivia Rodrigo - 'Drivers License'

Best Collaboration

Doja Cat ft. SZA - 'Kiss Me More'

Best Pop

Justin Bieber ft. Daniel Caesar, Giveon - 'Peaches'

Best Hip-Hop

Travis Scott ft. Young Thug & M.I.A. - 'Franchise'

Best Rock

John Mayer - 'Last Train Home'

Best Alternative

Machine Gun Kelly ft. Blackbear - 'My Ex's Best Friend'

Best Latin

Billie Eilish & ROSALIA - 'Lo Vas A Olvidar'

Best R&B

Bruno Mars, Anderson .Paak, Silk Sonic - 'Leave the Door Open'

Best K-Pop

BTS - 'Butter'

Video for Good:

Billie Eilish - 'Your Power'

Best Direction

Lil Nas X - 'Montero (Call Me By Your Name)'

- Directed by: Lil Nas X and Tanu Muino

Best Cinematography

Beyonce, Blue Ivy, SAINt JHN, WizKid - 'Brown Skin Girl'

- Cinematography by: Benoit Soler, Malik H. Sayeed, Mohammed Atta Ahmed, Santiago Gonzalez, Ryan Helfant

Best Art Direction

Saweetie ft. Doja Cat - 'Best Friend'

- Art Direction by: Art Haynes

Best Visual Effects

Lil Nas X - 'Montero (Call Me By Your Name)'

- Visual Effects by: Mathematic

Best Choreography

Harry Styles - 'Treat People With Kindness'

- Choreography by: Paul Roberts

Best Editing

Bruno Mars, Anderson .Paak, Silk Sonic - 'Leave the Door Open'

- Editing by: Troy Charbonnet

Group of the Year

BTS

Song of the Summer

BTS, 'Butter'

Global Icon Award

Foo Fighters-Bang Showbiz



US rapper Doja Cat speaks on stage.— AFP photos



US musician Dave Grohl (center) performs with the Foo Fighters on stage.



Doja Cat speaks onstage during the 2021 MTV Video Music Awards.

Doja Cat's multiple costume changes at MTV Video Music Awards

Doja Cat was forced to accept an MTV Video Music Award (VMA) while dressed as a worm. The 25-year-old singer donned a series of elaborate costumes while hosting the ceremony in Brooklyn on Sunday and couldn't help but laugh about how ridiculous she looked when she walked on stage to accept the Best Collaboration Moonperson for 'Kiss Me More' with SZA. After giving out her thank yous, she laughed: "I look like a worm. That's dope. I never

thought I'd be dressed as a worm while accepting an award. Anyway, I love you. Thank you, VMAs! Thank you, MTV!" Doja had started the night in more traditional attire, teaming a strapless black lace corset dress with long navy gloves and a chain belt as she gave a brief opening monologue which featured a shout-out to MTV's 40th anniversary, as well as this year's awards venue.

Following opening performances from Justin Bieber with The Kid

LAROI and Olivia Rodrigo, she exclaimed: "Brooklyn! Welcome to the 2021 " Later in the evening, Doja donned a red jumpsuit to sing 'Been Like This' and 'You Right', which saw her begin her performance floating above the stage surrounded by a ball of light. She was introduced by gymnast Simone Biles, who said: "I'd say [Doja Cat's] Team U.S.A., but I think she prefers Planet Her." And the worm wasn't her only outrageous outfit as Doja also opted to wear an upside

down chair as a hat while introducing Tommy Lee - and she made good use of her new accessory while presenting Olivia Rodrigo with the Best New Artist award. Leaning back against the red chair, she joked: "I'm so relaxed." And to close out the ceremony, the 'Say So' hitmaker teamed a giant fedora with a pink shirt and boots which looked like large chicken feet.-Bang Showbiz



Puerto Rican singer Ozuna performs on stage.



US rapper Busta Rhymes performs during the 2021 MTV Video Music Awards.



(From left) Spliff Starr and Busta Rhymes perform on stage.



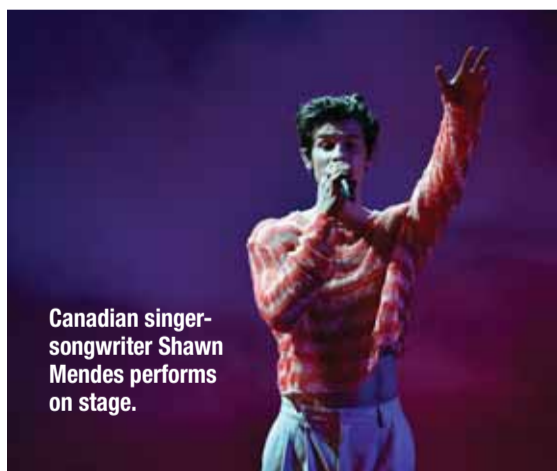
US actress Megan Fox (left) and US media personality Kourtney Kardashian speak on stage.



(From left) US singers AJ McLean, Lance Bass and Nick Lachey walk on stage.



(From left) Alicia Keys and Swizz Beatz attend the 2021 MTV Video Music Awards.



Canadian singer-songwriter Shawn Mendes performs on stage.



US musician Dave Grohl (center) performs with the Foo Fighters on stage.



Doja Cat attends the 2021 MTV Video Music Awards.



Jennifer Lopez speaks onstage.



Madonna performs onstage.



US-Cuban singer-songwriter Camila Cabello arrives for the 2021 MTV Video Music Awards.



Canadian singer-songwriter Avril Lavigne arrives for the 2021 MTV Video Music Awards.



US drummer Travis Barker and US personality Kourtney Kardashian.— AFP photos

Sports

'Competitive' Bayern head into Europe boosted by Leipzig reinforcements

Bavarians have 10 points from first four league games

BERLIN: Bayern Munich start their Champions League campaign today with a mouth-watering clash at Barcelona as the Bavarian giants confidently head into Europe having plundered reinforcements from Bundesliga rivals RB Leipzig.

While Paris Saint-Germain snapped up stars like Lionel Messi and Sergio Ramos and Manchester United finally signed Jadon Sancho, Bundesliga champions Bayern raided last season's German runners-up RB Leipzig for talent.

Bayern head into Europe buoyed by results, with 10 points from their first four league games, and confident in their current squad despite no big-name signing this summer. "We are very, very well positioned - we have possibilities and options. We are definitely competitive," Bayern CEO Oliver Kahn insisted last week.

France defender Dayot Upamecano was signed for 42.5 million (\$50 million) from RB Leipzig, as was versatile Austria midfielder Marcel Sabitzer, at a bargain price of around 16 million euros, as Bayern's main recruits for this season.

'We don't force anyone'

Ironically, Sabitzer made his Bayern debut off the bench in Saturday's 4-1 win at Leipzig, where he began the season as club captain. Bayern also reportedly paid Leipzig around 20 million euros to bring the 34-year-old Julian Nagelsmann to Munich as head coach on a five-year contract after two successful years in Saxony.

Kahn rejects the notion that Bayern deliberately set out to weaken Leipzig, who have lost three of their first four league games. "We always have a

clear idea of the players and coaches we think are good," said Kahn. "When an opportunity arises, we try to make it possible. That has nothing to do with weakening an opponent. We don't force anyone to come to FC Bayern." Nagelsmann says the squad he has inherited is "more than enough" as he predicts using a core group of 14 to 15 players for "90 per cent" of matches this term. Bayern have drawn Dynamo Kiev, Benfica and Barca in their Champions League group.

Today's clash at Camp Nou will be the first time Bayern have faced Barcelona since the unforgettable 8-2 thrashing the Germans handed out in a one-off Champions League quarter-final in 2019/20. Bayern have retained seven of the side which started the historic rout in Lisbon. They certainly possess the firepower to become European champions for the seventh time in the club's history.

With Upamecano anchoring the defence, Bayern boast the core of the Germany team's midfield and attack, with the addition of Robert Lewandowski, voted the Best FIFA Men's Player in 2020, up front. Joshua Kimmich and Leon Goretzka form a formidable midfield partnership with Serge Gnabry and Leroy Sane on the wings and Thomas Mueller in attacking midfield.

Ready-made replacement

Lewandowski, 33, and Mueller, 31, are approaching the twilight of their careers, yet both are in peak form. Having scored a record 41 times during the 2020/21 Bundesliga campaign, Lewandowski has already scored six goals in four league games this



MUNICH: (From left) Bayern Munich's French defender Lucas Hernandez, French defender Kingsley Coman and Polish striker Robert Lewandowski joke during a training session on the eve of the first UEFA Champions League Group E football match against Barcelona at the clubs training ground in Munich, southern Germany, yesterday. —AFP

season, including a hat-trick against Hertha Berlin and a penalty on Saturday at Leipzig.

Mueller earned a Germany recall with a constant supply of assists, setting up many of the chances Lewandowski finishes. Bayern will need a new striker in the coming seasons. They could well join the race to sign Borussia Dortmund striker Erling Haaland, whose contract reportedly has a release clause which becomes active in 2022.

However, Bayern have a ready-made replacement

for Mueller in 18-year-old Jamal Musiala. Already a full Germany international, Musiala scored Bayern's third in Leipzig to claim his eighth Bundesliga goal in 31 appearances.

Mueller rates Musiala as a "special talent" who "works hard", while Nagelsmann says the teenager is "already extraordinary". "Yeah ... he can have it - someday," Mueller said with a smile when asked about Musiala taking his shirt for club and country. —AFP

Lukaku fills Chelsea's striker void

LONDON: Romelu Lukaku has fulfilled his dream of starring as Chelsea's number nine — now the Belgium striker plans to fire his boyhood club's bid to retain the Champions League. Lukaku scored at Stamford Bridge for the first time on Saturday as his double inspired Chelsea's 3-0 win against Aston Villa. After scoring in his first match after returning to Chelsea in their win at Arsenal in August, Lukaku made it three goals from three appearances with a pair of predatory strikes.

Lukaku, who previously played for the Blues from 2011 to 2014, is back with Chelsea following his club record £98 million (\$135 million) move from Inter Milan in the close season. The 28-year-old's maiden goals at the Bridge came in his 15th appearance at the west London stadium that served as his field of dreams when he was a star-struck child in Belgium.

Lukaku grew up idolizing Didier Drogba and Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink when they starred in Chelsea's attack, so it was especially frustrating that he never scored for the club in his first spell. That pent-up emotion poured out when he jubilantly celebrated his goals against Villa.

"It's my dream since I was 11. I've worked hard for this moment," Lukaku said. "I was up and down at the start of my career, but I've found a certain consistency in the last three years. With experience and hard work. I just keep on working."

When Lukaku left Chelsea to join Everton in search of regular first-team action, he was a raw youngster with much to prove. He has returned firmly established as one of the world's elite strikers after maturing both on and off the pitch during his time at Inter.

'Keep working'

Criticized as a flat-track bully who rarely shone in the biggest games and sometimes had a diffident attitude during his spell at Manchester United, Lukaku was determined to hone his craft in Serie A. Chances are at a premium due to the defensive tactics deployed by many Italian clubs, but Lukaku carried Inter to their first title in 11 years last season.

He scored 64 goals in 95 matches for Inter and has maintained his momentum since joining Chelsea. "In Italy, I was playing in a league where I maybe had one or two chances a game, so I had to take them. I'm very happy with the situation I'm in and we keep going," Lukaku said.

Lukaku's astute tactical observations and calm demeanor are a contrast to his profile at United and have already impressed Chelsea boss Thomas Tuchel. Having Lukaku as the spearhead of his attack could prove the difference as Chelsea look to win back-to-back Champions League crowns, while also challenging for the Premier League title.

Last season, Tuchel worked wonders at Chelsea after replacing Frank Lampard in January. The German's motivational skills and clever game-plans out-witted the cream of Europe as Chelsea lifted their second Champions League trophy.

But it was clear even during Chelsea's successful European campaign that Tuchel would benefit from a striker with a more ruthless edge than Timo Werner, Olivier Giroud and Tammy Abraham. Once Borussia Dortmund priced Erling Braut Haaland out of the market, it was Lukaku who sat top of Tuchel's wanted list. —AFP

Allegri's Juve rebuild off to rocky start after Ronaldo exit

TURIN: Massimiliano Allegri is the man who has taken Juventus closest to their dream of Champions League glory in recent seasons, but he begins this season's European campaign in the midst of a dreadful start to the season which has put their domestic credentials under the spotlight.

The 52-year-old was pelted with eggs by fans when he arrived for his first spell at Juve in 2014, due to the rows in which he was involved with Juve while managing AC Milan and the fact he was replacing club legend Antonio Conte, but he won over supporters by leading Juve to five straight league titles and two Champions League finals.

The Old Lady of Italian football tried to go one step further with the shock 2018 signing of Cristiano Ronaldo, who had ended their hopes of a first Champions league title since 1996 the previous two seasons.

However it was a 100-million euro gamble which didn't pay off, with Juventus allowing Ronaldo to leave at a fraction of the price three summers later, their status on the continent less than it had been when the five-time Ballon d'Or winner arrived.

Ronaldo is the Champions League's all-time highest scorer but even with him in their ranks they failed to get any further than the quarter-finals and in the past two seasons were dumped out in the last 16 by Lyon and Porto.

Childlike Mourinho hails 'incredible' Roma win

MILAN: Jose Mourinho said he felt like a child when charging from his dugout to celebrate Stephan El Shaarawy's last-gasp winner in a thrilling 2-1 victory over Sassuolo, which put his side top of Serie A in his 1,000th match as a manager.

Italy international El Shaarawy struck with a sublime curling strike in the 91st minute which caused wild celebrations at the Stadio Olimpico in Rome, with Mourinho running to join his joyous players in front of screaming supporters behind the goal.

"Today I wasn't 58 years old, I felt like a 10, 12, 14-year-old, back when you begin to dream about a career in football. It was a child's run," Mourinho told DAZN. "During the week I lied to myself because I tried to convince myself that wasn't a special match, but it was a special match... For the rest of my life, I will remember that the match that took me to 1,000 was this one."

A breathless content looked to be heading for a

Benzema hat-trick gives Madrid winning return to Bernabeu

MADRID: Real Madrid returned to the Santiago Bernabeu after 560 days away and Karim Benzema ensured it was a happy homecoming as his hat-trick inspired a thrilling 5-2 fightback against Celta Vigo on Sunday.

Benzema twice had to pull Madrid level after Santi Mina and Franco Cervi each put Celta ahead,

Juve have also somewhat lost their way domestically, last season finishing 13 points behind league winners Inter Milan under novice coach Andrea Pirlo and only qualifying for the Champions League on the final day of the campaign because Napoli failed to beat Verona at home.

Now Allegri returns to the Juve dugout this season not as an enemy but an old friend, charged both with re-establishing their pre-eminence in Italy and rebuilding their European reputation with a weaker line-up than the teams he took to within one match of glory in 2015 and 2017.

'Life goes on'

Ronaldo had already been rumored to want out this summer and charismatic Allegri practically shrugged his shoulders while announcing last season's top scorer in Italy had no intention of ever playing for Juve again. Never a coach short of confidence, Allegri said "life goes on" as he played down the exit of one of the game's greatest ever players, but his second spell is off to a wobbly start.

Losers at Napoli on Saturday, Juve have just one point from their first three games and look a shadow of the team which dominated Italian football for nearly a decade while just falling just short on Europe's biggest stage on two occasions.

They kick off their continental campaign at Malmo, a relatively soft start to Group H which before the Napoli defeat Allegri called the "most important" game of a group which also contains European champions Chelsea. "Let's hope that we can begin the Champions League better than we have the league season," Allegri then said after his depleted side fell to defeat in Naples.

draw after Bryan Cristante's 37th-minute opener was cancelled out by Filip Djuricic just before the hour mark and both sides wanted a raft of chances. Tammy Abraham and Hamed Traore hit the post for each team, but it was Roma goalkeeper Rui Patricio who had to be at his best to stop gilt-edged opportunities presented to Domenico Berardi and Jeremie Boga as Sassuolo pushed for a win.

However, with the seconds ticking away El Shaarawy crashed in his shot from the edge of the area off the post to put Roma top, level on a perfect nine points with AC Milan and Napoli. There was even time for a scare right after the winner when Gianluca Scamacca's wonderful strike was disallowed for offside to enormous roars from the home crowd.

"It was a match that could have finished 6-6, 7-7, they could have won 2-1 as we did," added Mourinho. "In the final 20 minutes Rui Patricio made two or three incredible saves, we missed chances practically in front of an open goal. I think that for the neutral it was an incredible match."

Milan are level with Roma thanks to a 2-0 win over Lazio which came through goals from Rafael Leao and Zlatan Ibrahimovic, who scored seven minutes after making his comeback as a second-half substitute following four months out of action.

goals that were greeted with whistles inside the Bernabeu where 19,874 fans attended for the first time in a year and a half.

But Benzema kept his team in it and Madrid motored in the second half, Vinicius Junior finishing after racing onto the France forward's through-ball before Eduardo Camavinga marked his debut by tapping into an open net.

Benzema completed his hat-trick by converting a penalty in the 87th minute, to make it five goals and two assists from his opening four games this season. "The team has a lot of quality offensively, that's clear," said coach Carlo Ancelotti. "What wasn't so clear was the defensive organization, which has to



TURIN: Juventus' Italian coach Massimiliano Allegri (left), Sport Coordinator Federico Cherubini and Vice President Pavel Nedved attend a training session with teammates at The Juventus Training Centre in Turin yesterday, on the eve of the team's UEFA Champions League Group H match against Malmo. - AFP

He should have most of his first choice XI back for the trip to Sweden, with Juve's South American internationals — including key players Paulo Dybala and Juan Cuadrado — absent at Napoli due to their World Cup qualifying exertions now ready to play.

The only doubt remains Federico Chiesa, who also missed Saturday's defeat through an unspecified muscular problem and trained separately on Monday morning. Allegri will be hoping that a side resembling full strength can bounce back quickly from their early setbacks as between now and the next international break early next month they will have to face AC Milan and Chelsea, with a Turin derby thrown in for good measure. —AFP



ROME: Roma's coach Jose Mourinho (center) celebrates with Matias Vina (right) during their teams' Italian Serie A football match against Sassuolo at the Olympic stadium in Rome on Sunday. —AFP

The Swedish star, who turns 40 in three weeks, rolled home the simplest of finishes from Ante Rebic's low cross in the 67th minute to banish a knee injury he suffered at the end of last season, ensuring his second-placed team went two points ahead of reigning champions Inter Milan and Udinese. —AFP

improve." Antoine Griezmann's return was less impressive, his first game for Atletico Madrid in two years and four months coming against Espanyol, who sank to a 2-1 defeat after a 99th-minute winner from Thomas Lemar. Griezmann had gone off in the 58th minute with his team trailing.

Griezmann played for Barcelona in Real Madrid's last match at the Bernabeu on March 1, 2020, a 2-0 home win that also featured Lionel Messi, Sergio Ramos and Raphael Varane, with Zinedine Zidane and Quique Setien in the dugouts. If the drain of talent since has been a disappointment for La Liga, it might at least briefly offer Benzema a spell in the limelight. —AFP

Sports

Mahomes sparks Chiefs comeback in season opener

Rodgers' NFL season off to rocky start as Saints pummel Packers

LOS ANGELES: Patrick Mahomes rallied Kansas City with two fourth-quarter touchdown passes as the Chiefs launched their NFL season with a thrilling 33-29 victory over the Cleveland Browns. The Chiefs, who are trying to get to a third straight Super Bowl after winning it all in 2020 and falling to Tampa Bay last season, trailed all day in front of home fans at Arrowhead Stadium, where quarterback Baker Mayfield and the Browns took a 29-20 lead in the final period before Mahomes unleashed his magic.

With 10:10 left to play, Mahomes hit Tyreek Hill for a 75-yard touchdown that cut the deficit to two points. Barely more than three minutes later, Mahomes fired an eight-yard, third-down scoring pass to Travis Kelce to put the Chiefs up for the first time, 33-29. "You love his attitude because he always feels like we're in it," Chiefs coach Andy Reid said of Mahomes. "He does such a great job with the guys around him. He's a great communicator during tough times on the sideline."

A two-point conversion attempt failed, but the Chiefs were still able to hold on for the win, cornerback Mike Hughes intercepting Mayfield to end the Browns' final drive. The Chiefs outscored the Browns 23-7 in the second half, Mahomes finishing with 337 yards on 27-of-36 passing with three TDs.

Reigning NFL Most Valuable Player Aaron Rodgers' season, meanwhile, got off to a rocky start. The veteran Green Bay quarterback, who mulled retirement in the offseason before opting to return to the Packers despite tension with his longtime team, endured the worst margin of defeat in his NFL career in a 38-3 loss to the New Orleans Saints.

Rodgers threw for only 133 yards and two interceptions before Jordan Love, the team's first-round draft pick in 2020, took over in the fourth quarter of the blowout loss. "We played bad. I played bad," Rodgers said, but added: "One game. We've got 16 to go."

The Saints didn't miss a beat as they played their first game since talismanic quarterback Drew Brees retired. They were also playing their would-be home opener in Jacksonville, Florida, because of damage from Hurricane Ida in Louisiana.

Saints quarterback Jameis Winston threw five touchdowns and said the win was for fans back in New Orleans still struggling in the aftermath of Ida. "That was for the city," Winston said. "We did that for them. We knew how much it would mean to get a great victory for that region."

Rough ride for Lawrence

Elsewhere, Trevor Lawrence's NFL career got off



KANSAS CITY: Quarterback Patrick Mahomes #15 of the Kansas City Chiefs carries the ball into the end zone for a touchdown during the game against the Cleveland Browns at Arrowhead Stadium on Sunday in Kansas City, Missouri. —AFP

to a losing start as the Jacksonville Jaguars suffered a season-opening 37-21 mauling by the Houston Texans. Number one draft pick Lawrence, one of the most highly rated college quarterbacks in years, was intercepted three times as the Jaguars were



Texans, Steelers, 49ers, Rams win

outplayed by a Texans line-up missing DeShaun Watson, who is battling sexual assault allegations.

With Watson sidelined, it was left to Texans backup quarterback Tyrod Taylor to lead the AFC South side to a comfortable win. Taylor threw for 291 yards with two touchdowns and no interceptions as the Texans made a winning start to the season. Lawrence meanwhile finished with three touchdowns and 332 passing yards from 28-of-51 completions.

In other action, the Pittsburgh Steelers jolted the Super Bowl hopeful Buffalo Bills with a 23-16 victory on the road. The Bills, aiming to build on a successful 2020 campaign which saw them reach the AFC Championship game, started smoothly as they edged into a 10-0 lead at half-time.

But Ben Roethlisberger's pass to Diontae Johnson for a touchdown at the start of the fourth quarter helped the Steelers take a 13-10 lead and then a blocked punt recovered by Ulysees Gilbert III in the end zone put Pittsburgh 10 points clear. Evan McPherson kicked a 38-yard field goal in overtime to give the Cincinnati Bengals a 27-24 victory over the Minnesota Vikings.

In Detroit, the San Francisco 49ers held off a furious late rally from the Lions and new quarterback Jared Goff to claim a 41-33 victory. Matthew Stafford, the former Lions quarterback traded to the Los Angeles Rams for Goff, made a winning start for his new team, throwing for 321 yards with three touchdowns in a 34-14 victory over the Chicago Bears. Stafford unleashed a 67-yard TD pass to Van Jefferson on his opening drive to give the Rams a lead they would never relinquish. He also connected with Cooper Kupp and Matthew Woods with scoring passes. — AFP

Onus on sport to confront online racism head on, says expert

PARIS: Sport cannot use the excuse that racism is "a societal issue" when it comes to stars suffering social media abuse, a leading figure at a global strategic consultancy has told AFP. Radha Balani, a director at thinkBeyond, which focuses on utilizing sport for social good, said social media companies merely suspending the trolls' accounts was little more than a "sticking plaster" on the problem.

And she urged federations and clubs to take a hard look at the values of companies and brands before signing sponsorship deals. England footballers Bukayo Saka, Jadon Sancho and Marcus Rashford were the target of racist abuse after they missed penalties in the shootout with Italy in the Euro 2020 final in July.

The majority came from accounts within the United Kingdom but one of the abusers was from Saudi Arabia. He had his Instagram account suspended for just 24 hours and told the BBC this week he deserved a longer ban.

Balani, who in her career has worked for US tennis legend Billie Jean King and World Rugby among others, said the British government should be labelling this abuse as hate crimes. "What is the UK Government going to challenge Twitter to (change) its regulations that allow for hate crimes to go unpunished in any meaningful way?" she told AFP.

It is sport, though, that Balani believes must also take a stronger stance. "Sport has its role to play. It cannot hide behind saying racism is a societal issue — sport is part of society and it doesn't exist in a vacuum," she said. "Sport has many levers it can pull on to make a positive impact — it's already doing some of these, but more depth, intentionality and bravery is required in order for wide-ranging, sustainable impact to come about. Sport is not magic, it won't change things unless we pull on those levers."

Balani said one of those levers comes from the athletes themselves raising awareness of issues and lobbying for change. "Taking the knee is part of this, as is Naomi Osaka's use of face masks," she said. At least year's US Open, Osaka sported face masks bearing the names of individuals who had died of alleged police or racist violence in the United States.

'Utterly disgusting'

Balani said that while Osaka's actions and the England men's and women's football teams taking the knee could have an impact, professional sport and governing bodies "must also hold brands and businesses to account when racist action is seen." She pointed to the monkey chants directed at black England players in Budapest when they played against Hungary in a World Cup qualifier last month. "FIFA punishing Hungary is one thing, but will FIFA use its influence and power to challenge the Hungarian government to hold itself and its citizens to account?" Balani said.

She said clubs and federations should carefully study the values of potential sponsors before signing up. "Who are we buying from in our supply chain? What are their values and policies?" she said. "By investing, buying in from them, are we further embedding institutionalized racism or are we allowing diverse, equitable and inclusive businesses and organizations to thrive, and therefore impacting both sport and society?" — AFP

Near-perfect Scherzer notches 3,000th career strikeout

LOS ANGELES: Los Angeles hurler Max Scherzer flirted with perfection Sunday as he became the 19th Major League Baseball pitcher to record 3,000 career strikeouts in the Dodgers 8-0 victory over the San Diego Padres. Scherzer, 37, reached the 3,000 strikeout milestone when he fanned Eric Hosmer on a full-count changeup for the second out of the fifth inning.

But it would be Hosmer who broke up Scherzer's bid for a rare perfect game with one out in the eighth inning. Hosmer belted a changeup to the right-field warning track — out of the reach of speedy outfielder Mookie Betts — for a double. That ended Scherzer's bid for MLB's first perfect game since Seattle's Felix Hernandez threw the 23rd perfect on August 15, 2012.

The nine-year drought without a perfect game — in which a pitcher

retires every batter he faces — is the longest in the major leagues since the dry spell from 1968-1981. But Scherzer had plenty to celebrate even without a perfect game or the third no-hitter of his career. He joined former teammate Justin Verlander as the only active pitchers to reach 3,000 strikeouts. He needed just 66 pitches to record six perfect innings — that included striking out the side on nine pitches in the second for the third "immaculate inning" of his career.

"It's hard to describe the emotion," said Scherzer, who was able to celebrate his strikeout milestone with his wife and small children as well as his parents at Dodger Stadium — which he has called home only since a July 30 trade from the Washington Nationals. "To me this is a testament to durability, to me going out there making my 30-plus starts a year,



LOS ANGELES: Max Scherzer #31 of the Los Angeles Dodgers tips his hat after throwing his 3000th career strikeout in the fifth inning against the San Diego Padres at Dodger Stadium on Sunday in Los Angeles, California. — AFP

year-in, year-out."

Scherzer, a three-time Cy Young Award winner, is now in the hunt for a fourth award for the league's top pitcher. He is 6-0 in eight starts as a Dodger with a 0.88 earned run aver-

age and 71 strikeouts in 51 innings. His ERA for the season is a major league-leading 2.17, a smidge in front of Milwaukee's Corbin Burnes (2.25) and Dodgers teammate Walker Buehler (2.32). — AFP

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Sabah Hospital	24812000	Khalidiya	24848075
Amiri Hospital	22450005	Kaifan	24849807
Maternity Hospital	24843100	Shamiya	24848913
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700	Shuwaikh	24814507
Chest Hospital	24849400	Abdullah Salem	22549134
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010	Nuzha	22526804
Adan Hospital	23940620	Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300	Qadsiya	22515088
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000	Dasmah	22532265
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9	Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
		Shaab	22518752
		Qibla	22459381
		Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
		Mirqab	22456536
		Sharq	22465401

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144

CHANGE OF NAME

I, PASUPULETI MUNI KUMAR, S/o PASUPULETI SUBRAMANYAM, holder of Indian passport no: M2288252, R/o D.No.9/335-3, SRI RAM NAGAR, Rly. Kodur Town & MANDAL, KADAPA DIST., A.P. - 516 101. (NEW) has changed my name from NEMALI MUNI KUMAR (OLD NAME) to PASUPULETI MUNI KUMAR (NEW NAME).

I, formally known as AKALEZI JOHN KELECHI, holder of Nigerian Passport Number A08103014, hereby declare that I have changed my name to AKALEZI STEPHEN. All former documents remain valid. The general public, banks and concerned authorities should please take note.

I, OTHMAN ALLAH SHAIK, holder of Indian Passport No. S3697946 change my name to SHAIK USMANULLAH. So hereafter I will be known as SHAIK USMANULLAH, address: 7/614 Mochampet street, Kadapa, Andhra Pradesh. (C 647) 14-9-2021

I, BHAVIN KUMAR CHANDRABHUSHAN, holder of Passport Number P5628353, do declare adding surname MASIH along with given name BHAVIN CHANDRABHUSHAN. Full name to be BHAVIN CHANDRABHUSHAN MASIH. (C 0644)

I, GAFFAR SYED HUSSAIN SHANAWAS, Tindivanam V.R.P. Dist, Tamil Nadu, hereby declare that I have changed my name as SYED SHANAWAS S/o SYED HUSSAIN, Tindivanam V.R.P. Dist, Tamil Nadu. (C 0642) 8-9-2021

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Djokovic's Grand Slam bid foiled as Medvedev wins US Open



NEW YORK: Winner Russia's Daniil Medvedev (right) and Serbia's Novak Djokovic hold their trophies after the 2021 US Open Tennis tournament men's final match against at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center in New York, on Sunday. — AFP

NEW YORK: Daniil Medvedev shattered Novak Djokovic's Grand Slam dream with a straight sets victory in the US Open final here Sunday, denying the world number one a record-breaking 21st major men's singles title. Russia's second-ranked Medvedev dominated Djokovic 6-4, 6-4, 6-4 to prevent the first calendar-year Grand Slam since 1969 and keep Djokovic level with Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal atop the career Slam title list. "Sorry for you fans and Novak because we all know what he was going for," Medvedev said. "What you have accomplished in your career... for me, you are the greatest tennis player in the history."

Medvedev, the 2019 US Open runner-up, captured his first Grand Slam title in his third Slam final, a rematch of February's Australian Open final, won in straight sets by the 34-year-old Serbian to launch his Slam quest. "Congratulations to Daniil. Amazing match," Djokovic said. "If there's anyone that deserves a Grand Slam title right now, it's you." Djokovic's bid to sweep the US, French and Australian Opens and Wimbledon in the same year for the first time since Rod Laver did it 52 years ago collapsed at the last hurdle, with 83-year-old Aussie legend Laver among 23,700 watching at Arthur Ashe Stadium.

"Simply stunning Daniil Medvedev, you stopped one of the greatest tonight," Laver tweeted. "To win your first Grand Slam title is always special, to do it against a champion like Novak Djokovic is something else. Take heart Novak, the quest continues. Best wishes." Djokovic missed out on his fourth US Open title and will enter 2022 tied with "Big Three" rivals Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal, both absent with injuries, on an all-time record 20 men's Slam titles.

Sitting after the match, tearful Djokovic said he was overcome with emotions. "Relief," he said. "I was glad it was over because the buildup for this tournament and everything that mentally, emotionally I had to deal with throughout the tournament in the last couple of weeks was just a lot. "It was a lot to handle. I was just glad that finally the run is over. "At the same time I felt sadness, disappointment, and also gratitude for the crowd." Djokovic paid tribute to the crowd that roared support for him even when all seemed lost down

two sets and two breaks.

"Even though I have not won the match, my heart is filled with joy and I'm the happiest man alive because you guys have made me feel special on the court," Djokovic said. "You guys touch my soul. I've never felt like this in New York."

Instead of joining immortals Laver and Don Budge, who completed the first men's Slam in 1938, Djokovic became the third man to fall at the final match attempting to complete the Slam after Australians Jack Crawford in 1933 and Lew Hoad in 1956.

"I do feel sorry for Novak because I cannot imagine what he feels," Medvedev said. Djokovic saw his 27-match Slam win streak halted three shy of the record he set in 2015 and 2016 when he won four consecutive Slams, ending with the 2016 French Open. Medvedev, 25, became the third Russian man to win a Grand Slam title after Yevgeny Kafelnikov at the 1996 French Open and 1999 Australian Open and Marat Safin at the 2000 US

Open and 2005 Australian Open.

Struggle from the start

In the biggest of Djokovic's 1,176 career matches, he made two unforced forehand errors to surrender a break in the first game and Medvedev held through to take the first set, never facing a break point. It was the fifth consecutive match in which Djokovic dropped the first set. Djokovic squandered three break chances in the second game of the second set and another in the fourth, when he smashed his racquet in frustration.

In the fifth game, Djokovic mis-hit a backhand volley to hand Medvedev a break and a 3-2 lead and the Russian held three times to claim the set. Medvedev broke in the first and third games of the final set, pulled ahead 5-1 and served for the match in the eighth game. With hecklers in the crowd, Medvedev double faulted on championship point and again, then netted a forehand to surrender a break that kept Djokovic in the match. "It was not easy," Medvedev said. Serving again for the match at 5-4, Medvedev double-faulted on his second match point but finally got over the line on his third chance with a service winner after two hours and 16 minutes. — AFP



Tearful Djokovic relieved tournament is over

Once-controversial halo hailed after Hamilton escapes serious injury

MONZA: The sight of the hefty back tire of Max Verstappen's Red Bull Formula One car crashing down towards the helmet of Lewis Hamilton at the Italian Grand Prix made for sickening viewing. The seven-time world champion was beached in his Mercedes, but ultimately saved by his halo, a cockpit head protection system introduced in March 2018. "Honestly, I feel very fortunate," said Hamilton. "Thank God for the halo, that ultimately, I think, saved me, and saved my neck. I don't think I've ever been hit on the head by a car before and it's quite a shock for me, because I don't know if you've seen the image, but my head really is quite far forward. And I've been racing a long, long time, so I'm so, so grateful that I'm still here."

Verstappen was blamed by the Monza stewards for the dramatic airborne crash with Hamilton. The Red Bull driver, who leads Hamilton by five points in the Formula One standings but must now serve a three-place grid penalty at the Russian Grand Prix in a fortnight's time, had tried to muscle past Hamilton who had just

rejoined the track after a pit stop on lap 26. But Verstappen's car, pushed onto the sausage kerb at the Turn One chicane, ended up with its back wheel rolling over the top of his rival's Mercedes. The halo protected Hamilton's head. Mercedes team principal Toto Wolff had once threatened to take a chainsaw to the safety system if he could, because of its weight. But he struck a different tone after watching Hamilton escape unscathed. "The championship was good fun up until now, but we saw the halo save Lewis' life today. We don't want to see someone seriously hurt," Wolff said in Monza.

Highly divisive

The halo, a thong-like titanium and carbon fiber structure above the cockpit weighing less than 10kg and capable of resisting two tons, was highly divisive when it was introduced. Team principals, drivers and fans were split over whether it was the right safety solution when it made its debut ahead of the 2018 season opener at the Melbourne Grand Prix. After years

of research and development, motorsport's governing body, the FIA, settled on the halo to protect drivers from flying debris following the deaths of Jules Bianchi, who died nine months after crashing at the 2014 Japanese Grand Prix, and Justin Wilson, who was killed in an IndyCar race in the US the following year.

Motor racing purists were aghast because they say grand prix racing is supposed to be an open-cockpit formula. Other fans moan it is just plain ugly and some drivers have complained it restricts vision. Hamilton, speaking in Melbourne after the halo's introduction in 2018, said: "We have known for some time it was coming and I think after a few races we will forget it is even there." The halo is the latest in a long list of Formula One safety measures introduced in the wake of Ayrton Senna's death in 1994.

That year saw the cockpit lengthened and reinforced and the suspension strengthened. The next season, 1995, brought higher norms for crash tests. In 1996, the protection round the driver's head was reinforced and two years later the wheels were attached to the car by tethers to stop them flying off. A head and neck support system (HANS), which attached the helmet to the shoulders and is designed to protect the



MONZA: Mercedes' British driver Lewis Hamilton (left) and Red Bull's Dutch driver Max Verstappen collide during the Italian Formula One Grand Prix at the Autodromo Nazionale circuit in Monza, on Sunday. — AFP

spine, was introduced in 2003. It was followed in 2018 by the halo to protect a driver's head.

French driver Romain Grosjean had a spectacular crash at the Bahrain Formula One race last year, but survived thanks to what he said was the halo. "I wasn't for the halo some years ago, but I think it's the

greatest thing we brought to Formula 1 and without it I wouldn't be able to speak to you today," Grosjean said at the time. George Russell, who will join Hamilton at Mercedes next season, also credited the halo with saving him from serious injury after he was hit by a bouncing wheel in the Belgian Grand Prix last year. — AFP