



3 Vaccinated Kuwaiti travelers to UK exempt from mandatory PCR tests



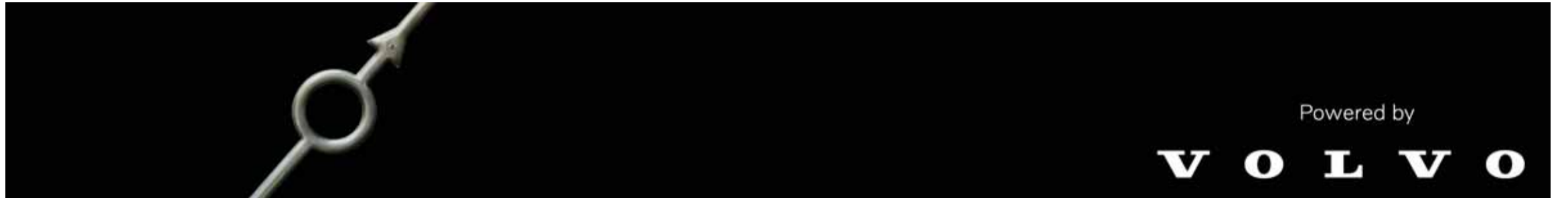
5 Houthis execute 9 over political leader's killing



11 Gun-toting Taliban mingle with families and kids at Kabul Zoo



15 Pakistan battling isolation after New Zealand pull out



Furious France recalls envoys to Australia, US

Row escalates after Canberra scraps French submarine deal

Kuwait marks World Cleanup Day



KUWAIT: US Ambassador to Kuwait Alina L. Romanowski takes part in a cleanup campaign at Ushairej beach to mark World Cleanup Day yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

PARIS: France on Friday recalled its ambassadors to the United States and Australia in a ferocious row over the scrapping of a submarine contract, an unprecedented step that revealed the extent of French anger against its allies. President Emmanuel Macron recalled the envoys after Canberra ditched a deal to buy French submarines in favor of US vessels, Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said.

Le Drian said that the decision was made to "immediately" recall the two French ambassadors due to "the exceptional seriousness of the announcements made on Sept 15 by Australia and the United States". The abandonment of the ocean-class submarine project that Australia and France had been working on since 2016 constituted "unacceptable behavior among allies and partners," the minister said. "Their consequences affect the very concept we have of our alliances, our partnerships, and the importance of the Indo-Pacific for Europe," he added.

US President Joe Biden announced the new Australia-US-Britain defense alliance on Wednesday, extending US nuclear submarine technology to Australia as well as cyber defense, applied artificial intelligence and undersea capabilities. The pact is widely seen as aimed at countering the rise of China. The move infuriated France, which lost a contract to supply conventional submarines to Australia that was worth Aus\$50 billion (\$36.5 billion) when signed in 2016.

A White House official expressed "regret" over the French envoy's recall but added "we will continue to be engaged in the coming days to resolve our differences, as we have done at other points over the course of our long alliance." State Department spokesperson Ned Price said in a tweet that Washington understood France's position and was in "close contact" with Paris. He added that the issue would be discussed "at the senior level", including at the United Nations General Assembly next week, which both Le Drian and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will attend.

Pentagon spokesperson John Kirby meanwhile acknowledged that telephone talks earlier between US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and French counterpart Florence Parly showed "that there is still much work to do in terms of our defense relationship with France".

The French ambassador recalls from the United States and Australia - key allies of France - are unprecedented. Withdrawing envoys is a last resort diplomatic step taken when relations between feuding countries are plunged into crisis but highly unusual between allies. "I am being recalled to Paris for consultations," France Ambassador to the US Philippe Etienne wrote on Twitter. "This follows announcements directly affecting the vision we have of our alliances, of our partnerships and of the importance of the Indo-Pacific for Europe."

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US admits strike in Kabul killed 10 civilians

WASHINGTON: A top general admitted the United States had made a "mistake" when it launched a drone strike against suspected Islamic State militants in Kabul, killing 10 civilians including children instead during the frenzied final days of the US pullout from Afghanistan last month.

The strike, a macabre coda to the 20-year US war in Afghanistan, was meant to target a suspected IS operation that US intelligence had "reasonable certainty" aimed to attack the Kabul airport, said US Central Command commander General Kenneth McKenzie. "The strike was a tragic mistake," McKenzie told reporters after an investigation.

US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin apologized to the relatives of those killed in a statement. "I offer my deepest condolences to surviving family members of those who were killed," Austin said in a statement. "We apologize, and we will endeavor to learn from this horrible mistake," he said. McKenzie said the government was studying on how payments for damages could be made to the families of those killed.

The general said that on Aug 29 US forces had tracked a white Toyota for eight hours after seeing it at a site in Kabul that intelligence had identified as a location from which Islamic State operatives were believed to be preparing attacks on the Kabul airport. Intelligence reports had led US forces to watch for a white Toyota Corolla that the group was allegedly using, he said.

"We selected this car based on its movement at a known target area of interest to us," McKenzie said. "Clearly our intelligence was wrong on this particular white Toyota," he said. The drone strike killed 10 people, including seven children, according to McKenzie, none of whom ultimately were linked to IS. McKenzie defended the US operation as in "self-defense strike" amid concerns about an attack on the airport in the last days of the chaotic evacuation.

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Algeria ex-president Abdelaziz Bouteflika dies aged 84

ALGIERS: Abdelaziz Bouteflika, who ruled Algeria for two decades before resigning in 2019 as huge protests engulfed the country, has died aged 84, public television announced. The former strongman had left office in April 2019 under pressure from the military, following weeks of demonstrations over his bid to run for a fifth term in office. After quitting, he had stayed out of the public eye at a residence in western Algiers.

The announcement of his death late Friday evening triggered little reaction in the North African country, reflecting how his absence had stamped him out of public interest. A statement from his successor Abdelmajid Tebboune noted Bouteflika's past as a fighter in the war for independence from France and said flags would be lowered to half mast for three days to honor him.

But on the streets of the capital Algiers, many residents told AFP the once-formidable president would not be missed. "Bless his soul. But he doesn't deserve any tribute because he did nothing for the country," said greengrocer Rabah. Malek, a telecoms employee, said Bouteflika "was incapable of reforming the country despite his long rule".

Even state broadcasters limited their coverage to the news of his death, without running special bul-

letins on his legacy. Sabqpress news website said the funeral would take place today at the El-Alia cemetery east of the capital where his predecessors and other independence fighters are buried. There was no immediate confirmation from authorities.

Bouteflika became president of Algeria in 1999 as the former French colony emerged from a decade of civil war that killed nearly 200,000 people. He went on to be elected for three more consecutive five-year



Abdelaziz Bouteflika

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Philippine nurses face burnout

MANILA: Exhausted nurses in the Philippines are struggling to care for patients as colleagues contract COVID-19 or quit a profession that was dangerously understaffed even before the pandemic. The country is enduring a record rise in infections, fueled by the Delta variant, with the health department reporting a nursing

shortfall of more than 100,000 - forcing those left to work long hours for little pay on often precarious short-term contracts.

"They are tired and burned out," nursing director Lourdes Banaga, at a private hospital south of Manila, told AFP. "At the start of the pandemic we had almost 200 nurses," said Banaga, director for nursing services at the Lipa Medix Medical Center in Batangas province. "By September that will reduce to 63." Official figures show 75,000 nurses are working in public and private Philippine hospitals but roughly 109,000 more are needed.

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MANILA: This photo taken on Sept 1, 2021 shows health workers staging a protest to ask the government for hazard pay and benefits outside the department of health office. — AFP

Spoons become new symbol of 'freedom'

JERUSALEM: The humble spoon has taken its place alongside traditional flags and banners as a Palestinian resistance symbol, after prisoners were said to have carried out one of the Zionist entity's most spectacular jail breaks with the utensil. When the six Palestinian militants

escaped through a tunnel on Sept 6 from the high security Gilboa prison, social networks shared images of a tunnel at the foot of a sink, and a hole dug outside.

A hashtag, "the miraculous spoon", suggested how the Hollywood-style feat might have occurred. But whether or not the utensil had really been involved or its role was cooked up was at first unclear. Then on Wednesday a lawyer for one of the fugitives who has since been recaptured told AFP that his client, Mahmud Abdullah Ardah, said he had

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GAZA: An artist works on a mural yesterday glorifying six Palestinian prisoners who escaped from the Zionist Gilboa prison almost two weeks ago. — AFP

Local

Home farming growing in Kuwait

Farmers use innovative techniques to overcome harsh conditions



KUWAIT: Seasonal fruits grown in a home garden in Kuwait. — KUNA photos



Apples grown in a home garden in Kuwait.

KUWAIT: Homes have become a core of green societies in Kuwait, with many families setting up traditional and modern gardens with eye-catching products. Kuwaitis are not new to gardening which has contributed to food security, and many citizens recently started home gardening and thus producing daily and seasonal vegetables.

Home farmers overcome some difficulties, like limited resources, by seeking new methods that enabled them to see fresh products on their tables. Some farmers said home farming has become a passion which taught them discipline and patience, as well as being a good way to spend free time in a productive manner.



Contributing to better food security

'Beautiful and positive'

Khadija Al-Refae, another farmer, said home gardening has "beautiful and positive" impacts on physical and psychological wellbeing of people which contributed to better condition of the heart, bones and muscles. "Exposure to sun rays while farming increases

Vitamin D, from which many people suffer deficit," she said. Home farmers can use empty spaces like yards, roof tops or windows to plant their domestic gardens. Nouri Al-Ostath, with an experience in home gardening, said farmers could plant vertically by using pots which could produce many fruits like peach, apple and figs.

The Public Authority for Agriculture and Fish Resources was also encouraging experienced and amateur farmers to do their own home gardens, contributing to better food security. The authority published guidelines to help farmers design their gardens to ultimately have better produce. These



Strawberries grown in a home garden in Kuwait.



Flowers planted in a home garden in Kuwait.

guidelines range from preparation of soil, irrigation system and water quality, fertilizers and spacing. One of the main objectives of the home gardens is producing daily needs of leafy vegetables, toma-

atoes and carrots for example. The authority was also offering training courses over the fundamentals of home gardening to contribute to healthy environment. — KUNA

Furious France recalls envoys to...

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Paris sees itself as a major power in the Indo-Pacific due to overseas territories such as New Caledonia and French Polynesia which give it a strategic and military foothold unmatched by any other European country. France had made no effort to disguise its fury even before the recalls and on Thursday Le Drian accused Australia of backstabbing and Washington of Donald Trump-era behavior over the submarines deal.

The row has for now at least put on hold hopes of a post-Trump renaissance in Paris-Washington relations under Biden and his Secretary of State Blinken, a fluent French speaker who was educated in Paris. France's European Affairs Minister Clement Beune also said Friday that Paris was unable to trust Canberra in ongoing European Union trade deal talks following the decision.

France meanwhile called off a gala at its ambassador's house in Washington scheduled for Friday. The event was supposed to celebrate the anniversary of a decisive naval battle in the American Revolution, in which France played a key role.

Australia earlier shrugged off Chinese anger over its decision to acquire the US nuclear-powered submarines, while vowing to defend the rule of law in airspace and waters where Beijing has staked hotly contested claims.

Beijing described the new alliance as an "extremely irresponsible" threat to regional stability, questioning Australia's commitment to nuclear non-proliferation and warning the Western allies that they risked "shooting themselves in the foot". China has its own "very substantive program of nuclear submarine building", Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison argued Friday in an interview with radio station 2GB.

China claims almost all of the resource-rich South China Sea, through which trillions of dollars in shipping trade passes annually, rejecting competing claims from Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam. Beijing has been accused of deploying a range of military hardware including anti-ship missiles and surface-to-air missiles there, and ignored a 2016 international tribunal decision that declared its historical claim over most of the waters to be without basis.

Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne, in Washington, said she understood the "disappointment" in Paris and hoped to work with France to ensure it understands "the value we place on the bilateral relationship and the work that we want to continue to do together". — AFP

said Ahmadi's activities that day were "completely harmless", and that the man was "just as innocent a victim as were the others tragically killed". Ahmadi's brother Aimal told AFP that the car had been filled with children pretending that the parking routine was an adventure.

"The rocket came and hit the car full of kids inside our house," he said. "It killed all of them. My brother and his four children were killed. I lost my small daughter... nephews and nieces," he said disconsolately. AFP was unable to independently verify Aimal's account. "On behalf of the men and women of the Department of Defense, I offer my deepest condolences to surviving family members of those who were killed, including Mr Ahmadi, and to the staff of Nutrition and Education International, Mr Ahmadi's employer," Austin said.

More than 71,000 Afghan and Pakistani civilians have died directly from the war launched by the United States after the Sept 11, 2001 attacks, with casualties rising dramatically after then president Donald Trump relaxed rules of engagement in 2017, according to a Brown University study in April. — AFP

Philippine nurses face...

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The pandemic has exacerbated a pre-existing lack of nurses, said Maristela Abenojar, president of Filipino Nurses United - a situation she describes as "ironic" in one of the world's biggest exporters of healthcare workers. The "chronic understaffing" is down to inadequate salaries, she said. An entry-level nurse in a public hospital can earn 33,575 pesos (\$670) per month, official data show.

But Abenojar said most were on short-term contracts, earning 22,000 pesos with no benefits such as hazard pay. Meanwhile, those in the private sector were making as little as 8,000 pesos. And many

have had enough: About 40 percent of private hospital nurses have resigned since the start of the pandemic, according to the Private Hospitals Association of the Philippines.

More than 5,000 nurses have been given the green light to go abroad this year after a COVID-19 ban was replaced with a cap to ensure enough nurses were available in the Philippines. It hasn't worked. "We can't get additional nurses, we can't compel them to apply," said Jose Rene de Grano of the private hospitals association.

In recent weeks, health workers have protested over unpaid benefits, including a coronavirus special risk allowance. Abenojar said many were still waiting. President Rodrigo Duterte has asked for patience while the government tries to come up with the money. "We don't feel cared for," said Melbert Reyes of the Philippine Nurses Association. — AFP

Spoons become new symbol...

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used spoons, plates and even the handle of a kettle to dig the tunnel from his cell.

He began scraping his way out from the northern Zionist institution in December, the lawyer, Roslan Mahajana, said. Ardash was one of four fugitives later arrested after the army poured troops into the occupied West Bank as part of a massive manhunt. All six were accused of plotting or carrying out attacks against Zionists. Two men remain on the loose following the extremely rare escape. The

Zionist entity has begun an inquiry into lapses that led to the embarrassing incident, which Palestinians see as a "victory".

"With determination, vigilance... and cunning, and with a spoon, it was possible to dig a tunnel through which the Palestinians escaped and the enemy was imprisoned," writer Sari Orabi said on the Arabi 21 website. Palestinian cartoonist Mohammed Sabaaneh says the escape has served up "black humor" and exposed the Zionist entity's security system to ridicule. He has made several drawings featuring the utensil, including one titled "The Tunnel of Freedom".

The issue has also stirred admiration outside the Palestinian territories, where spoons have been carried in demonstrations supporting prisoners detained by the Zionist entity. — AFP

US admits strike in Kabul killed...

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On Aug 26 an Islamic State-Khorasan suicide bomber had killed scores at the airport, including 13 US service members. Huge crowds were there clamoring to get inside and on board one of the final evacuation flights out of the country. "There were over 60 clear threat vectors that we were dealing with at this time," McKenzie said. US officials believed that the car had been loaded with explosives. The New York Times reported that it was filled with canisters of water. McKenzie said that no civilians had been spotted in the area at the time the strike was authorized.

One of those killed was an Afghan man who worked for a US aid group, Ezmarai Ahmadi. "We now know that there was no connection between Mr Ahmadi and ISIS-Khorasan," said Austin. He

Algeria ex-president Abdelaziz...

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terms, most recently in 2014. Dubbed "Boutef" by Algerians, he won respect as a foreign minister in the 1970s and then for helping foster peace after the civil war, notably with an amnesty law that prompted thousands of Islamist fighters to hand in their weapons.

"He was welcomed in countries around the world, and the country improved when Bouteflika became president," said kitchen porter Amer, 46. Journalist Farid Alilat, who has written a biography

of Bouteflika, says that at the height of his rule in the early 2000s, the president had "all the levers of power". Crucially, he was backed by the army and the intelligence services. "He became an absolute president," Alilat told AFP.

Algeria was largely spared the wave of uprisings that swept the Arab world in 2011, with many crediting still-painful memories of the civil war - as well as a boost in state handouts - for keeping a lid on tensions. But Bouteflika's rule was marked by corruption, leaving many Algerians wondering how a country with vast oil wealth could end up with poor infrastructure and high unemployment that pushed many young people overseas. "He had a very comfortable life, even after he was ousted from power. But we have to admit that his legacy isn't the most glowing", said carpenter Mohamed, 46. — AFP

Local

Kuwait volunteers carry out beach cleanup drive to mark global event

Environmentalists raise awareness on dangers of plastic waste



KUWAIT: People participate in a cleanup drive at the Ushairej beach yesterday to mark the International Coastal Cleanup Day. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

KUWAIT: A local team of volunteers organized a cleanup drive at the Ushairej beach yesterday to mark the International Coastal Cleanup Day. US Ambassador to Kuwait Alina L Romanowski participated in the event, organized by the Green Hands Environmental Team, and featuring representatives from other NGOs in Kuwait.

As an ambitious global environmental initiative, the world celebrated the International Coastal Cleanup Day yesterday by organizing various campaigns and activities to clean seacoasts and beaches. These campaigns aim to raise environmental awareness and the need to preserve seacoasts and beaches, and to shed light on the problems and threats to the environment, thus contributing to maintaining its ecological balance and ensuring its biodiversity.

On the International Coastal Cleanup Day, the Media official of Kuwait's diving team, Dr Dhari Al-Huwail said that the team participated in the global

campaign to clean the beaches by cleaning the southern coast of Fahaaheel in cooperation with the Kuwait Municipality and volunteers. He noted that the team chose the southern coast as a cleaning site on this occasion due to the accumulation of a lot of plastic waste carried by the northern winds that blew over Kuwait a few days ago, indicating that the team was able to remove two tons of plastic waste.

Moreover, he stressed the danger of plastic waste and its negative impact on the marine and coastal environment and its organisms, as it destroys thousands of sea creatures and birds, wishing more penalties for violators to ensure the

safety of the environment and coasts. He also said that the team continues to protect the marine and coastal environment throughout the year, with the participation of many governmental and private agencies, and it has distinguished international partnerships, most notably the environmental cooperation with the United Nations Environment Program.

Meanwhile, Chairman of the Wildlife Protection Committee of the Kuwait Society for the Protection of the Environment, Dr Manaf Behbehani, said that the coasts are among the most important natural environments due to their biological diversity. He noted that Kuwait enjoys a seacoast extending

from north to south with a length of about 325 km, and the nine islands have a coastline of 175 km, which is considered a natural wealth. Behbehani stressed that Kuwait attaches great importance to protecting the coasts and their vital and non-vital resources, as stated in Article 100 of the Environmental Law, as it includes severe financial penalties and imprisonment for those who cause the destruction of coastal environments.

In the meantime, Director-General of Public Relations and Media at the Environment Public Authority, Sheikha Al-Ibrahim, said that the International Coastal Cleanup Day is a global initiative identified by the United Nations and celebrated by the world in many activities to clean coastal and marine areas and aims to raise environmental awareness. She added that the authority chose the beaches of Kubbar Island as a cleaning site on this occasion, as it is one of the most beautiful Kuwaiti islands, for the diversity of its wildlife.

Restrictions eased for vaccinated Kuwait travelers to England

LONDON: The British government announced Friday that Kuwait, among other countries, is removed from mandatory pre-departure COVID-19 tests for vaccinated travelers to England and Scotland, starting October 4. Grant Shapps, the UK Transport Secretary, said in a series of tweets that as of the aforementioned date, the current red-amber-green country lists that govern arrivals into England would cease to exist. In their place will be a "simpler" red list of no-go destinations. The new system will help in "striking the right balance to manage the public health risk as No.1 priority," Shapps said. Hence, according to Shapps, the UK will no longer require pre-departure tests before arrival into England for fully vaccinated travelers coming from non-red list countries starting from October 4. "From later in October, (fully vaccinated travelers) will be able to replace the day two PCR test with a cheaper lateral flow," he added, referring to the test required two days after arriving in England. Officials review these measures weekly or

in response to significant changes in disease activity abroad, as they could re-impose, extend, further ease, or otherwise amend any restrictions with little-to-no notice depending on disease activity over the coming weeks.

The new measures to ease pandemic restrictions on travel into England and Scotland replace a complicated "traffic light" watchlist with a simpler regime for fully vaccinated arrivals. As per the new measures, the "amber" list covering travel from much of the world, including Europe, will be abolished in the UK's two largest nations, reflecting high levels of vaccination against COVID-19 by other countries. The reform comes after strong disquiet among the public and the travel industry over byzantine rules that made summer holidays prohibitively expensive for many families.

"Today's changes mean a simpler, more straightforward system," Shapps said in a statement, announcing the changes for England. "One with less testing and lower costs, allowing more people to travel, see loved ones or conduct business around the world while providing a boost for the travel industry."

Only the "red" list will remain, requiring travelers to quarantine in government-approved hotels if they are arriving from COVID hotspots. But eight countries will come off the English and Scottish red list from next Wednesday — Bangladesh, Egypt, Kenya,

the Maldives, Oman, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Turkey.

From October 4, fully vaccinated travelers coming to England from other destinations will no longer have to take a pre-departure test. And from the end of October, they will not have to take an expensive PCR test on day two of their stay in England, only a rapid lateral flow test.

The Shapps statement applied only to England, but Scotland's separate government followed suit with parallel changes scrapping the amber list. However, Edinburgh retained the requirement for pre-departure and day-two PCR tests, "due to significant concerns at the impact on public health".

All the UK's devolved administrations — including Wales and Northern Ireland — have followed previous changes to travel rules announced by the UK government in London. The Welsh government said it would "carefully consider" the announcement by London, but also voiced concern at the changes to the testing regime.

Nevertheless, UK Health Secretary Sajid Javid said: "As global vaccination efforts continue to accelerate and more people gain protection from this dreadful disease, it is right that our rules and regulations keep pace." Travel industry bodies welcomed the move, while the British Chambers of Commerce said it could provide travelers and businesses with "confidence and clarity needed after so much uncertainty". —Agencies

Around 200 arrested in Farwaniya crackdown



KUWAIT: Around 200 people were arrested in a wide-scale crackdown on violators in Farwaniya Governorate over the weekend, the Interior Ministry said yesterday. "Farwaniya security directorate launched a crackdown in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, Farwaniya, Khaitan, Industrial Ardiya, Friday Market and Rai," the Interior Ministry said. And while the ministry did not disclose the number of people arrested in the crackdown, local reports quoting security sources said that the crackdown resulted in

the arrest of around 200 residency law violators, loose laborers and domestic helpers working in markets. The anonymous sources noted that crackdowns will continue "until security is established in the entire country and residency law violators are deported." Interior Ministry, manpower authority, environment authority and fire force personnel took part in the crackdown, the interior ministry said.

Police have arrested 118 people during a police



crackdown in Hawally Wednesday night. Police also arrested 64 residency law violators and eight juveniles during a campaign in Fahaaheel Industrial area earlier on Wednesday. On Tuesday, police carried out a similar campaign in Bneid Al-Qar, during which they arrested 96 people. Furthermore, the Interior Ministry announced during the weekend that Capital Governorate police arrested 17 people during a similar crackdown in Jaber Al-Ahmad.

News in brief

Earthquake north of Kuwait

KUWAIT: A 3.1-magnitude earthquake occurred in Rhoudhatain northeast of Kuwait yesterday, the Kuwait National Seismic Network (KNSN) said. In a statement, KNSN said that the quake happened at 3:18 am in Kuwait at a depth of seven kilometers. KNSN is an entity affiliated with the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR).

Cops sustain injuries

KUWAIT: A man attacked two policemen with a knife before he was placed under arrest, the interior ministry announced yesterday. The attack happened while police were placing the suspect under control after they responded to an emergency call reporting a man physically assaulting his parents, the interior ministry explained, adding that the officers are in stable condition. The suspect, who was likely under the influence of narcotics at the time of arrest, was taken to the proper authorities for further action, it added.

Murder threat

KUWAIT: Police arrested a Kuwaiti man who attempted to kill his ex-wife, according to a local report. A security source said the woman complained to Salmiya police that her ex-husband threatened to kill her and was following her. Police contacted the man, who denied his ex-wife's accusations, adding: "I am at a chalet and let her say whatever she likes". Policemen doubted his claims and told the woman to leave, assuring her that detectives will follow her. They discovered her ex-husband was following her and tried to force her to stop, so detectives arrested him.

More arrests

KUWAIT: The criminal security sector statistics during the week indicated an increase in activities to arrest violators. The statistics mentioned 68 drugs cases, the arrest of 79 suspects including five women, 29 thefts and the arrest of 37 suspected thieves, in addition to confiscating drugs and forgery and other cases.

Human rights diwan chief meets World Bank representative

KUWAIT: Chairman of Kuwait's Diwan of Human Rights Jassem Al-Mubarak said his agency attaches significance to strategic partnerships with international sustainable development agencies to achieve the 'Kuwait Vision 2035' goals, create a sustainable living environment and brush up Kuwait's international status.

Following a meeting with the World Bank's Resident Representative in Kuwait Ghassan Khoja, Mubarak said in a press statement yesterday that they had reviewed the diwan's role in realizing the vision of partnership between Kuwait and the bank to revamp the business climate and workers' conditions in the country. He added that his organization had monitored and followed the efforts of concerned bodies in giving workers a midday break in open places during summer.

Furthermore, he maintained that the diwan had requested health and preventive measures for workers amid the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Meanwhile, the World Bank's official said the bank closely monitors labor laws and legislation adopted in Kuwait and attentively looks at the principles of equal opportunities and gender equity in both public and private sectors in the country. He hoped that obstacles the Kuwaiti labor market is facing would be removed. —KUNA

WHO commends Kuwait's backing to Lebanon

BEIRUT: Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO) Dr Tedros Ghebreyesus on Friday touted Kuwait as a strategic partner to Lebanon in the health sector, citing its unremitting assistance to Lebanon to overcome its crises. Speaking while visiting Beirut, he said the State of Kuwait has provided immediate support to Lebanon in a bid to ease out the ramifications of its crises, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. In this context, Ghebreyesus appreciated Kuwait Red Crescent Society for having offered \$500,000 for providing virus vaccines to Lebanese people, and Syrian and Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. He added that Kuwait had contributed to the restoration of a public medicine store and several hospitals that were affected by the 2020 Beirut Port explosion, and to supplying medical equipment and serums to 11 laboratories. The WHO chief noted that Kuwait's unyielding backing to the needy people worldwide comes at a time when everyone needs to help each other. He emphasized that the WHO and other donors were working hard to respond to crises like the refugee problem, the Coronavirus pandemic, Beirut Port blast and the economic crisis in Lebanon. Ghebreyesus pointed out that the organization has provided public hospitals in Lebanon with over 500 nurses to attend to patients languishing in intensive care units. —KUNA

GCC foreign ministers firmly back Palestine's right for statehood

JEDDAH: Gulf Cooperation Council foreign ministers stressed their countries' firm position toward Palestine's right to have its own free state, with 1967 borders and East Jerusalem as its capital. In the final statement for GCC ministerial meeting held in Riyadh on Thursday, Secretary General Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf said, the Palestinian issue comes on top of all priorities for Arabs and Muslims, demanding the right to return for Palestinian refugees, along with accepting the two-state solution to resume the peace process negotiation.

The GCC ministerial meeting, chaired by Bahrain's Foreign Minister Dr Abdullah Al-Zayani, condemned the Zionist ongoing violations of the international law towards Palestinians, calling on the international community to take a firm action against the Zionist cruelties, the statement added. The GCC agreed to form an international investigation committee, according to UN's Human Right council resolution on July 22, 2021, regarding violations committed by the Zionist entity against Palestinians, the statement said.

Peace in Afghanistan

Meanwhile, the GCC foreign ministers voiced backing to the peace process in Afghanistan and the vital role of some Gulf states in facilitating the evacuation operations carried out, along with the concerned countries, from that country. The conferees affirmed GCC solidarity with Afghan people, urging the international community to shoulder its responsibilities in providing humanitarian support to Afghanistan, the communique said. They also extolled Qatar's contribution to re-open-

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: This picture taken on September 15, 2021 from Kuwait City shows a view of the moon in its waxing gibbous phase. — 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)

Prime Minister leaves to attend UN General Assembly meeting

KUWAIT: The Representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and his accompanying delegation left yesterday for New York to head Kuwait's delegation at the meetings of the 76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. His Highness the Prime Minister was accompanied by a high-level delegation that includes Foreign Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, as well as several senior officials from the Diwan of His Highness the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

His Highness was bid farewell at the airport by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Nazaha (Integrity) Enhancement Abdullah Yusef Al-Roumi, Head of the Prime Minister's Diwan Abdulaziz Dakheel Al-Dakheel and a number of senior state officials. —KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah prepares to leave yesterday for New York where he is set to head Kuwait's delegation at the 76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. —KUNA

AUB concludes internship program for LOYAC students

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank (AUB) concluded its summer internship program for LOYAC students for 2021, which is held annually in the bank's head office. The program includes a variety of specialized training and educational courses. AUB holds this program as part of its policy aimed at developing the skills of young and enhancing their expertise in the banking fields.

On this occasion, Naqeeb Amin, AUB's Human Resources General Manager said, "We have a close cooperation relationship with LOYAC, and in this context, we organized a summer internship program for LOYAC students, whereby we designed for them an intensive training program to help them gain practical experience by engaging in the actual environment of banking business and getting familiar with the work mechanism within the bank different departments. At the conclusion of the program, we grant certificates of appreciation to the students who exhibited commitment and willingness to learn and

ing Kabul airport. The council emphasized that the crisis in Afghanistan will be solved by the Afghans themselves. The ministers called on all countries to avoid interfering into Afghanistan's domestic affairs, stressing the importance of not using the country by any international terrorist group or exploiting its territories in smuggling drugs, according to the communique.

In the meantime, the ministers denounced the Houthi militia's ongoing drone and missile attacks on Saudi Arabia alongside attempts to disrupt maritime navigation off the Sea of Oman. The ministers particularly denounced the recent Iran-aligned Houthi attacks on the Saudi Arabia's Abha airport on August 30 and 31 as well as the Houthi targeting of residential areas in the eastern Saudi city of Dammam on September 4. They described the Houthi military escalation as a blatant violation of the international norms and laws.

The non-stop hostilities show Houthis' clear defiance of the international community and relevant international laws as well as their rejection of all international efforts to reach a peaceful settlement to the conflict in Yemen, the foreign minister suggested. They also urged the international community to shoulder its responsibility and take a decisive action towards the Houthi militia to stop the continued terrorist acts. The top diplomats expressed solidarity with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in face of all these threats and their countries' backing to all the measures the Kingdom takes to defend its security, stability, territories and people. They hailed the vigilance, high performance of Saudi Royal Air Defense Forces and the Saudi-Arab coalition to support legitimacy in Yemen and their role in intercepting and shooting down the drones and missiles fired by Houthis towards the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The ministers reiterated their condemnation of terrorism, extremism and violence in all forms and their determination to continue their effective role in the global coalition to defeat the so-called Islamic State group as well as their contributions to the regional and international endeavors to counter extremist groups and dry up their financial



KUWAIT: Naqeeb Amin and a group of HR employees during the LOYAC students' honoring.

work during the training course."

Naqeeb emphasized that summer internship programs are of great importance as they help develop the theoretical aspect delivered at universities through exercise and practical training, to enable students to better understand the nature of work in banking and financial sector.

Naqeeb added, "At AUB, we are committed to support youth through all means, within the framework our integrated training plan, which is concerned with training young national personnel and preparing them to hold specialized positions in banking business. The bank also

resources. They assailed the attack on an oil tanker off the Oman Sea coast on July 29, 2021, and the attempt to hijack another tanker near the coasts of the United Arab Emirates of Fujairah on August 3. The GCC ministers urged the international community to stop such acts and ensure unimpeded and safe navigation of commercial ships and oil tankers. They reaffirmed the GCC call for guaranteeing the safety of the international maritime movement and standing up against all attempts to disrupt navigation.

UAE islands

Furthermore, the GCC ministers reiterated firm opposition to Iran's continued occupation of three UAE islands. The final statement of the 149th session of the GCC foreign ministers' council renewed the GCC unwavering support to the UAE sovereignty over the three islands of Abu Musa, and the Greater and Lesser Tunbs. The UAE has unequivocal sovereignty over these islands, including their territorial waters, airspace and continental shelf, according to the statement. The council maintain its stance that the three islands are integral part of the UAE territories, and thereby deeming null and void any acts or practices by Iran on these islands, the statement stressed. It called on Iran to respond positively to the UAE endeavors to solve the dispute through direct negotiations or refer it to the International Court of Justice.

Regarding the relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran, the council reminded of its previous resolutions and basic principles of neighborliness, mutual respect and non-interference in the domestic affairs of others. It also highlighted the need of resolving any differences through peaceful means and avoiding use of, or threatening to use, force, and rejecting all acts of terrorism or sectarianism, based on the UN Charter and international law. The statement expressed hope that the new President of Iran Ebrahim Raisi would play a positive role in alleviating the tension and building trust between the GCC states, on one hand, and his country on the other in keeping with the stances of the GCC of which Iran was informed.

aims through its prominent role in providing excellent training programs for young people, to maintain its position as a leading banking institution, where it managed to produce many distinguished banking personnel over the course of its years of work since its establishment."

It is worth noting that AUB launches several initiatives that spread banking knowledge among school and university students. The bank also seeks to interact with young national skilled and talented personnel, develop their knowledge, attract promising elements from them, and encourage them to join the bank's teamwork in the next few years.

It also voiced hope that the talks on Iran's nuclear program would tackle Iran's destabilizing role in the region and its sponsorship of terrorist and sectarian militias as well as the country's missile program, and the safety of international navigation and oil facilities. The ministerial meeting denounced Iran's failure to meet its nuclear obligations through accelerating uranium enrichment above the level needed for peaceful purposes. It urged Iran to back down from this move and cooperate fully with the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Water security

On the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), the communique confirmed that water security of Egypt and Sudan is an integrated part of the Arab national security, rejecting any action or measure taken to negatively affect those countries' rights to the Nile River. The council renewed GCC support to all endeavors aiming to contribute to solving the dam's crisis, taking into consideration the interests of all parties. The communique further affirmed the importance of continuing talks amongst the three countries -Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia - to reach a fair and binding deal as soon as possible in accordance with the international laws and criteria.

In addition, the council showed GCC firm solidarity with Lebanese people to maintain Lebanon's security and stability amid these difficult exceptional conditions the country is going through. It called on Lebanese politicians to assume their responsibilities in restoring security, stability and development in Lebanon, and to cooperate with international organizations in carrying out required economic reforms.

On Libya's crisis, the ministerial meeting commended the efforts of the presidential council, the government of national unity and the joint military committee (5+5) in re-opening the coastal road between east and west of Libya. The conferees lauded endeavors of the Libyan political forum in ensuring the legal and constitutional frameworks and bases in preparation for holding the national polls due on December 24, the communique concluded. —KUNA



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Two men after Merkel's job

Tried and tested or comeback king?

BERLIN: The frontrunner to replace Angela Merkel as German chancellor is an experienced finance minister, but his opponent has the reputation of being a comeback king. The race to replace Merkel has boiled down to a competition between Vice Chancellor Olaf Scholz of the centre-left Social Democrats and Armin Laschet of Merkel's CDU-CSU conservative alliance. Here's a look at the two main pretenders to Merkel's throne.

Safe pair of hands

As finance minister and vice-chancellor under Merkel, Scholz is one of Germany's most influential politicians with a reputation for being meticulous, confident and fiercely ambitious. He enjoys a close relationship with Merkel and has even sought to position himself as the true Merkel continuity candidate, appearing on the cover of the Sueddeutsche Zeitung magazine adopting her famous "rhombus" hand gesture.

Nicknamed the "Scholzomat" for his robotic speeches, Scholz has hardly stood out for his charisma in the run-up to the election and has admitted himself that he is "not someone who is particularly emotional in politics". But the 63-year-old has also benefited from not making any embarrassing mistakes on the campaign trail. When he was attacked by Laschet during a TV debate over police searches car-

ried out at the finance ministry, Scholz kept his cool, accused Laschet of "twisting the facts", and was promptly voted the winner of the debate.

Born in the northern city of Osnabrueck, Scholz trained as a lawyer and specialised in labour issues before being elected to the national parliament in 1998. He married fellow SPD politician Britta Ernst that same year. He was the mayor of Hamburg for many years, overseeing the development of the wildly expensive but cherished Elbphilharmonie concert hall.

But generally speaking, he is seen as fiscally conservative and a staunch defender of Germany's famed budget discipline - an approach that has at times left him marginalized within his own workers' party. Scholz was overlooked in a leadership vote in 2019 in favor of two relatively unknown left-wingers, but has got behind the SPD's flagship policies in the election campaign, backing a planned wealth tax and an increase in the minimum wage.

Comeback king?

Laschet's election campaign has been marred by gaffes, but the affable Rhinelander has a reputation for endurance and what Der Spiegel magazine has described as an ability to "sit out" his opponents - a talent that may yet land him Germany's top job. The CDU chief won the conservatives' nomination to be chancellor candidate after a drawn-out battle with the

more popular Markus Soeder of the CSU, the CDU's Bavarian sister party.

Asked in a recent TV interview whether he thought he was often underestimated, Laschet replied that "many have certainly miscalculated". Laschet was born in Aachen, the spa city in western Germany near the border with Belgium and the Netherlands where his father fed the family digging for coal. "When you're down in the mine, it doesn't matter where your colleague comes from, what his religion is or what he looks like. What is important is, can you rely on him," he told party colleagues earlier this year.

Laschet, 60, has a reputation for pragmatism and the ability to unify, famously standing by Merkel during the fallout from Germany's 2015 refugee influx. "Polarizing is easy - anyone can do it," he told a party conference in January. "We have to speak plainly, but not polarize. We have to be able to integrate. Keeping a society together and bringing it together, that is hard work."

Laschet's hero is Charlemagne, the king of the Franks credited with uniting Europe whose empire was based in Aachen, and his family has even said they are direct descendants. The father-of-three was elected to the Bundestag German parliament in 1994 and to the European Parliament in 1999, and has been the state premier of North Rhine-Westphalia since 2017. — AFP

Violent clashes in Melbourne

MELBOURNE: Several police officers were wounded and hundreds of protesters were arrested in Australia's second-most-populous city yesterday in violent clashes at an anti-lockdown march. Officers used pepper spray and made over 200 arrests in Melbourne as several hundred attendees flouted stay-at-home orders and marched through an inner-city suburb. The illegal gathering comes as the city goes through its sixth lockdown since the pandemic started, with the wider state of Victoria reporting over 500 cases of COVID-19 yesterday.

Police said six officers were taken to hospital after they were pelted with projectiles and trampled in clashes with the crowd of around 700 people. "What we saw today was a group of protesters that came together, not to protest freedoms, but simply to take on and have a fight with the police," Victoria Police Commander Mark Galliot told media. Police attempted to reduce access to the centre of the city, blocking roads and stopping public transport in a bid to avoid a repeat of violent scenes at a rally that drew thousands last month.

But marchers then relocated, with footage from one incident showing a crowd charging through a police line as scuffles erupted along a tram route. Huge numbers of police managed to deter a similar gathering in Sydney, with officers swarming a park where the protest had been due to go ahead. New South Wales Police said they arrested around 20 people in the city, mainly across the public transport network, while several others were arrested in smaller gatherings around the state. — AFP

Yemen rebels execute nine

SANAA: Yemen's Houthi rebels said they executed nine people yesterday for involvement in the killing of one of their top leaders in a 2018 air strike claimed by Saudi Arabia. Saleh Al-Sammad was head of the Houthis' supreme political council and his death three years ago was seen as a major blow to the Iran-backed rebels who control Sanaa. The pro-rebel Saba news agency said the nine were shot by a firing squad at a square in the Yemen capital.

They were among 16 people convicted of involvement in his killing by a Houthi court. Seven other people - including Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and former US president Donald Trump - were tried in absentia by the court and also sentenced to death. Sammad was killed in April 2018 alongside six other people in an air strike in the western Yemeni province of Hodeida. "The general prosecution has carried out the death sentence against nine people involved in the murder" of Sammad, Saba reported.

"They were shot to death in Tahrir Square... in the presence of senior Houthi leaders and Sanaa residents," the agency added. Saudi Arabia said later that it carried out the air strike. "The heroes of the Royal Air Force were able to successfully target the leader

of the Houthi militia Saleh Al-Sammad," Saudi Arabia's ambassador to the United States, Prince Khaled bin Salman, tweeted at the time.

Prince Khaled said the strike was overseen by his brother the Saudi crown prince, after Sammad threatened a wave of missile strikes against Saudi Arabia. The Houthis are battling the Saudi-backed Yemeni government - and a military coalition spearheaded by Riyadh - for control of the impoverished country. The conflict began in 2014 when the Houthis seized Sanaa, prompting the Saudi-led coalition to intervene the following year. Since then, tens of thousands have been killed and millions pushed to the brink of famine in what the United Nations calls the world's worst humanitarian crisis. — AFP



Announcement to Tender No. (01 – 2021/2022)



For more details, please visit our website www.cmgs.gov.kw



License for the planning, development, completion, operation, maintenance, utilisation and investment of **Sheikh/ Jaber Al Ahmad Al-Sabah** Causeway sites comprising of North and South Islands and North and South Banks.



The Council of Ministers General Secretariat (CMGS) announces the issuance of Tender No. (2022/2021 – 01) regarding, License for the planning, development, completion, operation, maintenance, utilisation and investment of Sheikh/ Jaber Al- Ahmad Al-Sabah Causeway sites comprising of North and South Islands and North and South Banks for the benefit of the Public Authority for Roads & Land Transportation (PART) taking into consideration the specifications and general conditions contained within the tender documents, to be obtained from the (CMGS) – Seif Palace – Gate No.4, during the official working days.

International

Google pulls Russia's opposition app under 'extraordinary duress'

Telegram messenger blocks opposition bot during vote

SAN FRANCISCO: Google blocked new downloads of a Russian opposition voting app under "extraordinary duress," sources close to the matter said, as international outrage and concern built over the decision. The company faced public threats from the Russian government and private threats of serious criminal charges and incarceration of local staff, the source added, similar to pressure that hit Apple before it pulled the app. Allies of jailed critic Alexei Navalny accused the tech giants of "censorship" after they said a "Smart Voting" app advising supporters on how to vote out Kremlin allies had been removed from the companies' app stores.

Earlier Friday a source close to Apple's decision told AFP the iPhone maker had relented after authorities made arrest threats against its workers in Russia. Polls opened across the vast country on Friday after a year that saw a sweeping crackdown on President Vladimir Putin's opponents, with Russians given the option of voting online. The election for seats in the lower house State Duma, which runs until Sunday, comes after a year that has seen Navalny jailed, many of his allies arrested and his organizations banned.

Telegram blocks bot

In another development, jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny's "Smart Voting" bot has disappeared from the Telegram messenger app following similar moves by Apple and Google on Friday at the start of a three-day parliamentary vote in Russia.

The bot, which instructed Navalny supporters which candidate they should back to unseat Kremlin-aligned politicians, was removed after Telegram announced it would "limit the functioning of bots associated with election campaigns."

Telegram's Russia-born founder Pavel Durov said he was following Apple and Google, which "dictate the rules of the game to developers like us". In a post on his Telegram channel, he said the tech giants had "already this year" urged the encrypted messenger widely popular in Russia to remove information that violates the laws of individual



Navalny accuses tech giants of 'censorship'

countries or face exclusion from their app stores.

He said that removing election-related bots was related to Russia's ban on campaigning during voting. "We consider this practice legitimate and urge Telegram users to respect it," Durov wrote late Friday. But he added that "the blocking of applications by Apple and Google creates a dangerous



MOSCOW: A woman casts her ballot at a polling station during the second day of the three-day parliamentary and local elections in Moscow yesterday. — AFP

precedent that will affect freedom of speech in Russia and around the world." The election for seats in the lower house State Duma, which runs until Sunday, comes after a sweeping crackdown this year on President Vladimir Putin's opponents.

Navalny, who was detained in January and has seen his allies arrested or flee the country and his organizations banned, has nonetheless aimed to dent the Kremlin's grip on parliament from behind bars. His allies on Friday accused Apple and Google of "censorship", while sources told AFP that the companies had faced public threats from the

Russian government and private threats of serious criminal charges and incarceration of local staff.

After Telegram removed the "Smart Voting" bot, a Twitter account associated with Navalny posted links to Google Docs with recommended candidates, saying they were their last "remaining" tools. Yesterday, Navalny's team said that Google had demanded they delete the documents following a request from Russia's media regulator Roskomnadzor and would do so itself if they did not comply. Google did not immediately respond to a request for comment from AFP. — AFP

World on 'catastrophic' path to 2.7C warming

PARIS: A failure to slash global emissions is setting the world on a "catastrophic" path to 2.7 degrees Celsius heating, UN chief Antonio Guterres warned Friday just weeks before crunch climate talks. His comments come as a United Nations report on global emissions pledges found instead of the reductions needed to avoid the worst effects of climate change, they would see "a considerable increase". This shows "the world is on a catastrophic pathway to 2.7-degrees of heating," Guterres said in a statement.

The figure would shatter the temperature targets of the Paris climate agreement, which aimed for warming well below 2C and preferably capped at 1.5C above pre-industrial levels. "Failure to meet this goal will be measured in the massive loss of lives and livelihoods," Guterres said. Under the landmark 2015 Paris deal, nations committed to slash emissions, as well as to provide assistance to the most climate-vulnerable countries. But the window for action is narrowing as nations slow-walk their responses.

Last month a bombshell "code red" for humanity from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warned that Earth's average temperature will be 1.5C higher around 2030, a decade earlier than projected only three years ago. "We have to act, all of us, we have to act now," said US President Joe Biden on Friday, urging the world to bring its "highest" ambition to the UN climate conference in Glasgow in November. "Those who have not yet done so, time is running out," Biden said in the White House at the start of a virtual summit with nine foreign leaders.

'Wrong direction'

With only 1.1C of warming so far, the world has seen a torrent of deadly weather disasters intensified by climate change in recent months, from asphalt-melting heatwaves to flash floods and untamable wildfires. The IPCC says emissions should be around 45 percent lower by 2030 compared with 2010 levels to meet the 1.5C goal. But current pledges by 191 countries would see emissions 16 percent higher at end of the decade than in 2010 - a level that would eventually cause the world to warm 2.7C.

"Overall greenhouse gas emission numbers are moving in the wrong direction," said UN climate chief Patricia Espinosa in a press conference. But she said there was a "glimmer of hope" from 113 countries that had updated their pledges, including the United States and European Union. These new pledges, known as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), would see their emissions reduced 12 percent by 2030 compared to 2010.

Big emitters

The Paris deal included a "ratchet" mechanism for countries to review and toughen up their climate pledges every five years. Despite an end of 2020 deadline, many major emitters have yet to issue new targets. That includes China - the world's biggest emitter - which has said it will reach net zero emissions by 2060, but has not yet delivered its NDC to spell out emissions reductions by 2030.

Meanwhile updates from Brazil and Mexico were actually weaker than pledges they submitted five years ago, according to an analysis by the World Resources Institute. The UN report was a "damning indictment" of global progress on climate, particularly by G20 nations, responsible for around 80 percent of emissions, said Mohamed Adow, who leads the think tank Power Shift Africa. "They are the countries which have caused this crisis and yet are failing to show the leadership required to lead us out of this mess," he said. — AFP

Moderna vaccine edges Pfizer in new US research

WASHINGTON: A new study released by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on Friday is the latest to suggest the Moderna COVID vaccine confers better long-term protection against hospitalization than Pfizer. CDC researchers conducted an analysis of nearly 3,689 adults who were hospitalized with severe COVID from March 11 to August 15, 2021 - a period that precedes and includes the dominance of the Delta variant. Overall, 12.9 percent were fully vaccinated with the Moderna vaccine, 20.0 percent were vaccinated with Pfizer-BioNTech, and 3.1 percent were vaccinated with Johnson & Johnson.

Over the entire period, the Moderna vaccine was 93 percent effective against hospitalization, Pfizer



NORWOOD: Moderna vials sit on a table before they are loaded into syringes at a mobile COVID-19 vaccination clinic in Bridgeport, Connecticut. — AFP

was 88 percent effective, and J&J was 68 percent effective. The loss of efficacy against hospitalization for Pfizer was particularly pronounced: it fell from

91 percent in 14-120 days after vaccination to 77 percent more than 120 days after vaccination. By contrast, Moderna fell from 93 percent to 92 percent when comparing the same two periods.

The study also included a separate analysis of the levels of different types of antibodies provoked by the vaccines, taken from 100 volunteers. The Moderna vaccine elicited higher levels of antibodies compared to Pfizer and J&J for a key part of the virus' spike protein, which it uses to invade cells. There is accumulating research suggesting the Moderna vaccine's superiority over the Pfizer vaccine, including a previous CDC study released last week.

The reasons aren't fully clear, but it could be because the dosage levels are higher - 100 micrograms against 30. It could also be tied to the dosing interval, with the Pfizer shots given three weeks apart versus Moderna, which are given four weeks apart. The Food and Drug Administration was holding a meeting of leading independent experts on Friday to weigh the question of giving third doses of Pfizer to the general population, not just immune compromised people. — AFP

10,000 migrants packed under Texas bridge

DEL RIO: The mayor of Del Rio, Texas declared a state of emergency Friday after more than 10,000 undocumented migrants, many of them Haitians, poured into the border city in a fresh test of President Joe Biden's immigration policy. Del Rio Mayor Bruno Lozano said that the migrants were crowded in an area controlled by the US Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) beneath the Del Rio International Bridge, which carries traffic across the Rio Grande river into Mexico.

Video footage showed thousands under and around the flyover, adults and families. Many were Haitians hoping to stay in the United States as their country suffers after a large earthquake and continuing political turmoil, Lozano said. Hundreds continued to flow into Del Rio Friday, boosting up the number that Lozano put at 10,503 under the bridge late Thursday. All were awaiting processing, and hopefully a chance to remain in the United States, by the CBP, which has been overwhelmed by migrants crossing the border from Mexico as well as tens of thousands of refugees from Afghanistan. "The border patrol right now is so overwhelmed with the influx of migrants in the Del Rio sector," Lozano said.

Biden mum

The White House remained silent on the issue as political pressure mounted on Biden to address the influx. Both Republicans and Democrats called for quick action from Biden, whose administration recorded and mostly expelled more than 200,000 migrants at the border in both July and August, the

Beating video puts Bulgaria police violence in spotlight

SERGUEVA: A series of blows and then blackness: Bulgarian student Evgeni Marchev was taking part in his first demonstration in Sofia when police detained and beat him until he lost consciousness. The incident in July 2020 passed largely unnoticed until last month when CCTV footage of it was shown in parliament and then published in the media.

Despite a long history of police violence going unpunished in the EU country, the images have caused deep shock. Marchev's case - like others before it - may well have remained overlooked. Since 2000, the Strasbourg-based European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) has condemned Bulgaria in 46 cases related to the use of force by police or



AMBOASARY: A general view of the landscape along the National Road 13 (RN13) near Amboasary Atsimo on the RN13. The RN13 that links the city of Fort-Dauphin on the Southeast coast and the city of Toliara on the Southwest coast. — AFP

highest numbers in more than a decade.

Some said Biden's decision in late July - after Haitian president Jovenel Moise's assassination - to allow Haitians without US visas at the time to remain in the country offered an incentive for others to come. "10,503 illegal aliens are under this bridge tonight because Joe Biden made a political decision to cancel deportation flights to Haiti," Texas Republican Senator Ted Cruz tweeted on Thursday.

Meanwhile Democratic Representative Ilhan Omar, herself an immigrant, also pressed Biden to act. "This needs an urgent response from the Biden administration that is comprehensive and includes a cross-agency collaboration," she said in a statement. "Let's help these folks who are stranded there and act swiftly before this gut-wrenching situation grows to unmanageable level."

Haitians from South America

The number of Haitians crossing the southwest border into the United States has been surging for

inadequate investigation of alleged abuses. Only Romania, whose population is three times bigger than Bulgaria's 6.9 million people, did worse, with 64 condemnations.

However in response to police violence during mass anti-graft protests just over a year ago, Bulgaria's parliament has set up a committee to look into it. Thousands rallied mainly in Sofia against three-time prime minister Boyko Borisov who has been in office for almost a decade. He has since been unable to clinch another term after two elections this year returned a fragmented parliament with no one party able to form a coalition government. A snap poll has been set for November to try to resolve the political crisis.

'You will die'

On July 10, 2020, Marchev attended one of the big anti-Borisov demonstrations with friends in front of the prime minister's office. When suddenly bottles were hurled at police, they responded by grabbing the 23-year-old and other protesters from

months. Many come from South America, where they may have migrated to years ago, especially after the country's January 2010 earthquake. More are on the way. In Chiapas in southern Mexico earlier this week, Domingue Paul, a 40-year-old Haitian, told AFP he had traveled from Chile where he lived for five years, and was hoping to join a sister living in the United States.

Lozano's emergency declaration said the city expected thousands more migrants in the coming weeks and they were taking a toll on city resources and heightened the COVID-19 danger. It allows the city to request federal financial aid, and it also called on the state to deploy law enforcement officials to help with the situation. In a statement, the CBP said it was sending extra personnel and resources. "To prevent injuries from heat-related illness, the shaded area underneath Del Rio International Bridge is serving as a temporary staging site while migrants wait to be taken into Border Patrol custody," it said. — AFP

The crowd to drag them into the shadows of the government building, where they handcuffed and beat them with fists and kicks, the CCTV showed.

"A policeman kept saying: 'You will die.' I was terrified," Marchev, who remotely studies European law at a Dutch university, told AFP. He blacked out and was hospitalized with concussion. The beating still haunts him today, he said, adding that he didn't do anything to provoke the police. Probing the protest violence a year later, lawyer and parliamentary committee chairman Nikolay Hadjigenov dug out CCTV footage - previously unseen by the public - of Marchev's arrest.

The video shown in the committee and released to the media "sincerely shocked" the country, Hadjigenov said. Sofia prosecutors responded saying a probe had been opened in late 2020 into three out of 15 initial complaints of police violence during the protests. The chief prosecutor Ivan Geshev also denounced the "unacceptable violence", although he had previously defended police actions during the protests that also targeted him personally. — AFP

International

Girls excluded from returning to secondary school in Afghanistan

Taleban order only boys and male teachers back to classroom

KABUL: Girls were excluded from returning to secondary school in Afghanistan yesterday, after the country's new Taleban rulers ordered only boys and male teachers back to the classroom. The hardline Islamist group ousted the US-backed government last month, promising a softer brand of rule than their repressive reign in the 1990s, when women were mostly banned from education and work.

But the diktat from the education ministry was the latest move from the new government to threaten women's rights. "All male teachers and students should attend their educational institutions," a statement said ahead of classes which resumed yesterday. The statement, issued late Friday, made no mention of women teachers or girl pupils. Secondary schools, with students typically between the ages of 13 and 18, are often segregated by sex in Afghanistan.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, they have faced repeated closures and have been shut since the Taleban seized power. Since a US-led invasion ousted the Taleban in 2001, significant progress has been made in girls' education, with the number of schools tripling and female literacy nearly doubling to 30 percent - however, the change was largely limited to the cities. The United Nations said it was "deeply worried" for the future of girls' schooling in Afghanistan.

"It is critical that all girls, including older girls, are able to resume their education without any further delays. For that, we need female teachers to resume teaching," the UN's children's agency UNICEF said. Primary schools have already reopened, with boys and girls mostly attending separate classes and some women teachers returning to work. The new regime has also permitted women to go to private universities, though with tough restrictions on their clothes and movement.

Women's ministry closed

In a further sign that the Taleban's approach to



KABUL: Boys attend their class at Istiklal school in Kabul yesterday. — AFP

women and girls had not softened, they appeared to have shut down the government's ministry of women's affairs and replaced it with a department



Latest move from threaten women's rights

notorious for enforcing strict religious doctrine during their first rule. In Kabul on Friday, workers were seen raising a sign for the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice at the old Women's

Affairs building in the capital. Videos posted to social media showed women workers from the ministry protesting outside after losing their jobs.

No official from the Taleban responded to requests for comment. Although still marginalized, Afghan women have fought for and gained basic rights in the past 20 years, becoming lawmakers, judges, pilots and police officers. Hundreds of thousands have entered the workforce - a necessity in some cases as many women were widowed or now support invalid husbands as a result of decades of conflict. The Taleban have shown little inclination to honor those rights - no women have been included in the government and many have been stopped from returning to work. Meanwhile, a top United States general admitted it had made a "mistake" when it launched a drone strike against suspected Islamic State (IS) militants in Kabul last month, instead killing 10 civilians, including children. — AFP

North Africa virus cases plummeting

TUNIS: Weeks after a spike in coronavirus cases overwhelmed intensive care units across North Africa with severe oxygen shortages sparking public anger, case numbers are sharply declining. Here is a look at the situation in the four countries of the Maghreb-Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria and Libya-based on official figures collected by AFP.

Tunisia

Images of intensive care units overwhelmed with COVID patients in July sparked outrage in Tunisia, which has suffered the region's highest number of deaths per head from the virus, with around 24,500 in a population of 11.7 million. At its peak, the latest wave saw more than 55,000 new infections between 7-13 July—a weekly figure seven times the current rate. The past seven days saw 342 deaths from the virus—just a fifth of the toll in the last week of July. Authorities responded to the surge with a strict early evening curfew and travel restrictions. Neighboring Libya closed its border with Tunisia. Those measures have now been eased.

"There's the effect of mass vaccination of the population," said Hechmi Louzir, director of the Pasteur Institute in Tunis, who is a member of the country's scientific committee on the pandemic. He told AFP that up to 60 percent of the population could be fully vaccinated by October, adding that large numbers of infections had also boosted levels of immunity. AFP figures show that over the past week, Tunisia was vaccinating its population faster



RAS JEDIR, Libya: Photo shows cars crossing into Tunisia through the Libyan Ras Jdeir border crossing, after the two neighboring North African countries reopened their border crossing following a two months closure as Tunisia's coronavirus caseload soared. — AFP

than any other African country, with 0.81 percent of the population per day receiving a jab. More than a quarter of Tunisians are now fully inoculated.

Morocco

Morocco has seen 13,800 COVID deaths in its population of around 36 million, according to AFP figures. The kingdom is ahead of its Maghreb neighbors in inoculations, with 46.7 percent fully vaccinated. Morocco saw a surge in infections after easing a curfew and opening its borders to travelers in June. That allowed Moroccans in European countries hard hit by the highly infectious Delta variant to return home for summer holidays.

The caseload spiraled, with some 70,000 new cases over one week in early August. Authorities responded by imposing a new curfew and restrictions on movement and gatherings. Health ministry

official Abdelkrim Meziane Bellefquih said this week that infections were down for a fifth straight week. But in comments carried by the official MAP news agency, he warned that "high rates of critical cases and deaths continue to be recorded". The country has pushed back the start of the new school year to October 1 and has launched a vaccination drive among teenagers.

With an official toll of 5,650 deaths, Algeria announced a target in September to vaccinate 70 percent of its 43.9 million population by the end of the year. But AFP figures show that this week, barely 13 percent of the population had received a first vaccine jab, with fewer than 10 percent fully vaccinated. The country's caseload peaked in the last week of July with over 10,000 infections, but has since plummeted. While the first week of August saw 268 deaths, the last seven days saw 132. — AFP

Work-related accidents, illnesses kill nearly two million each year

GENEVA: Work-related illnesses and injuries kill nearly two million people annually, largely due to long working hours, the UN said Friday, warning that the pandemic was likely to worsen the situation. The first-ever joint assessment by the UN's health and labor agencies of the global disease and injury burden linked to jobs stretches from 2000 to 2016, so does not include the dramatic shifts in working conditions brought on by the COVID-19 crisis.

Some 1.9 million deaths worldwide were officially linked to work-related causes in 2016, up slightly from 1.7 million at the turn of the century, according to the report, which cautioned these were almost certainly underestimates. Long working hours "are the single deadliest occupational risk factor" World Health Organization (WHO) chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told a press conference in a video statement. Exposure to long working hours, defined as working 55 hours a week or more, was deemed responsible for some 750,000 deaths in 2016, the report said.

In all, the study examines 19 occupational risk factors, including exposure to carcinogens like asbestos, ergonomic factors like prolonged sitting and manual handling of loads. After long working hours, workplace exposure to gases, fumes and other air pollution was seen as the top risk, responsible for some 450,000 deaths in 2016. "It's shocking to see so many people literally being killed by their jobs," Tedros said,

describing the report as "a wake-up call to countries and businesses to improve and protect the health and safety of workers."

Long working hours kill

The report found that non-communicable diseases accounted for a full 82 percent of work-related deaths in 2016, with the greatest cause of death being chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, which killed 415,000 people that year. That was followed by strokes, at 400,000, and ischaemic heart disease at 350,000. Occupational injuries were responsible for 18 percent of all work-related deaths, and were estimated to have killed 360,000 people in 2016.

"All of these deaths are preventable," International Labor Organization chief Guy Ryder said in a video message. "We can and we must ensure safe and healthy workplaces for all workers." On a positive note, the global death rate from work-related causes shrank by 14 percent over the 16-year-period covered in the report, although a growing global population meant the number of deaths remained about the same.

The decrease from 39.9 to

34.3 deaths per 100,000 working age people was possibly a reflection of improvements in workplace safety measures, the report said. But while there was a sharp drop in the number of deaths caused by occupational injuries, deaths linked to long working hours surged over the same period. The death rate from heart disease associated with exposure to long working hours ballooned by 41 percent, while stroke deaths brought on by excessive work rose 19 percent, the report showed. — AFP

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News in brief

Explosions rock Jalalabad

KABUL: Two people were killed when three blasts struck the Afghan city of Jalalabad yesterday, at least one of which targeted a Taleban vehicle, in the country's first deadly attack since the United States withdrew. The hardline Islamist group stormed to power in mid-August, ousting the government and promising to restore security to the violence-racked country. "In one attack a Taleban vehicle patrolling in Jalalabad was targeted," a Taleban official who asked not to be named said. "Women and children were among the injured," he added. An official from the health department of Nangarhar Province told AFP that three people died and 18 were wounded, while several local media reported the attacks left at least two dead. Pictures taken at the site of the blast showed a green pick-up truck with a white Taleban flag surrounded by debris as armed fighters looked on. — AFP

Libya-Tunisia border reopens

RAS JDEIR BORDER CROSSING: Tunisia and Libya opened their shared border on Friday, two months after it was closed as Tunisia's coronavirus caseload soared. AFP reporters on both sides of the Ras Jdeir border post saw small numbers of travelers queuing to pass through. On the Libyan side, more than a hundred empty cargo trucks were waiting to cross and load up with Tunisian imports, particularly food. Tunisian products have been largely absent from Libyan shelves since the border was closed. Libya shut its land border and suspended flights between the two countries on July 8 citing the explosion in COVID-19 cases in Tunisia. But with the caseload rapidly dropping, officials on both sides agreed to reopen the frontier after Libyan transitional Prime Minister Abdulhamid Dbeibah met Tunisian President Kais Saied in Tunis on September 9. — AFP

Japan 'message in a bottle'

TOKYO: A message in a bottle released 37 years ago by Japanese high school students has been found—around 6,000 kilometers away in Hawaii. Members of a natural science club at Choshi High School in Chiba, east of Tokyo, released 750 bottles into the sea between 1984 and 1985 to investigate ocean currents. The bottles—which contained messages in English, Japanese and Portuguese asking the finder to contact the sender—have washed up in places as far-flung as the Philippines, Canada and Alaska. But none had been found since the 50th bottle was discovered in 2002 in Japan's southwestern Kagoshima Prefecture. The 51st bottle was discovered by a nine-year-old girl on a beach in Hawaii in June, the school announced, with the postcard-sized messages still largely legible. "I was really surprised," school vice principal Jun Hayashi told AFP on Friday. — AFP

CONDOLENCES



Mrs. Kunjunjamma Daniel

(Ex-Principal & Director of Indian School, Salmiya, Kuwait
Ex-Principal of Jabriya Indian School, Kuwait,
Eldest Sister of Late **Mr. M. Mathews**
(Ex-Managing Director of Sefeena Group of Companies)

**The Management & Staff of
Sefeena Group of Companies express our
Heartfelt Condolences & prayers to the
bereaved family.**

Business

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2021

IMF chief denies altering World Bank report to appease China

World Bank drops Doing Business report after irregularities found

WASHINGTON: IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva disputed an independent investigation which found that in her previous job at the World Bank, she pressed staff to alter a report to avoid angering China. Based on the findings, the World Bank announced it was immediately discontinuing its Doing Business report after the investigation found irregularities in the 2018 and 2020 editions.

Georgieva, a Bulgarian national who took the helm of the International Monetary Fund in October 2019, rejected its conclusions regarding her role. "I disagree fundamentally with the findings and interpretations of the Investigation of Data Irregularities as it relates to my role in the World Bank's Doing Business report of 2018," she said in a statement.

The allegations could damage her reputation, and provide grist for long-time US critics of the multilateral organizations and their treatment of China. "These are serious findings," the US Treasury said in a statement, noting it is "analyzing the report." "Our primary responsibility is to uphold the integrity of international financial institutions."

Georgieva said she briefed the IMF's board on the situation. The board is expected to meet to discuss the issue but it is unclear when. Justin Sandefur of the Center for Global Development, who has written extensively about the problems with the report's methodology, said: "We need to hear her side of the story, but it doesn't look great right now."

"For the head of the IMF to have been involved in data manipulation is a pretty damning allegation," he told AFP. "That does seem like a real hit on their credibility."

Changing China's ranking

The flagship report ranks countries based on their business regulations and economic reforms, and has caused governments to jockey for a higher spot to attract investors. According to the investigation, Beijing complained about its ranking of 78th on the list in 2017, and the next year's report would have shown Beijing dropping even further.

The Washington-based development lender's staff was preparing the 2018 edition while leadership engaged in sensitive negotiations to increase its lending capital, which hinged on an agreement with China and the United States. In the final weeks before the report was released in late October



Kristalina engineered a cover-up: Romer

2017, the World Bank's then-president Jim Kim and Georgieva, at the time the bank's CEO, asked staff to look into updating the methodology in regard to China, according to the investigation by law firm WilmerHale.

Kim discussed the rankings with senior Chinese officials who were dismayed by the country's ranking, and his aides raised the issue of how to improve

what software millions of people (use)... the App Store will continue to be a convenient chokepoint for government censorship and crackdowns on dissent," said Evan Greer, director of digital advocacy group Fight for the Future.

The digital world has been an incubator for opposition from the Arab Spring to Hong Kong's pro-democracy protests by giving people a way to communicate and organize movements rapidly. Yet that same technology can be turned against people, as was demonstrated by the scandal around Pegasus, a hugely invasive spyware that can essentially turn a phone into a pocket listening device.

Limits of Big Tech

Allegations that the software has been used by governments worldwide to eavesdrop on human rights activists, business executives and politicians sparked a global uproar in July. In the case of Russia, pressure has been building after Moscow accused the US tech giants of election interference and demanded they remove the app. "This demonstrates the limits of Big Tech to resist crackdowns with regards to dissent, in Russia and elsewhere, during elections and outside them," said David Levine, an election integrity fellow at think tank Alliance for Securing Democracy.

Sources close to the decision to pull the opposition app said both companies faced threats of criminal charges or the jailing of staff and general "bullying" from authorities.

Levine noted this type of escalating pressure could become a "page in the playbook" for repressive governments. The firms are for-profit, yet because of their global reach and key role in mass communication, can end up being called on to combat hate, lies and repression on their



PARIS: In this file photo taken on May 18, 2021, International Monetary Fund Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva speaks during a joint press conference at the end of the Summit on the Financing of African Economies in Paris. —AFP

it, according to the summary of the probe, released by the World Bank. It is considered one of Kim's signature achievements that he shepherded a deal for a \$13 billion increase in World Bank resources. The bargain required support from the US president at the time Donald Trump, who opposed concessional lending to China, and from Beijing, which agreed to pay more for loans.

Amid the pressure from upper management, staff changed some of the input data, which boosted China's ranking in 2018 by seven places to 78 — the same as it was the previous year, according to the investigation that analyzed 80,000 documents and interviewed more than three dozen current and former employees of the lender.



devices or platforms.

As a result, Big Tech can and will get entangled in these type of fights on delicate matters with the governments of places where they do business. "Giant IT companies are going to have to think about how they operate in these markets, like how far they'll go in terms of complying and cutting off the freedom of people to see things," said Kathryn Stoner, a Stanford political science professor.

Especially for social media companies like Facebook, the role of information gatekeeper is one that the firms have played with widely varying outcomes. The case in Russia, though, has resonated in particular because it touches on something deeply personal, which also has tremendous consequences. "This is the government going into your house and saying you cannot talk about voting against us," Isabel Linzer, a Research analyst at NGO Freedom House, said. "That is as much election interference as it would be to go and stuff a ballot box," she added. —AFP

Critics warn of Apple, Google 'chokepoint' repression

WASHINGTON: The global dominance of tech giants serves as a convenient online chokepoint for authoritarian governments to crack down on dissent or rig elections, critics of Apple and Google said Friday. The companies were facing international outrage after pulling a Russian opposition voting app off their online marketplaces in response to authorities' escalating pressure, including arrest threats.

Google and Apple, whose operating systems run on 99 percent of the world's smartphones, have a stranglehold on the markets for the applications that allow users to do everything from watch movies to hail a ride. "The app stores are the new frontier for censorship," Natalia Krapiva, tech legal counsel at rights group Access Now told AFP. "We're witnessing a new stage of assault on digital rights."

The companies face a growing pile of new legislation, legal trouble and regulators scrutiny over worries their dominance is a competition-killing monopoly. Concerns recently had been about consumers' choice and app developers ability to avoid paying Apple an up to 30 percent cut on purchases made via its App Store. But after an app advising opposition supporters on how to vote out Kremlin allies in Russia's parliamentary election was removed from the app stores of both Apple and Google, advocates warned of another threat.

"As long as Apple maintains a stranglehold over

UK retailers face supply crunch as Christmas looms

LONDON: UK retailers are facing a double whammy of sliding sales and global supply crunch, making it tough for stores to obtain goods ahead of the Christmas shopping season, data showed Friday. Retail sales dropped 0.9 percent in August from the prior month, with the grocery sector hit by people returning to restaurants and pubs after the lifting of virus curbs, the Office for National Statistics said in a statement.

A significant number of retailers are additionally unable to source enough products because of the supply crunch caused in large part by a shortage of lorry driver owing to COVID and Brexit fallout.

The ONS said on Friday that 6.5 percent of retail firms were unable to obtain materials, goods or services needed from within the UK in the two weeks to August 22. Department stores were the hardest hit at 18.2 percent, followed by clothing stores at 11.1 percent.

Economists said Friday's gloomy news spells Christmas trouble for retailers. "A perfect storm of labor shortages, supply chain issues and increased demand will continue to test retail leaders," said Oliver Vernon-Harcourt, head of retail at accountancy group Deloitte. "Christmas will be impacted by these headwinds; there will very likely be shortages in some categories which will force consumers to make different choices."

The ONS added that almost 9.0 percent of retail businesses were forced to change suppliers or find alternative solutions. "Managing price increases and stock shortages will be one of the main challenges retail leaders will have to address in the coming months," added Vernon-Harcourt.

The ONS said food store sales suffered in August as a result of the recovering hospitality industry, which was shuttered by lockdowns during much of the pandemic but reopened earlier this year.



LONDON: British retail sales dropped 0.9 percent in August from the prior month, with the grocery sector hit by people returning to restaurants and pubs after the lifting of virus curbs.

Motor fuel sales however rose on the month as people ventured out more after the economy fully reopened in July. Overall retail sales are 4.6 percent higher than before the start of the deadly coronavirus outbreak. However, Britain's economic recovery is flattening as a result of the stubborn pandemic, supply chain bottlenecks and the elevated cost of

commodities. The economy grew at just 0.1 percent in July, while annual inflation spiked in August to a nine-year peak of 3.2 percent. "The decline in retail sales volumes... suggests that the stalling in the economic recovery in July continued into August," noted economist Paul Dales at research consultancy Capital Economics. —AFP

'For multilateralism'

Georgieva chastised a World Bank senior official for "mishandling the Bank's relationship with China and failing to appreciate the importance of the Doing Business report to the country," the report said. After the changes were made, she thanked him for "doing his part for multilateralism." Georgieva later visited the home of the manager in charge of the report to retrieve a copy, and thanked them for helping to "resolve the problem."

Paul Romer, a Nobel Prize winner who served as World Bank chief economist at the time, resigned in January 2018 after telling a reporter that the methodology for the ranking had been changed in a way that could give the impression political considerations affected the results, notably for Chile. At the time, the World Bank strenuously denied any political influence over rankings.

Romer told AFP in an interview Thursday that during his World Bank tenure he was unaware of Georgieva pushing staff on China, though he said he had "suspicions."

Regarding the rankings, he said that when he raised those questions, "Kristalina engineered a cover-up, a whitewash." "I was reporting to people who lacked integrity. It was intolerable," Romer said. "The kind of intimidation this report describes was real."

The investigation also found "improper changes" in the 2020 report affecting the rankings of Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Azerbaijan. Nadia Daar, head of Oxfam International's Washington office, applauded the decision to scrap the report, saying the index "encouraged governments to adopt destructive policies that worsen inequality." —AFP

China applies to join trans-Pacific free-trade pact

BEIJING: China has formally applied to join a major trans-Pacific trade partnership, its commerce ministry said late Thursday, despite rising geopolitical tensions with member country Australia. Signed by 11 Asia-Pacific countries in 2018, the partnership is the region's biggest free-trade pact and accounts for around 13.5 percent of the global economy.

"On September 16, Minister of Commerce Wang Wentao submitted China's official application to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP)," the ministry said in an online statement. It added the application was submitted via a letter to New Zealand's trade minister Damien O'Connor and that both Wentao and O'Connor had a phone conversation about follow-up work for China's membership application.

China had already signaled interest in joining the CPTPP multiple times, with Premier Li Keqiang saying in March that the world's second-largest economy "will actively consider joining".

The CPTPP is the successor to a previous trans-Pacific trade pact that the United States withdrew from under Donald Trump in 2017. The Chinese Embassy of Australia this week lobbied Canberra to join, writing to an Australian parliamentary inquiry that "China's accession to the CPTPP would yield large economic benefits," Bloomberg reported.

However, all eleven members of the CPTPP would need to reach a consensus to allow Beijing to join—a tricky prospect during the tumultuous geopolitical dispute with Canberra that has seen China impose tariffs on a range of Australian goods including wine and barley.

Australia asked the WTO on Thursday to rule against tariffs on wine exports to what was once its largest market. On Wednesday, Canberra unveiled a strategic military partnership with the US and UK that would provide it with nuclear-armed submarines in a bid to counter Chinese influence in the Indo-Pacific. China blasted the alliance as "extremely irresponsible".

Foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said on Thursday that "the export of highly sensitive nuclear submarine technology to Australia by the US and the UK proves once again that they are using nuclear exports as a tool for geopolitical game and adopting double standards." —AFP

Business

Biden says huge spending plan can redefine US 'trajectory'

Rebuilding US economy in the wake of COVID-19 shutdowns is 'an opportunity'

WASHINGTON: President Joe Biden said he is confident Congress will pass a mammoth middle class spending plan that can "change the trajectory" of the United States. In a speech at the White House, Biden said rebuilding the US economy in the wake of COVID-19 shutdowns is "an opportunity to be the nation we know we can be."



\$3.5 trillion in spending proposed

Making the case for some \$3.5 trillion in spending on social services, like education, child care and climate crisis issues, Biden said "we're at an inflection point in this country—one of those moments where the decisions we make can change the trajectory of our country for years or decades to come."

Biden also argued for a series of tax increases aimed at corporations and the very wealthy, saying that loopholes allow America's richest entities and individuals to end up paying almost no income tax. "It's long overdue. I'm not out to punish anyone. I'm a capitalist... All I'm asking is you pay your fair share," he said. "It's about the super wealthy finally beginning to pay what they owe."

The Democrat is banking on this message of fairness to get him across the finish line in Congress, where his party holds a razor thin majority over a Republican opposition showing no desire to compromise. The \$3.5 trillion social spending package would come on top of an approximately \$1 trillion infrastruc-

ture plan for things like roads and bridges.

Republicans have agreed to support that smaller bill—an extremely rare case of bipartisanship that Biden also hopes to use as proof of his claims to have tried to unite the country.

Hammered at home and abroad over the messy withdrawal from Afghanistan, where he ended America's lost 20-year war against the Taliban, Biden is keen to pivot to domestic issues and secure Democrats a major victory ahead of next year's congressional elections. A big domestic win would also help resuscitate his presidency, which after a strong start looks bogged down by the Afghanistan fallout, a complicated economic recovery after COVID shutdowns, and a resurgence of the pandemic thanks to the Delta variant of the coronavirus.

With an average approval rating of 46 percent, according to FiveThirtyEight, Biden is one of the most unpopular presidents at this point in the first term in modern history—even if he is way ahead of where Donald Trump was at the same mark with 38.8 percent approval.

Hard bargaining

Biden says his "Build Back Better" plan will tilt the economy in favor of ordinary Americans after years of growing wealth gaps and a fraying of basic social services like education. It's a message with broad appeal, but Democrats are squabbling over how far to push it, with many content with the \$3.5 trillion price tag, leftist leaders wanting even more, and some moderates insisting on less than half.

With Democrats unable to afford losing a single vote in the 50-50 Senate and little more than that in the almost equally tight House of Representatives, Biden's entire agenda hangs in the balance.

The key Senate votes are Democratic moderates Joe Manchin and Kyrsten Sinema, who have cold feet



WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden speaks about the economy and the middle class, in the East Room of the White House in Washington, DC. — AFP

about the higher price. Under pressure from his party to become more personally involved, Biden met privately with both Sinema and Manchin at the White House on Wednesday.

The administration also touted a letter of support signed by 15 Nobel economics prize winners who say his social spending plan will promote "success in the 21st century."

However, Republicans are playing hardball. They not only refuse to countenance the multi-trillion-dollar package but sense a chance to deal the Biden presidency a severe blow ahead of next year's polls, when

they hope to take control of Congress. In addition to trying to block the big spending package—while agreeing to the smaller, hugely popular infrastructure bill—Republicans are threatening to cause havoc by blocking approval of an increase to the national debt. For years this has been largely a technicality and Republicans agreed to relax borrowing restrictions repeatedly when Trump was president. Refusing to vote for it in the coming weeks will force the Democrats to scramble to find ways to avoid a funding crisis that could trigger a US default and plunge the economy into turmoil. —AFP

China losing battle to sell its 'win-win' deals to Congolese

KINSHASA: Much has ground to a halt during the coronavirus pandemic, but not the march of Sino-Congolese friendship. Or so the Chinese embassy in Kinshasa is keen to show, amid growing scrutiny of Beijing's activities in the mineral-rich nation.

On the Boulevard Triomphal in Kinshasa, opposite the People's Palace, work is still under way on the gigantic future Central African Cultural and Arts Centre—a fact that the Chinese embassy took to social media to highlight. "The COVID-19 pandemic has stopped many things, but not the construction" of this China-funded center, "a new symbol of Chinese-Congolese cooperation", the embassy tweeted on Thursday, with photos to back it up. For several weeks, China's diplomats have been responding to the wave of government decisions and positions seen as hostile to China's very visible presence in the DRC, to negative publicity about its operations in the crucial mining sector, as well as to criticism about failure to follow through on its commitments.

The marked change in tone was set in May when Tshisekedi announced his intention to review what he says are badly negotiated mining contracts agreed by Kabila. Kabila was in power from 2001 to early 2019, but his influence only really disappeared two years later, when Tshisekedi ended a cumbersome coalition agreement. "It is not normal that those with whom the country has signed exploitation contracts get rich while our people remain poor," he said in May.

Showdown or negotiating tactic?

The DRC's enormous mineral reserves are critical to global supplies of lithium and cobalt, used in cell batteries and electric vehicles, tantalum, tin and gold in electronic devices, and copper for power lines and uranium. Yet despite the huge trove of wealth, 73 percent of the nation's 80 million people lived on less than \$1.90 a day, the World Bank estimated in 2018. The impact of the coronavirus is believed to have made the



The vital resources sector is a source of growing tension between Kinshasa and Beijing. — AFP

situation even worse. With Chinese companies the dominant players in DR Congo's resources sector, many saw Tshisekedi's remarks as heralding a showdown with Beijing, just as Kinshasa was drawing closer to Washington.

Others, however, see the move as more of a negotiating tactic. In August, the US agreed a \$1.6 billion package of aid for the DRC aimed at strengthening public institutions, improving access to water and electricity, and promoting small businesses and agriculture.

China, on the other hand, has long been criticized for attaching strings to its aid for developing nations.

In the wake of the presidential speech, announcements have accelerated since early August. In particular, Tshisekedi ordered a review of the shareholding of state-owned mining company Gecamines in a major copper and cobalt deposit majority owned by Hong Kong-listed China Molybdenum. A commission will assess the extent of Tenke Fungurume Mining's reserves to allow the state to regain a fair share of its rights, the government has said.

Even more dramatically, Tshisekedi called for a review of the 2008 deal under which China secured

rights to crucial minerals including cobalt and copper in return for building infrastructure.

'Strategic partnership'

After years of delays, complaints over poor quality and environmental and rights impacts, it seems the Congolese government believes the deal hasn't lived up to its promise. Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesman Zhao Lijian has defended the "strategic partnership", which he said has made it possible to promote "the development of the local mining industry, contribute to the financing of local communities and develop employment".

But China's words appear to hold little sway with Congolese public opinion, which seems increasingly inclined to listen to criticism from the ground where Chinese firms are operating.

The governor of South Kivu has suspended the gold mining activities of Chinese companies which, he said, do not respect the rules of the mining code, the environment or human rights—China's embassy has vowed to crack down on such abuses. A documentary accusing China of colonizing the DRC has also added to the problem. —AFP



WASHINGTON: Securities and Exchange Commission Chair Gary Gensler has described the cryptocurrency industry as "the Wild West." — AFP

Regulators frown as crypto players move into banking

WASHINGTON: With offers of loans and interest-earning accounts, more new cryptocurrency firms are straying into the world of traditional banks, to the consternation of US financial regulators. Government agencies have been cracking down recently, trying to regain control of the largely unregulated sector.

Digital currency exchange Coinbase in early September went public with a complaint about a threat from top US markets cop the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) to sue the company if it goes ahead with its lending platform. Coinbase Lend would allow individuals to earn interest when they loan out their digital currencies, a service offered by several other crypto players for several years.

In July, prosecutors in several US states went after another platform, BlockFi, demanding it put an end to its interest-bearing accounts, which the company says can earn up to eight percent annually at a time when most traditional banks offer just 0.01 percent for savings. "Crypto is the new shadow bank," Senator Elizabeth Warren told The New York Times.

"It provides many of the same services, but without the consumer protections or financial stability that

back up the traditional system," said the senator, a long-time crusader for tougher financial regulations to safeguard individuals.

These platforms fall into somewhat of a gray area. Since they are not classified as banks or lending institutions, they are outside the reach of the Federal Reserve or the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, the main US bank regulators. "They are offering banking products. But as a matter of US law, banking law doesn't apply to Coinbase," said Dan Awrey, professor of law and financial regulation at Cornell University.

However, he said securities law can apply to cryptocurrency platforms, something SEC Chair Gary Gensler agrees with. While elected officials in

Congress are only just drafting bills to deal with these firms, and central bankers are debating their role, the former Goldman Sachs investment banker is taking action. "I think it's more like the Wild West," Gensler said of the industry at a Senate Banking Committee hearing on Tuesday, noting he was interested particularly in its lending features.

'Ill-fitting law'

Antoni Trenchev, co-founder of the England-based Nexo platform, said "it's a matter of time" before the SEC "reaches all companies operating in crypto." Nexo says its customers can earn up to 12 percent annually for term deposits, or borrow using their cryptocurrency holdings as collateral.

But the push from regulators is a sign "our industry is becoming mainstream" and poised for more growth, he told AFP. Good regulation "will drastically increase people's faith and sense of security in crypto," which will bring in more potential customers. "I also don't see it as a bid to control our industry. It's simply a means of protecting consumers which is ultimately what regulators are designed to do," Trenchev said.

Nevertheless, there is concern that the SEC is quick to prohibit certain products. The agency has gone after many crypto sales, saying they are actually securities which must be approved. "Unfortunately, it is not uncommon for companies to find themselves in a position where a regulator says 'no' without explaining the rationale behind its decision," said Hailey Lennon, attorney at Anderson Kill and former legal officer in charge of regulatory issues at Coinbase. —AFP

OECD: Rich nations make dismal progress in climate finance

PARIS: Rich countries are making little progress towards meeting their pledge to provide \$100 billion a year to poorer nations to combat climate change, the OECD said Friday. Developing countries, which bear the greatest impact from climate change, received \$79.6 billion in 2019, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) said in its latest report on the issue. That is more than \$20 billion below what wealthy nations promised to give every year starting from 2020 to help poorer countries curb their carbon footprint and cope with future climate impacts.

The 2019 figure is the most recent available and marked a two percent increase from the year earlier, a sharp slowdown from the rates of earlier years. And watchdog groups have warned that even those numbers may be inflated. "The limited progress in overall climate finance volumes between 2018 and 2019 is disappointing, particularly ahead of COP26 (the UN climate summit in November)," OECD Secretary-General Mathias Cormann said in a statement.

"While appropriately verified data for 2020 will not be available until early next year it is clear that climate finance will remain well short of its target," he said. "More needs to be done. We know that donor countries recognize this," he said, adding that Canada and Germany are moving forward a plan to mobilize the additional finance required to reach the \$100 billion annual goal. Meanwhile, the impact of the coronavirus pandemic is still unknown. Low income countries have been hit particularly hard by the COVID-19 crisis, with waves of disease and lockdowns wreaking economic havoc, even as climate change-driven disasters and threats continue to mount.

Public climate finance from developed countries accounted for the lion's share of the 2019 figure, some \$62.9 billion, with another \$2.6 billion in government-backed export credits. The rest, some \$14 billion, came from private investment mobilized by public mechanisms. The 2009 UN climate summit in Copenhagen mandated that poorer nations were to receive the \$100 billion and the pledge was renewed in the 2015 Paris Agreement. But where the money was to come from and how it would be allocated were not spelled out, which has made tracking progress toward that goal both difficult and disputed. —AFP

Moody's upgrades Portugal's debt rating

LISBON: Moody's Investors Service on Friday upgraded Portugal's debt ratings a notch to Baa2 from Baa3 citing the country's "robust recovery" boosted by support from the European Union. "Looking beyond 2021, the Next Generation EU (NGEU) funds will provide important support to medium-term growth," the ratings agency said.

The EU in June approved Lisbon's reform plan, which unlocked 16 billion euros in funding.

"The Portuguese economy is experiencing a robust rebound from the pandemic recession in spite of ongoing challenges in the tourism sector," the statement said. The report noted that employment has normalized and aided consumption, while "stronger rebounds in key export markets are supporting a recovery in goods exports." Moody's shifted the debt outlook to stable from positive. — AFP

Business

Investor interest in GCC at all-time high as curbs near end: TBY CEO

The Business Year releases a series of reports documenting trends across region during COVID-19

KUWAIT: For countries across the GCC, the COVID-19 pandemic served only to hasten plans for digitalization and wider schemes to diversify away from oil and gas.

The Business Year has released a series of publications over recent months, each detailing various aspects of the GCC's pandemic experiences. Unprecedented interest in these reports has afforded us a window into the thoughts and plans of international investors as countries across the region ease COVID-19 restrictions.

Special Report: Resilience & Management in Times of Crisis featured interviews with the

public- and private-sector leaders who helped Kuwait to navigate the early days of the crisis, with an eye on future growth sectors. A series of reports also detailed Saudi Arabia's experiences dealing with the double-edged sword of COVID-19 and fluctuating oil prices, with Special Report: Saudi Arabian Leadership Through COVID-19 documenting the business personalities behind the country's world-beating response to the pandemic, Special Report: Saudi Arabia Resilience & Growth detailing the factors that helped the kingdom remain robust even at the height of the crisis, and the more-recent Special

Report: Digital Kingdom bringing together dozens of interviews, as well as news and analysis, to paint a picture of Saudi Arabia's digital economy in the wake of COVID-19.

Elsewhere, special reports in the form of Special Report: Dubai Real Estate & Construction and Special Report: Dubai & the Future of Trade helped to shine a spotlight on the sectors that make Dubai tick during a time of crisis, while Special Report: Education in Bahrain asked how the education sector on the island nation responded to COVID-19, and the readiness of the sector to benefit from newfound interest online.

Finally, The Business Year: Qatar 2021 and The Business Year: Saudi Arabia 2021, the latest in our series of flagship publications, both include over 180 pages of in-depth interviews with major figures across the economy, as well as articles and analysis, detailing sector by sector the challenges and opportunities that exist in the wake of COVID-19.

As 2021 rolls on, and eventually gives way to 2022, The Business Year will continue to publish meaningful, actionable resources for global investors looking at the GCC. Find all of our reports online at thebusinessyear.com.



Ayse Valentin

AUB congratulates winners of Al-Hassad draw

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank (AUB) held the weekly draw of 15 September 2021 of Al-Hassad Islamic account, the first Islamic prizes account in Kuwait which offers over 750 prizes over a 12 month period and provides numerous features. Such features include the simplest and easiest savings program, highest number of winners, largest prize value, loyalty multipliers, and unique account opening feature online with all ease with instant deposit option.

The bank announced 20 winners of KD 1,000 as follows: Badreyah Sulaiman Al-Shayji, Sarah Abdullateef Al-Saleh, Nafea Houry Al-Dhafiri, Basel Ali Al-Sanea, Ayed Fahad Al-Mutairi, Sarah Athal Majed, Sabeeh Mohammed Umer, Hussain Ali Jawahri, Abdulrahman Mahdi Al-Mutairi, Khaled Samy Al-Farhan, Tareq Khaled Al-Maki, Jassim Mohammad Al-Dosari, Mujahed Mohammad A Al-Jash, Mohammad Abdullaheem Al-Saffar, Abdullah Mahmoud Al-Bostan, Abdulrahim Abdulkarim Abdulghaffar, Fatemah Hamlan Al-Hamlan, Adaweyah Hussain Al-Ibrahim, Bader Habeeb Al-Awadh and Ayman Ahmad Al-Hakeem.

The draws of Al-Hassad include several cash prizes, such as KD 100,000 each Eid and the grand quarterly draw of KD 250,000 prize which continues to be a key aspiration for customers who are wishing to fulfill their dreams. Al-Hassad offers also 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.

ABK launches 'Ask Sanad' Chatbot service

KUWAIT: In line with its 'Simpler Banking' strategy, Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) yesterday announced the launch of its virtual assistant "Ask Sanad", an Artificial Intelligence (AI)-driven chatbot to service clients. This advanced service provides relevant and contextual responses to customer queries, allowing them to make transactions in the chat window of the mobile application.

Faisal Al-Tamimi, Head of the Call Centre at ABK commented: "Attention to customer experience is powering ABK to go beyond traditional financial services. "Ask Sanad" can perform diverse actions such as fund transfers, bill payments, in addition to a host of other services including opening new savings accounts, requesting a cheque book, and international and local transfers."

ABK's innovative chatbot offers customers yet another way to connect with the Bank in response to the health and safety measures prompted by COVID-19 as contactless transactions have accelerated the consumer shift towards using digital platforms to fulfill key banking requirements.



Faisal Al-Tamimi

Burgan Bank celebrates its Harvard Alumni executives

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced the graduation of three executives from Harvard Business School Program for Leadership Development (PLD). The success of Burgan's new Harvard Alumni is an achievement that reflects the effectiveness of the bank's unique culture and strategic commitment to attracting and retaining talented individuals as well as investing in their professional development.

Halah El Sherbini, the Group Chief Human Resources & Development Officer, said "Burgan has been steadily working on growing its pool of Kuwaiti executives, supported by an innovative visionary approach to talent acquisition and management. The bank has an ambitious employee development strategy that provides programs tailored to support talented employees to become the future leaders of the banking sector. These learning and development programs are designed to empower the employees and enhance their innovation and leadership capabilities so they can fully engage in supporting the bank's development and competitive edge, as well as in creating impactful corporate practices that would steer forward the digital transformation journey."

The three alumni, Mohammad Najeeb Al-Zanki, Head of Corporate Banking Group, Shayma Hisham Al-Sultan, Unit Head at Corporate Banking, and Dalal Yousef Al-Sane, Head of Debt Capital Markets, who were interviewed about their participation in the program, highlighted the main learning outcomes of the program centered on leadership, innovation and change. They also praised the bank's various integrated learning and development programs that support employees' professional growth and enhance their capabilities to navigate market changes and challenges.

Mohammad Najeeb Al-Zanki -Head of Corporate Banking- AGM -Corporate Banking Group

Can you tell us more about the Leadership Development Program?

Al-Zanki: I have completed the program both on campus and through the advanced online learning interactive tools of Harvard Business School digital platform. The program consists of five highly integrated modules that focus on handling cross-functional challenges of corporate leadership, leading

organizational change and high performing teams, developing personal leadership philosophy and capitalizing on opportunities in the digital transformation era.

How did you benefit from the program and how was your personal learning experience?

Al-Zanki: Since 2014, I have completed 3 HBS programs, one of which was the Program for Leadership Development. The PLD offers the opportunity to experience the Harvard method of acquiring skills through live business cases. I have gained an extended knowledge and a deeper understanding of the concepts introduced in the program. The on-campus cross cultural networking experiences were also particularly beneficial for me. Therefore, I encourage all aspiring banking leaders to attend this program and similar learning events. It is also important to highlight Burgan's pioneering position in extensively investing in the development of employees, the organization's most valuable asset that plays a significant role in the successful implementation of the bank's strategy.

Shayma Hisham Al-Sultan - Unit Head- Services & Energy Unit - Corporate Banking Group

How does the PLD program support Burgan's employees learning and development plans?

Al-Sultan: This high-level learning program is part of Burgan's Ro2ya Talent strategic initiative that focuses on developing the skills and capabilities of Kuwaiti talented bankers to enhance their preparedness to assume future leading roles in the bank. Along with the other alumni, I am part of the Eagles team that is following a training and learning path designed by the HR Learning & Talent Development team under Ro2ya program.

The Harvard Business School program has been a particularly motivating learning experience that provides immediate and direct immersion in a practical learning environment that empowers the learners and pushes them out of their comfort zone. The program has provided me with helpful effective tools to develop my leadership skills and achieve personal and professional growth. It was also a great opportunity to learn from professionals from all over the world.

What will the program add to your career development?

Al-Sultan: Upon completing the program, I was able to implement immediately the learnings that I had acquired. This has been a key direct beneficial outcome of the program, especially in light of the great challenges that we have been facing with the COVID-19 pandemic, where leading through a changing environment has become a must-have skill. Experiencing the superior quality learning in Harvard Business School and becoming a Harvard alumna is not only a great personal achievement, but also a collective success that I would like to thank Burgan Bank for giving me the opportunity to be part of.

Dalal Yousef Al-Sane - Head of Debt Capital Markets - Group Investment Banking & Treasury

What were the most valuable learning outcomes of the program and how do they inspire you to lead?

Al-Sane: Above all, Harvard Business School's Program for Leadership Development gracefully initiates and facilitates the processes of deep introspection from various vantage points. It leverages one's vulnerability, curiosity and willingness to learn as means to develop a vivid sense of self-awareness. These are crucial skills for leading from a place of empathy, and consequently, instilling a culture of trust that believes in people's intrinsic equality and deploys their distinct aptitudes towards serving meaningful purposes.

In other words, the program taught me the value and power of leading authentically for positive transformation. To continue fueling virtuous cycles of development, I am determined to champion people's processes of self-discovery, self-understanding and self-mastery. I'd like to thank the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences and Burgan Bank for making this indispensable experience possible.



Halah El Sherbini



Mohammad Najeeb Al-Zanki



Shayma Hisham Al-Sultan

Allegations of favoring China could erode confidence in IMF chief

WASHINGTON: A storm of controversy threatens to undermine Kristalina Georgieva's leadership of the IMF as experts, US lawmakers and the Treasury scrutinize her actions in a former senior role at the World Bank. The situation also could present a challenge to Democratic US President Joe Biden's administration, since it gives fodder to Republicans dubious of, if not outright hostile to, the multilateral institutions, especially their dealings with China. An independent investigation released Thursday found that during her time as World Bank CEO, Georgieva was among the institution's leaders who pressured staff into changing data to paint China in a more favorable light in the 2017 edition of a closely-watched business favorability ranking.

Georgieva was appointed IMF managing director in 2019, and the lender's member countries will "have to make a decision about whether they're comfortable with, with her continuing in that role." Nobel laureate Paul Romer said in an interview: "I think they should think about their options." Georgieva disputed the probe's findings, and on Friday told IMF staff the charges were "not true."

"Neither in this case nor before or after have I put pressure on staff to manipulate data. I would ask staff to please check, double-check, triple-check, but never change, never manipulate what the data tells us," she said according to The New York Times, which obtained a transcript of her remarks. She said she believes "strongly in the value of credible data and analysis that leads to policy recommendations for the benefit of our members."

Romer, who was World Bank chief economist during Georgieva's time there, criticized her for engineering what he described to AFP as a "whitewash" of separate concerns he raised about the institution's flagship Doing Business report. He ultimately resigned in January 2018 after going public with his criticisms.

IMF board 'reviewing'

The United States will be crucial in determining Georgieva's fate since Washington holds the biggest voting share in the International Monetary Fund, and the Treasury on Thursday said it was analyzing the report. "These are serious findings," the department said in a statement. "Our primary responsibility is to uphold the integrity of international financial institutions."



The World Bank board commissioned the investigation by law firm WilmerHale, which examined tens of thousands of documents and interviewed more than three dozen current and former staff. A spokesperson said the IMF board, which was scheduled to meet Friday, "is currently reviewing this matter," without providing further details. Republican lawmakers already have raised questions about Georgieva's conduct. House Representative French Hill called the report "alarming" and said the multilateral lenders' "reputation is now tarnished."

If the allegations are true, "The IMF board should promptly assess her service in the top job there," Hill said in a statement. The situation was another example of "how the Chinese Communist Party systematically works to hijack multilateral institutions," he said.

'Pretty damning allegation'

In light of the investigation, the World Bank scrapped the Doing Business rankings, which classified countries based on their business regulations and economic reforms, and has caused governments to jockey for a higher spot to attract investors. The probe also found that Georgieva

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

Justin Sandefur of the Center for Global Development had written extensively about the problems with the methodology in the World Bank rankings, which he said "made it ripe for this sort of interference and manipulation." "For the head of the IMF to have been involved in data manipulation is a pretty damning allegation," he told AFP. "That does seem like a real hit on their credibility."

Hill called on Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen to report to Congress on the situation and find ways to "ensure strict, transparent data integrity in the reports and assessments of the World Bank and the IMF." Andy Barr, a fellow Republican House lawmaker, called on Treasury to investigate the "bombshell findings," saying, "Georgieva's involvement with data manipulation for China's benefit is alarming." —AFP



A Taleban fighter looks at an aquarium at the Kabul Zoo.



A boy poses for a picture with the rifle of a Taleban fighter near the camel enclosure at the Kabul zoo.



A Taleban fighter touches a deer in its enclosure.— AFP photos

GUN-TOTING TALEBAN MINGLE WITH FAMILIES AND KIDS AT KABUL ZOO

Taleban soldiers cradling AK-47s and M16 assault rifles mingle among families at Kabul Zoo, a novelty experience for many of the young fighters from rural Afghanistan. As visitors set up picnic spots in the shaded grounds, enjoying ice creams and salted pomegranate seeds, heavily armed Taleban gunmen peer into the enclosures housing lions, leopards, camels, wolves, ostriches and macaques. After years of fighting in the countryside, the capture of the capital was the first time many had entered a large city, let alone a zoo. They take selfies and pose for group photos, but the relative tranquility is upended suddenly when one fighter grabs a deer by its antlers and his friends roar with laughter.

Posing with rifles

After Friday prayers, scores of armed Taleban fighters turn out — and many more are without weapons-wearing traditional hats, turbans and shawls. Some sported the eye makeup popular among Afghan men. One Taleban member, 40-year-old Abdul Qadir, who now works for the interior ministry, said he was sight-seeing with a group of male friends. “I really like the animals, especially those which can be found in our country,” he says. “I like lions very much.” Asked about the armed presence-unheard of in other zoos around the world—he says the Taleban were in favor of barring guns from the venue so that “children or women should not feel scared”.



People enjoy their visit at the Kabul Zoo.

The zoo was long a haven for women, children and young lovers in a capital that has little public space for anyone but men. A unit of six armed men from the Taleban’s intelligence directorate-wearing full military fatigues, combat webbing bursting with ammunition and steel handcuffs, peaked caps and knee pads-huddle for a team picture with a turbaned mullah. The designated photographer coordinates the shot, which is closely examined by the group afterwards. A thumbs-up from one of the fighters, with a Taleban flag poking out of his magazine pouch, shows their approval. Later, a dif-

ferent group of gunmen offer their rifles to boys as young as eight, who take snaps with their mobile phones.

‘No Guns in the Zoo’

The showpiece is a lion, named simply “White Lion”, which sleeps on a deck in its enclosure, measuring about 20 meters by 30 meters. The zoo’s most-treasured occupant was Marjan, a male lion who was a symbol of Afghan survival living through coups, invasions, civil war and the Taleban’s first rule, until he died in 2002. A bronze statue of the big cat, once injured by a grenade attack, greets visi-



A member of the Taleban poses for a picture in front of aquariums at the Kabul Zoo.

tors on their way in, while a plaque on its grave reads: “Here lies Marjan, who was about 23. He was the most famous lion in the world.” Another popular attraction is the aquarium and reptile house, where women in niqabs, burqas and hijabs shepherd young girls and boys around the tanks. A python is coiled up in a large glass enclosure as goldfish, catfish and turtles swim around in tanks lining the walls.

Samir, who is in Kabul waiting to return to London where he lives, is at the zoo with his young son and nephew. He says they have been having “a very hard

time” since the Taleban stormed to power in mid-August. “We didn’t expect (the Taleban) to come so quickly. It’s quite peaceful in Kabul, but the thing is, the way they are, people don’t feel safe.” Nestled between steep hills and next to the Kabul River, entry to the zoo costs 40 cents for Afghans, although some Taleban soldiers walk in without paying, flagrantly disregarding the sign saying “No Guns in the Zoo”. — AFP

Russian actress says ‘too late’ to fear ISS launch

Russian actress Yulia Peresild said Thursday it was “too late” to fear ahead of her launch into space, as Moscow races against Hollywood to film the first movie in orbit. Russia’s space agency Roscosmos is dispatching the 36-year-old screen star next month to the International Space Station (ISS) along with director Klim Shipenko, 38, in the race against time to beat a parallel US project. “If you’re afraid of wolves, you

shouldn’t go into the forest. It’s too late to be afraid,” Peresild told journalists during an online press conference. The 12-day mission was announced in September last year, four months after a Hollywood project involving actor Tom Cruise was unveiled. The Russian mission will begin on October 5. Shipenko said the movie would be a “dramatic film” about a doctor who goes to the ISS to save a cosmonaut’s life. Mission commander Anton Shkaplerov, as well as cosmonauts Oleg Novitsky and Pyotr Dubrov who are currently on board the station, will also appear in the film, he added.

Peresild said of the intensive training that the crew was undergoing, she had particularly enjoyed experiencing weightlessness. “It was so great for us. We real-

ly enjoyed it. I only regret that we just got to do zero gravity once,” she said.

Peresild said she had difficulty putting together a make-up kit for the trip with no glass and only specific plastics allowed on board. “The saleswoman didn’t understand what I was looking for. So, I explained: ‘I’m putting together a cosmetics bag for space,’” she said laughing. Shipenko said he was looking forward to experiencing ISS food, with a menu that includes dishes from the Caucasus region and traditional beetroot soup. The movie project comes despite a series of incidents on board Russia’s segment of the ISS, including smoke and burning smells this month, that has spurred safety concerns over conditions. — AFP

SpaceX tourists talk to Tom Cruise from orbit, provide update on flight

Four space tourists orbiting the Earth in a SpaceX capsule at 17,500 miles per hour (28,162 kph) talked to movie star Tom Cruise on Friday and provided a live update about life aboard the spacecraft. The first space tourism mission by Elon Musk’s SpaceX blasted off from Florida on Wednesday for a three-day voyage that is to end with a splash-down in the Atlantic Ocean at 4:06 pm Pacific time (2306 GMT) on Saturday. Mission control said the crew members-Jared Isaacman, Sian Proctor, Hayley Arceneaux and Chris Sembroski-spoke with Cruise, who is hoping to make a film in space, from the vessel on Friday.

“Rook, Nova, Hanks, and Leo spoke to @TomCruise sharing their experience from space,” said the Twitter account of Inspiration4, the official name of the first ever space mission to take place without an actual astronaut. The names are the call signs of the four passengers aboard SpaceX’s Dragon capsule. “Maverick, you can be our wingman anytime,” the tweet added, accompanied by a video clip of Cruise playing the elite fighter pilot whose call sign was Maverick in the movie “Top Gun.” Last year, former NASA administrator Jim Bridenstine announced a film project starring Cruise to be shot in zero gravity on board the International

Space Station. However, no details have yet been delivered about the project, which would be done in collaboration with SpaceX.



Tom Cruise

The four crew members shared their experiences in space during a 10-minute live webcast with mission control on Friday. Proctor, 51, who teaches geosciences at a college in Arizona and was a finalist to become a NASA astronaut, displayed a picture she drew with metallic markers of the Dragon capsule being propelled into space by a dragon. Arceneaux, a 29-year-old physician assistant at St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital in Memphis, Tennessee, demonstrated her impressive spins in zero gravity. “Hayley is a champ at spinning,” Proctor said. “She has been spinning from the moment we got on orbit.”

“It’s a lot of fun and allows us to lift very heavy things without any issue,” said Arceneaux. “We’ve also been taking several swabs of different parts of our body to evaluate the microbiome and how that changes in these three days in space,” she added. And “we have been spending so much time in this cupola,” she observed. Sembroski, a 42-year-old US Air Force veteran, pulled out his ukulele and played a few chords. — AFP



In this file photo actress Yulia Peresild, member of the International Space Station (ISS) expedition 66, attends the complex examination training at the Gagarin Cosmonauts Training Centre in Star City outside Moscow.



In this file photo (From left) Members of the International Space Station (ISS) expedition 66, Russian cosmonaut Anton Shkaplerov, director Klim Shipenko and actress Yulia Peresild, attend the complex examination training at the Gagarin Cosmonauts Training Centre in Star City outside Moscow. — AFP photos

Netflix finally eyes TV’s top prize with ‘The Crown’ at in-person Emmys

Netflix is tipped to finally win television’s biggest prize today as its critically adored British royals drama “The Crown” battles “Star Wars” series “The Mandalorian” at an Emmys ceremony held in front of a scaled-back live audience. Despite turning the entire TV landscape upside-down since its groundbreaking online platform launched in 2007, leading streamer Netflix has never won for best

drama at the small-screen version of the Oscars-nor best comedy, nor best limited series. “The Crown” does feel like it finally has come to the moment where it’s going to have its moment,” Variety awards editor Clayton Davis told AFP. “It’s going to be the first big series win for Netflix.”

As well as “The Crown”—which in its fourth series depicts the ill-fated marriage of Prince Charles and Princess Diana—the streaming giant is banking on the wildly popular “The Queen’s Gambit.” Starring Anya Taylor-Joy as a gifted but troubled chess prodigy, that show sent chessboard sales skyrocketing worldwide, and is the favorite to win top honors in the fiercely competitive limited series section-for shows ending after one season.

Add in nominations for wide-ranging offerings from Regency romp “Bridgerton” to nature documentary “David Attenborough: A Life on our Planet”—plus 34

Emmys won in technical categories announced ahead of Sunday’s gala-and Netflix could be eyeing an all-time record haul. “What we’re seeing is Netflix finally breaking through. They’ve always done well with the nominations, but never the final tally,” said Deadline columnist Pete Hammond. “This is a turning point for them,” he told AFP. If anyone can ruin the party, it will likely be Disney+, the new kid on the TV streaming block in just its second year, bringing beloved big-screen characters from “Star Wars” and Marvel films to the Emmys party.

Baby Yoda and a digitally de-aged Luke Skywalker helped “The Mandalorian” jointly top the overall nominations count alongside rival drama “The Crown.” The other outside bet for best drama is “Pose”—Billy Porter’s LGBTQ-focused show exploring New York’s 1980s underground ballroom culture has mounted a dazzling Emmys campaign

for its final season. In limited series competition, quirky sitcom-inspired Marvel superhero show “WandaVision” has exceeded all critical expectations. The category also features Kate Winslet’s small-town detective drama “Mare of Easttown,” and British break-out series “I May Destroy You,” which examines the aftermath of a rape-both from traditional Emmys juggernaut HBO.

‘Fun, ritzy party’

Last year’s ceremony-held before coronavirus vaccines were available-was an entirely virtual affair, with comedian Jimmy Kimmel standing in a deserted downtown Los Angeles auditorium as winners beamed in via video. This time, comedian Cedric the Entertainer takes on hosting duties, with a strict guest list of 500-odd nominees gathering in the venue’s outdoor section, under strict pandemic precautions including proof of inoculation.

“Making that level of celebrities ill is not on our agenda,” Emmys producer Ian Stewart told Variety, nonetheless promising a “fun, ritzy party” for those who clear security. With the Delta variant still raging and international travel complicated, some overseas contenders including the cast of “The Crown” are expected to dial in from a London satellite hub. The strategy echoes the approach adopted last year by the cast of “Schitt’s Creek,” who swept every comedy acting prize at the start of the Emmys ceremony as they beamed in from their base in Toronto. This year, Apple TV+ phenomenon “Ted Lasso” is the comedy frontrunner, including and Jason Sudeikis is a favorite for best actor for his work as an out-of-his-depth American football coach handed control of an English soccer team.—AFP

Lifestyle | Features

London street stitchers take on 'fast fashion'

Lined up on stools outside a well-known clothes store in south London, around 20 needle-wielding stitchers took the fight against "fast fashion" to the streets, showing shoppers how to revive shabby garments. Their message is "stitch not ditch" to repair clothes rather than throw them away and buy more, despite the temptations offered by low-cost fashion. The roaming street tailors on Wednesday set up camp in the London suburb of Bromley, in the shadow of a Primark shop, a symbol of "fast fashion" increasingly criticised for its impact on the environment.

Their slogan is displayed on the back of their stools and folding chairs, often stitched in brightly coloured threads. Organiser Suzi Warren wants to raise awareness of alternatives to the constant purchase of cheap, easily discarded clothes. "It's not to say don't buy it, it's to

say, if you do buy it, try and enter into some kind of contract to keep it as long as you can," she told AFP. "We cannot keep producing clothes at this pace," she added. Warren, who runs an online shop selling clothes with humorous designs, launched the street stitching movement this year after hearing about the damage of "fast fashion" and her Instagram page has developed a loyal fanbase.

'Meditative' past-time

Among the stitchers on Wednesday, Madeleine Tanato was hard at work mending a dress. "In recent years I've realized that fast fashion is having a really bad impact on the environment," she said. As intrigued passers-by stopped to ask questions, the needleworkers hoped to show that mending was a source of pleasure. "Mending is very meditative and a healthy thing for mental health," said



Warren. "It's easy, cheap, all you need is a needle and a thread." Passers-by were invited to join in by scanning a QR code giving them access to online tutorials.

The event was one of many held simultaneously in cities in Britain and across the world to mark the UK's Sustainable Fashion Week, held before

London Fashion Week on Friday. Low-cost fashion retailers are regularly criticized for generating waste and pollution and for the poor pay and working conditions of their staff. The sector's image was further tarnished by the collapse of the Rana Plaza garment factory in Dhaka in April 2013, which killed more than 1,100. It was also hit by reports that some brands use cotton produced by the forced labour of Uyghur Muslims in China.

In the face of criticism, Primark promised on Wednesday to make all clothing from recycled materials or more sustainable sources by 2030 and to halve carbon emissions. Asos, another British brand, on Thursday committed to more sustainable manufacturing and carbon neutrality by 2030. — AFP



Models present creations from British designer Mark Fast during a catwalk show for the Spring/Summer 2022 collection on the first day of London Fashion Week in London. — AFP photos

BACK ON THE CATWALK: LIVE SHOWS RETURN AT LONDON FASHION WEEK

Catwalk shows resumed at London Fashion Week on Friday, after previous editions of the landmark industry event were forced online by the coronavirus pandemic. The sight of models and audiences together again was a welcome sight for a country hoping to bounce back after lifting most restrictions in July. A total of 28 shows are planned over five days, featuring 131 brands, including those from well-established designers such as Britain's Edward Crutchley and Serbia's Roksanda. Irish designer Simone Rocha's brand is celebrating its 10th anniversary. But there are two notable absentees: former Spice Girl turned fashion designer Victoria Beckham, and the luxury brand Burberry.

The designer Saul Nash, 28, opened proceedings on Friday morning with a sportswear collection exploring his adolescence in Hackney, northeast London. Nash, who is also a dancer and choreographer, made freedom of movement at the centre of his fluid creations, with removable hoods and sleeves. He revisited the staple of the British school uniform—the short-sleeved shirt-in breathable fabric with a zip for a chic, casual look. On a tracksuit he used a distorted print of a

childhood transport map. In a different style, British designer Edward Crutchley's puffy dresses in aniseed green or floral prints showcased a touch of glamour in shimmering luxury fabrics.

Emerging talent

In February, London Fashion Week-one of the big four international fashion weeks alongside Paris, New York and Milan-was held entirely online, as the country was deep into a mid-winter virus lockdown. The London Fashion Council said the September shows "mark the long-awaited cultural reopening of London and brings back the global fashion industry to the UK". Some designers this time round are preferring to present their latest creations by appointment only, or via videos on the London Fashion Week platform.

US designer Michael Halpern unveiled a flamboyant collection of sequinned, feathered and draped gowns in a short film shot at the Royal Opera House, modeled by dancers who will be back before audiences next month after a break of over a year. Canadian knitwear designer Mark Fast, who has been expanding in Asia, took over a car park in the bohemian district of Soho for a show featuring inter-



locked chains and pastel shades. Among the emerging talents this year is London-based Albanian designer Nensi Dojaka, 27, who was presenting her debut show on Friday. Like Fast, Dojaka studied at the prestigious Central Saint Martins fashion school in London, and she won the LVMH 2021 prize for young talent last week. Her black babydoll dresses with graphic details won over the jury.

Bounce back

Following on from New York and preceding Milan, London Fashion Week is dedicated to spring-summer 2022 collections and is intended to be "gender neutral". The British fashion industry, which employed around 890,000 people in 2019, is hoping to bounce back after suffering a slump during the global health crisis. According to data from Oxford Economics for the Creative Industries Federation and Creative England, the sector could recover faster than the UK economy as a whole.

It estimated growth of more than 25 percent by 2025, which would contribute some £132.1 billion (\$180 billion, 153 billion euros) to the UK economy-over £28 billion more than in 2020. In July, Burberry announced that its first-quarter sales had returned to pre-pandemic levels. However, sales in Europe continued to suffer from the lack of tourists. Last week, the London-based French designer Roland Mouret told the Financial Times it could take his brand five years to fully recover from the impact of the pandemic. — AFP

Surprise may be key to 'Mozart effect' on epilepsy

A Mozart sonata that can calm epileptic brain activity may get its therapeutic power thanks to melodies that create a sense of surprise, according to a study published Thursday. The research on 16 patients hospitalized with epilepsy that did not respond to medication has bolstered hopes that music could be used for new non-invasive treatments. "Our ultimate dream is to define an 'anti-epileptic' music genre and use music to improve the lives of those with epilepsy," said Robert Quon of Dartmouth College who co-authored the study published in Scientific reports.



Mozart's Sonata for Two Pianos in D Major K448 is known for its effects on cognition and other brain activity, but researchers are still seeking to understand why. In this study, scientists played the piece for patients equipped with brain implant sensors to monitor the occurrence of IEDs-brief but harmful brain events suffered by epileptics between seizures. They found IEDs decreased after 30 seconds of listening, with significant effects in parts of the brain associated with emotion. When they compared the response to the structure of the work, they found the effects increased during transitions between longer musical phrases-ones that lasted ten seconds or more. Quon says the findings suggest that longer phrases may create a sense of anticipation-and then answer it in an unexpected way "creating a positive emotional response". —AFP

US firefighters optimistic over world's biggest tree

Firefighters battling to protect the world's biggest tree from wildfires ravaging the parched United States said Friday they are optimistic it can be saved. Flames are creeping closer to the majestic General Sherman and other giant sequoias, as man-made climate change worsens California's fearsome fire season. "We have hundreds of firefighters there giving it their all, giving extra care," Mark Garrett, communications officer for the region's fire department, told AFP, of the operation in Sequoia National Park. Crews

are battling the spreading Paradise and Colony fires, which have so far consumed 4,600 hectares (11,400 acres) of forest since they were sparked by lightning a week ago.

The blazes are threatening Giant Forest, a grove of around 2,000 sequoias that includes five of the largest trees on the planet-some up to 3,000 years old. The biggest of them all, the General Sherman stands 83 meters (275 feet) tall. On Thursday, General Sherman was wrapped in fire-proof blankets-aluminum foil intended to protect its giant trunk from the worst of the flames. By Friday, managers felt they had the upper hand, thanks in part to clearing of undergrowth and controlled burns that starve the fire of fuel. "I think the most challenging part is the terrain here," said Garrett. But "we haven't seen explosive fire behavior; it really

slowed down and gave us a chance to get ahead of it."

Around 600 personnel are involved in the fight. "We have folks up in the Giant Forest protecting structures and preparing everything. The fact is that they've been prescribed burning for the past 25 or 30 years so it is really prepared." Millions of acres of California's forests have burned in this year's ferocious fire season. Scientists say global warming, stoked by the unchecked use of fossil fuels is making the area ever-more vulnerable to bigger and more destructive wildfires. The enormous trees of the Giant Forest are a huge tourist draw, with visitors traveling from all over the world to marvel at their imposing height and extraordinary girth. —AFP



Firefighters pose with the historic General Sherman Tree, estimated to be around 2,300 to 2,700 years old, after wrapping it with structural wrap in the Sequoia National Park near Three Rivers California.



Wildland firefighters apply structure wrap to giant sequoias on the KNP Complex fire in the Sequoia National Park, California. — AFP photos



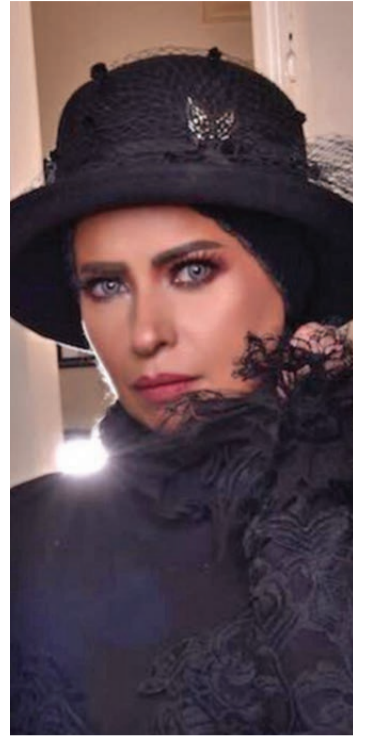
A man gives explanations in front of a newly discovered work by Vincent van Gogh "Study for 'Worm out'" from 1882, displayed at the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam. — AFP

Unseen Van Gogh drawing of old man goes on display

A never-before-seen Vincent van Gogh drawing of an exhausted old man went on display at an Amsterdam museum on Thursday for the first time. "Study for 'Worm Out'", which van Gogh drew early in his career in 1882, has been hidden away in a Dutch family's private collection for more than a century. The small pencil drawing depicts an elderly laborer dressed in a waistcoat, trousers and boots, sitting on a wooden chair with

his head in his hands. "This one has never been seen before anywhere. It's the first time that this drawing is out in the open," Tejo Meedendorp, senior researcher at the Van Gogh Museum, told AFP.

"It comes from a Dutch private collection where it has been for a very long time. And this is the first time and occasion that the world is able to see it." Van Gogh made a similar drawing shortly afterwards which he preferred, and which is currently in the Van Gogh museum's collection under the title "Worm Out". A lithograph of a similar theme is also in its collection called "At Eternity's Gate". The new drawing will be on temporary display at the museum until January 2 before returning to the private collection. — AFP



Montaha Al-Ujail participates in the Stockholm International Fashion Fair 2021

Kuwaiti designer Montaha Al-Ujail participated in the fourth edition of the Stockholm International Fashion Fair 2021 that took place at the National Museum in Stockholm, organized by In-Ter-Art agency in cooperation with the Swedish Volvo company. Ujail this year introduced her collection under the name 'La Vie en Rose', presenting long pink gowns that symbolize joy and happiness and express femininity, tenderness and softness at the same time,

which suits the taste of European women. She has achieved international fame through creating and designing high-end fashion with her Kuwaiti brand that competes with international brands. Her designs have been placed in international stores and highlighted globally. She was able to draw attention with her presence and personality as a Kuwaiti woman who has proven her success and accomplishments.

Ujail has received invitations to participate in international fashion shows in Dubai, Amman, London, New York, Paris, Thailand, Bali and Sweden. She was also invited to participate in international forums and global economic conferences, including the Arab Women and the World Economy Conference held in London and the European Gulf Business Forum in Brussels. She was also invited to present a special fashion show for the wives of the heads of some countries to

support women in Asia, which was held in New York. She also presented a fashion show for people with special needs. She attended a fashion show held at the Arab World Institute in Paris and participated in the International Thai Silk Fashion Week in honor of Queen Sirikit on the Queen Mother's birthday in the presence of Thai Prime Minister. Ujail has won several awards, including the Fashion Icon Award in London in

the presence of the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps Ambassador Khaled Al-Duwaisan, and was chosen by Emirates Woman magazine as one of the seven most influential people in the world. She was honored by the Kuwait Bar Association as part of the celebration of International Women's Day and had the honor of meeting HH Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah after receiving the Global Leadership Award.



— Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Made in India Exhibition

Embassy of India, Kuwait organized 'Made in India Exhibition' from September 14 to 15 at the Embassy premises showcasing 'Made in India' products in all categories such as agricultural products, gems and jewelry, consumer goods, tea, coffee, textiles, furniture, apparel, handicrafts, engineering goods and automobiles and many more. The products displayed included products such as buses and trucks from TATA motors, cars and pickup from Mahindra and motorcycles from Royal Enfield, TRIFED products, Tea from Assam, West Bengal and Nilgiri by Tea Board of India, Araku Coffee, Jewelry from Joylukkas & Raya Jewelers, Kent RO, La-Opala tableware, Himalaya Ayurveda and herbal products, and different FMCG products sourced by LULU Hypermarket and Oncost, NBTC, OBTC. An AYUSH Lounge was installed by the Embassy in the exhibition.



Ambassador of India to Kuwait Shri Sibi George inaugurated the exhibition and in his inaugural speech welcomed guests and spoke about the excellent

bilateral cooperation between India and Kuwait in all sectors and highlighted the popularity of 'Made in India' products in Kuwait. He underlined that the year 2021, India is celebrating two years long celebration of 75th anniversary of its independence (Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav) as well as 60th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Kuwait. He reiterated that as part of the vision of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, India is working to promote Indian exports abroad and the Embassy is committed to showcase the finest of Indian products and example of our technological advancement. He emphasized that under the guidance of leadership of both countries, relationship between two countries will reach new heights. Mazin Al-Essa, Under Secretary, Amiri Diwan, State of Kuwait, was chief guest of the event, which was attended by many resident ambassadors and members of diplomatic community in Kuwait as well as Kuwaiti businessmen and media persons.

On September 14, to celebrate 75th anniversary of India's independence, a spectacular presentation of 75 dishes from different region of the India showing rich culinary heritage and diversity was held. A grand cultural show with traditional classical dance and music performance was held. On September 15, the Exhibition included a show called 'Parinay' - celebration of Indian Weddings, bridal and wedding costumes showcased by members of Indian community. This was followed by a cultural evening where in various Indian artists residing in the State of Kuwait presented their performances. The event was very well received and was visited by a large number of Kuwaiti and Indian business and media persons and diplomatic community in Kuwait. The event was also broadcast on Embassy's social media which was attended online by thousands.



Sports

Brazilian clubs leave Copa Libertadores rivals in their wake

Palmeiras vs Atletico Mineiro kicks off semi-finals

SAO PAULO: While Brazil's national team marches on towards a place at next year's World Cup with a 100 percent record in South American qualifying, the country's clubs are dominating the Copa Libertadores, making the most of their unrivalled financial power on the continent and a conveyor belt of young talent.

For the first time since the South American equivalent of the Champions League was created in 1960, three teams from the same country have made it through to the semi-finals. In 1966, the Argentine trio of River Plate, Boca Juniors and Independiente all took part in the semi-final stage, but that was split into groups and so cannot be compared to 2021.

This season's semi-finals kick off this week, with the first leg of the all-Brazilian affair between Palmeiras and Atletico Mineiro in Sao Paulo on Tuesday being followed on Wednesday by Flamengo welcoming Barcelona of Ecuador to the Maracana.

If Flamengo, the Rio de Janeiro giants who won the Copa Libertadores in 2019, make it to the final in Montevideo on November 27, it will be another all-Brazilian showdown, just as it was last year when Palmeiras beat Santos. Brazil's population of over 200 million is almost half that of the entire continent and so it is hardly a surprise that its teams should do so well, but there are other explanations for the country's current pre-eminence.

"Brazilian football is evolving, leading players are coming back to the country and the league is becoming more and more competitive," said Brazil midfielder Lucas Paqueta, formerly of Flamengo and now of Lyon in France, recently.

Big-name Brazilian players have been returning to the top flight, the Brasileirao, with Atletico Mineiro bringing back Hulk earlier this year and last month signing former Atletico Madrid striker Diego Costa, a Spanish international but who was born in Brazil. Center-back David

Money talks

The financial gulf can be partly explained by the difference in television rights deals in Brazil compared to neighboring countries — in 2019 Brazilian top-flight teams pocketed \$253 million while the figure was just \$91 million in Argentina.

In the last decade they have spent \$800 million in the transfer market, almost double the amount invested by clubs in Argentina, which remains the most successful nation in the history of the Copa Libertadores with 25 titles, to 20 for Brazil. "The other clubs in South America cannot compete with the Brazilians. One of the most striking examples was when Atletico Mineiro signed Ignacio Fernandez from River Plate," says Bertozzi of the 31-year-old Argentine playmaker who moved to Belo Horizonte in February.

Most clubs in Brazil are heavily in debt, but they can still afford to buy top talent from neighboring countries, and these players are often then sold on at a profit to Europe. Given its population it is also no surprise that the country still brings through an endless stream of young talent.

Brazil is by a distance the world's biggest exporter of footballers with around 1,300 players finding their trade abroad according to the International Centre for Sports Studies, based in Neuchatel, Switzerland. "Brazil has always had a rich seam of players, whether they



BUENOS AIRES: This file photo taken on August 12, 2021 shows Brazil's Atletico Mineiro Hulk (left) and Argentina's River Plate David Martinez fighting for the ball during their Copa Libertadores quarter-finals first leg football match, at the Monumental stadium in Buenos Aires. — AFP

“Brazilian football is evolving”

Brazilian football is evolving

Luiz, released by Arsenal, has returned home to sign for Flamengo. Fellow former Chelsea and Arsenal star Willian has gone back to Corinthians.

These former Brazil internationals command big salaries, the kind of money that financially troubled clubs elsewhere in South America could not dream of paying. "Brazilian clubs can attract big-name players because they can pay much more money," says Leonardo Bertozzi, a commentator for ESPN Brasil.

are based at home or in Europe," points out Alex Sandro, the Juventus and Brazilian international full-back.

Palmeiras triumphed in last year's Copa Libertadores largely thanks to young talents like Gabriel Menino, Danilo and Patrick de Paula. Atletico Mineiro's squad includes 24-year-old Brazilian Olympic champion Guilherme Arana and Flamengo

have Pedro, who is the same age.

Of the 10 clubs who have sold the most players in South America in the last decade, six of them are in Brazil. The money earned can then be reinvested in new signings, and the cycle begins again. "You can expect to see Brazilian teams win most South American tournaments in the years to come," predicts Bertozzi. — AFP

News in brief

Newcastle, Leeds draw

NEWCASTLE: French forward Allan Saint-Maximin rescued a point for Newcastle as both they and Leeds were left searching for a first Premier League win of the season following an entertaining 1-1 draw at St James' Park on Friday. Loud boos were heard at full-time from a crowd of more than 50,000 as Newcastle fans, unhappy at what they see as the club's stagnation under controversial owner Mike Ashley and manager Steve Bruce, made their feelings clear. Brazilian midfielder Raphinha gave Leeds a 13th-minute lead when his cross was cleverly dummied by Rodrigo as it curled past Newcastle goalkeeper Karl Darlow. But an open match saw Newcastle equalize shortly before half-time when Saint-Maximin scored a fine individual goal. — AFP

Juventus lose €210m

ROME: Juventus on Friday reported a loss of 209.9 million euros (\$246 million) in the year to June 2021, up from 89.7 million the previous year, blaming the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. The continued spread of COVID-19 had a "significant, direct, negative impact" on revenues, notably from the lack of ticket sales and products, the club said in a statement. Some of this and other losses were however partly offset by higher income from broadcasting rights from matches postponed from 2020. Juventus said in August the board of directors had approved a capital increase of 400 million euros to steady the club's finances against the impact of the pandemic. — AFP

Probe into 'racist chants'

ROME: Prosecutors have opened an investigation into alleged racist chants by Lazio fans against AC Milan's Tiemoue Bakayoko last week, the Italian Football Federation (FIGC) said Friday. They are examining video footage from Milan's 2-0 win over the Roman club at the San Siro on September 12, after Bakayoko and his club said he had suffered abuse, it said in a statement. The Serie A club had asked the football federation to investigate after Bakayoko said Lazio fans hurled racist abuse at him and his teammate Franck Kessie. "To some Lazio fans and their racist cries towards to me and my brother Franck Kessie. We are strong and proud of our skin color," the midfielder said on Instagram. — AFP

Coman undergoes surgery

BERLIN: Bayern Munich winger Kingsley Coman has undergone surgery to correct an irregular heartbeat, the German champions announced Friday. The 25-year-old French international is expected back in training within two weeks, said coach Julian Nagelsmann. "He had a slightly irregular heartbeat, a minor heart irregularity. We did a long-term ECG and carried out this operation," said Nagelsmann. Coman will miss the next two Bundesliga games against Bochum and Greuther Fuerth while he is also unlikely to feature in Bayern's next Champions League clash with Dynamo Kiev. Despite concerns over players' heart welfare following Denmark midfielder Christian Eriksen's cardiac arrest at the European Championship in the summer, Nagelsmann was keen not to exaggerate Coman's condition. — AFP

Pele briefly back in ICU but now 'stable', says hospital

SAO PAULO: Brazilian football legend Pele, 80, was briefly transferred back to an intensive care unit Friday after suffering breathing difficulties but is now stable, said the Albert Einstein Hospital in Sao Paulo, where he underwent surgery earlier this month.

The transfer was a temporary "preventative measure," the hospital said in a statement, adding that the sporting great was later transferred to "semi-intensive care" as he continues to recover from surgery for a suspected colon tumor. "He is currently stable from a cardiovascular and respiratory point of view," it added. Shortly afterwards, the ex-footballer posted a message on social media stating: "Friends, I am still recovering very well. Today I received visits from family, and I am still smiling every day."

Pele's daughter Kely Nascimento also posted a photo of herself next to her father in the hospital, seeking to cheer up his fans. "This is the normal recovery scenario for a man his age. After an opera-

tion like this, sometimes you take two steps forward, one step back," Nascimento wrote on Instagram next to the photo.

"Yesterday he was tired, and he took a step back. Today, he has taken two steps forward," she added. In the photo, Pele is seen on what looks like a hospital bed in a black puff vest or jacket, alert and smiling. "He is recovering well, under normal conditions, I promise!" Nascimento added. "There is a lot of angst in the world these days and we don't want to add to it." On September 6 the hospital said Pele had undergone surgery for a suspected colon tumor. He originally left the ICU unit on Tuesday, telling his fans on social media that he was feeling happier by the day and was looking forward to reuniting with them.

The suspected tumor was detected during routine tests, according to the hospital, where Pele has been undergoing treatment since August 31. Considered by many to be the greatest footballer of all time, Pele, whose real name is Edson Arantes do Nascimento, has been in poor health in recent years, and has had various stints in the hospital.

The only player in history to win three World Cups (1958, 1962 and 1970), Pele burst onto the global stage at just 17 with dazzling goals, including two in the final against hosts Sweden, as Brazil won the World Cup for the first time in 1958.

Former English champions Derby to enter administration

LONDON: Former English champions Derby County have applied to enter administration, the struggling second-tier club announced Friday. The Championship side issued a statement which claimed the club's directors "had no choice but to make the tough decision" to file notice to appoint administrators following a failure to secure new owners and the impact of COVID-19 on the Midlands club's finances.

"Last week, it became clear that the process which has been underway to identify a purchaser for the club likely would not be productive over the near term, despite the number of negotiations with credible parties.

"Because the COVID-19 pandemic has had a severe impact on the revenues and profits of all of its businesses, the club has been unable to service its day-to-day financial obligations. The directors had no choice but to make the tough decision to take this action and protect the club."

Derby, managed by former England captain Wayne Rooney, are 16th in the table with seven points from their first seven matches. The Rams are now set to face a mandatory points deduction

under league rules designed to ensure clubs are not disadvantaged by being well-run businesses. They are already facing separate points penalties for previous breaches of financial fair play rules.

Derby, however, could appeal on the grounds of extenuating circumstances with the club adamant their financial position is a direct result of the coronavirus pandemic rather than financial mismanagement. "The irony is that the club's financial forecasts show the emergence of a financially sustainable picture," the statement added. "Absent the COVID-19 pandemic, we undoubtedly would have been able to trade through. As the COVID-19 pandemic and lock down tightened their grip, the club's revenues and cash flow took a circa £20 million (\$27 million, 23 million euros) hit."

'Got to stop'

Derby owner Mel Morris has been looking to sell the club since June 2019 only to see two deals fall through. The Rams avoided relegation from the Championship on the final day of last season after drawing 3-3 at Pride Park against Sheffield Wednesday. They were then spared a points deduction, which would have sent them down, when the English Football League decided not to appeal against a decision to only fine the club for failing to comply with finance rules.

Leading football pundit Gary Neville, who played alongside Rooney for both Manchester United and England, reacted to Friday's announcement by telling Sky Sports: "We've got to stop this

Wilder for a third time. As a result, Fury, having previously drawn with and then stopped Wilder, is set to make the maiden defense of his World Boxing Council (WBC) belt against the American in Las Vegas next month.

Joshua is set to face World Boxing Organization (WBO) mandatory challenger Oleksandr Usyk in London on Saturday, with a crowd of some 60,000 expected at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium, the home of the Premier League club. Joshua, also the World Boxing Association (WBA) and International Boxing Federation (IBF) champion, says he will battle to get the fight with Fury on.

"It will happen," the 31-year-old told the Daily Mail. "I know what people are saying about boxing politics, but I'll promise before the end of my career I will have done everything in my power to fight Tyson Fury. We saw it with Floyd Mayweather and



LEIPZIG: In this file photo taken on December 8, 2005, Brazilian football legend Pele is seen during a presentation in Leipzig on the eve of the final draw of the FIFA football World Cup 2006. — AFP

Four years later, Pele gave a tantalizing glimpse of his ability with an electric individual goal against Mexico in Brazil's opening 2-0 win. "O Rei" (The King) went on to have one of the most storied careers in sport, scoring more than 1,000 goals before retiring in 1977. — AFP



Derby County manager Wayne Rooney

happening. When owners come into football clubs, there has to be an obligation to cover what they sign up to. We've had Bury, Macclesfield, Derby, Bolton, Wigan. It's got to stop." He added: "The Premier League is amazing but it's not more important than losing your club. Derby have chased and chased and chased, and they haven't won the golden ticket. Now they may go out of business."

Derby's greatest days were in the 1970s when they were twice crowned champions of England by winning the old First Division, the forerunner of the Premier League. — AFP

Manny Pacquiao (not fighting until they were beyond their primes) but that was a superstar fight. Me and Fury is streets, two warriors, two fighters who have come from the amateur system in the UK and have taken the world by storm. We'll get it on in Britain." Joshua had spoken earlier in the week of how his career would be incomplete without fighting Fury. Thus the 2012 super-heavyweight Olympic champion is determined all potential barriers to the bout with the pugilist known as the 'Gypsy King' will be surmounted.

"Don't worry about age, boxing politics, don't worry about the American dollar," he said. "This is a British UK fight which can happen at Wembley, Tottenham, the O2, York Hall. I look at it less as a mega-fight for the world and more from the point of view that we are guys who first met in Finchley ABC. It is a grassroots fight." — AFP

Sports

Pakistan battling isolation as cricket host after New Zealand pull out

England mulls decision to send teams on Pakistan tour next month

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan cricket began confronting its worst fear Saturday, with the national side starting at another era of isolation from hosting international matches after New Zealand abandoned its tour, citing a security threat.

The All Blacks called off their first Pakistan series in 18 years with Wellington's backing on Friday just before the first one-day international was due to start in Rawalpindi. The decision has left cricket-crazy Pakistan reeling, with the nation still recovering from the 2009 militant attack on the Sri Lankan team in Lahore that wounded six players.

Already struggling to convince foreign teams to tour, Pakistan were forced to play home matches at neutral venues — primarily in the UAE — following the assault. The decision left a generation of cricket fans growing up having never attended a live game.

Prime Minister Imran Khan, a former international cricketer hero, and the Pakistan Cricket Board will now have to work overtime to avoid another period of exile. "With the administration they now have in place at the PCB and how closely linked to the PM it is, there'll be a real push to ensure they have to play as little as possible in a neutral venue," cricket writer Osman Samiuddin said.

Their first task will be to convince England, who decide today whether to send their men's and women's teams for a scheduled tour to Pakistan next

month. Those tours are to be followed by a series against the West Indies in December and Australia's first visit since 1998 in February next year.

"England are now likely not to tour. Australia... will also probably not come. So that will be a hit," Samiuddin said. "And for fans too, they've only just started getting used to going to big games again so for the prospect of that being taken away, it's going to hurt."

Avoiding isolation

The PCB bled \$200 million in losses during the country's cricket exile. Now, alongside the upcoming tours, its bids to host six international events — including the World Cup and Champion's Trophy between 2024-31 — could also be in jeopardy.

Former players say keeping international cricket in Pakistan is the key priority. "All cricketers are with the PCB and we have to find ways to avoid further isolation, for the sake of our next generations," former captain Rashid Latif told AFP.

New Zealand would have been the highest profile team to play in Pakistan in more than a decade. Pakistan have only hosted South Africa, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Zimbabwe since the 2009 attacks. Ex-player Naushad Ali said his country needs to restore the confidence of the cricketing world.

"Pakistan will have to prove that New Zealand's



RAWALPINDI: Policemen stand guard outside the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium in Rawalpindi on Friday, after New Zealand postponed a series of one-day international (ODI) cricket matches against Pakistan over security concerns. —AFP

decision was wrong, and I think only that will earn them sympathy," said Ali. "We should not give up our hosting rights and should lobby with other countries."

But former captain Shahid Afridi believes they

have sacrificed a lot over the years and deserve "a better deal". "We have done more than enough for them," he said. "We toured England and New Zealand (last year) despite fears of pandemic, and we want them to reciprocate." —AFP



Exile cost \$200 million in losses



NEW YORK: Emma Raducanu speaks after winning the 2021 US Open at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center on September 11, 2021. —AFP

Raducanu's grandmother wanted her to quit tennis

LONDON: Newly-crowned US Open champion Emma Raducanu's grandmother Niculina Raducanu wanted her to quit tennis, so concerned was she about her health after breathing difficulties forced her to retire from her Wimbledon Last 16 match this year. The 88-year-old Romanian told The Daily Mail her granddaughter's "health is more important (than wealth or fame)." Fortunately for 18-year-old Briton Raducanu neither her father Ian (son of Niculina) nor Chinese mother Renee took the advice and she swept through the US Open to become the first qualifier to win a Grand Slam title.

Niculina Raducanu — known to Emma as 'Mamiya' a Romanian term of endearment for grandmothers — is close to her granddaughter. She would host Emma twice a year in Bucharest in her apartment whilst she would come to the family's home in England to care for her

granddaughter and recount stories about Romania. However, she was so anxious for Emma after she retired from her clash with Australian Ajla Tomljanovic at Wimbledon she dared broach the subject of retirement with Raducanu's parents. "I asked her parents if she should quit tennis," Raducanu told the newspaper after they tracked her down at her Bucharest home. "Because what if something should happen to Emma? Her health is more important (than wealth or fame). The court she played on that day had a roof over it because it was raining, and she felt she couldn't breathe." When it came to last Saturday's US Open final, though, it was the grandmother not the granddaughter who faltered.

"The night she won the US Open (Raducanu beat fellow teenager Leylah Fernandez of Canada 6-4, 6-3), I couldn't watch because my heart couldn't take it," she said. "I said to myself: 'This match is going to be a really tough one,' so I decided not to watch it. I only found out the news the next day, and I was delighted she was strong and healthy, and that her mind was healthy also — especially after what happened the last time (at Wimbledon). When I talked to my son, I was happy for him. He would have been so disappointed if she'd have lost after all the work and resources, they'd put into this." —AFP

India coach Shastri denies book launch led to positive COVID test

LONDON: India head coach Ravi Shastri insisted he had "absolutely no regrets" over his attendance at a London launch of his new book cited as a possible source for a positive coronavirus test that took place before the team cut short their tour of England, as he signaled his intention to stand down after the upcoming T20 World Cup.

With India 2-1 up, this month's fifth and deciding Test against England was dramatically cancelled just over two hours before the scheduled start in Manchester because of COVID-19 concerns in the tourists' camp.

A reported positive test by assistant physiotherapist Yogesh Parmar, appeared to be the last straw for an India squad already without Shastri, and two other backroom staff, who had all previously contracted the virus.

Former India all-rounder Shastri was criticized after it emerged, he had launched his book at a well-attended party in London where no masks were worn, two days before the fourth Test at the Oval.

Four days after the launch, Shastri tested positive for COVID and had to go into isolation while the match was being played.

Shastri was widely criticized in England for his conduct but the 59-year-old, in an interview with the Guardian newspaper, published online Friday, said: "There were about 250 people there and no-one got COVID from that party."

"I've not got it at my book launch because it was on the 31st (August) and I

tested positive on 3 September. It can't happen in three days," he said. "I have absolutely no regrets...At the Oval Test, you were climbing stairs used by 5,000 people. So, to point a finger at a book launch?"

'Not lose a penny'

The abandoned Test at Old Trafford is reckoned to have cost English cricket up to £40 million (\$55 million) but Shastri said the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) would "not lose a penny."

"The ECB have been outstanding and their relationship with Indian cricket is tremendous. I don't know if it's a stand-alone Test next year or they give them an extra two T20 games, but the ECB will not lose a penny because of the relationship that exists. In 2008 when we had the (terrorist) blast in Mumbai, England came back and played the Test. We don't forget that."

Meanwhile Shastri, head coach since July 2017 after spending the three years before then as India's team director, believes the October-November T20 World up in Oman and the United Arab Emirates — a tournament moved from India because of COVID concerns — would represent an ideal time for him to step down.

"I believe so because I've achieved all I wanted," he said. "Five years as No 1 (in Test cricket), to win in Australia twice, to win in England."

Shastri, who said he played no part in the Manchester decision, added: "If we win the (T20) World Cup that will be the icing on the cake. I believe one thing — never overstay your welcome...To beat Australia away and to lead the series in England in a COVID year? It is the most satisfying moment of my four decades in cricket." —AFP

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Sabah Hospital	24812000	Khaldiya	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, My Self Phangan Singh Son of Amar Singh Holding India Passport Number L4263773 Residing in Village Mirzeke St Ferozepur That I Have Change My Name Phangan Singh to Given Name Fangan Singh. (C 0649) 17/9/2021

I, PROCARIUS MARIANESAN, holder of Indian Passport No. T2417987, declare to change my name from PROCARIUS MARIANESAN to PROCARIUS MARIANESON. (C 0852) 16-9-2021

I, GAFFAR SYED HUSSAIN SHANAWAS, holder of Indian Passport No. 4650880, declare to change my name from GAFFAR SYED HUSSAIN SHANAWAS to SYED SHANAWAS. (C 648) 15-9-2021

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).

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Arsenal win again as Liverpool go top



LIVERPOOL: Liverpool's Guinean midfielder Naby Keita (center) celebrates with teammates after scoring their third goal during the English Premier League football match between Liverpool and Crystal Palace at Anfield in Liverpool, northwest England yesterday. — AFP

LONDON: Martin Odegaard scored his first goal since his permanent switch to Arsenal yesterday to further ease the pressure on Mikel Arteta as Sadio Mane helped fire Liverpool to the top of the Premier League. Defending champions Manchester City dropped two points at home to Southampton after a 0-0 stalemate while struggling Wolves lost their fourth match in five against 10-man Brentford.

Arsenal were rock bottom of the table before last week's fixtures but wins against Norwich and now Burnley lifted them to the relative comfort of 12th spot before the late kick-off between Aston Villa and Everton.

Odegaard, who signed from Real Madrid last month after spending part of last season at the Emirates on loan, broke the deadlock in the 30th minute, curling home a free-kick to give the visitors a 1-0 lead at Turf Moor. Arsenal breathed a

sigh of relief when VAR overturned a penalty awarded to Burnley in the second half after Matej Vydra tumbled to the turf following a challenge by goalkeeper Aaron Ramsdale.

Liverpool forward Mane continued his eye-catching run against Crystal Palace, netting in his ninth league match in a row against the London side to send Jurgen Klopp's men top of the table with a 3-0 win. Mohamed Salah's glancing header from Konstantinos Tsimikas' corner was kept out by goalkeeper Vicente Guaita but Mane pounced to lash home his 100th goal for Liverpool in all competitions.

Salah doubled the Reds' lead in the 78th minute before Naby Keita sealed the win with a sweetly struck volley. Liverpool, champions in 2020, have made an impressive start to the season, scoring 12 goals in their opening five games and conceding just once.

Former United striker Louis Saha said the club could "afford" the defeat in Switzerland because they have a chance to recover but he believes Solskjaer will have less room for maneuver this season because of the strength of his squad. "I do think that he will be questioned faster because the team doesn't have any weaknesses," he said. "For me, it is a very strong side."

West Ham challenge

The Red Devils began the weekend on top of the Premier League with 10 points from their opening four games, with a potentially tricky trip to West Ham today. But some of the same flaws evident in midweek have also been on display in league games against Southampton, Wolves and Newcastle, only for United to be bailed out by their array of attacking talent. Despite their three wins, the team have lacked cohesion and have struggled to gain control of games, relying on moments of isolated magic from players such as Bruno Fernandes and Paul Pogba. Solskjaer has the unenviable task of striking a balance between defense and attack while keeping all his star names happy.

Marcus Rashford and Edinson Cavani are yet to feature this season due to injury, but will soon be competing for places with Ronaldo, Sancho, Mason Greenwood, Anthony Martial, Jesse Lingard, Donny van de Beek and Juan Mata. Behind them, Fernandes and Pogba have started the season in fine form, but their compatibility in a midfield three against stronger opposition is still up for debate.

"We've got goals, I know that, it's about striking a balance in the rest of the set-up," said Solskjaer after Newcastle made Ronaldo's homecoming last weekend far trickier than the 4-1 scoreline suggests. His attempts to find that balance in Switzerland were made tougher by Wan-Bissaka's dismissal but he drew criticism over his use of substitutes and tactics.

Solskjaer faced questions afterwards over why he took Ronaldo off at all and also over why he did not remove the 36-year-old earlier — showing how difficult it will be to keep everybody happy. The only way to quieten the noise is by getting back to winning ways, starting at the London Stadium today. — AFP

City drop points

Manchester City will rue their inability to beat Southampton at the Etihad after consecutive 5-0 home wins. It could have been worse for them after referee Jon Moss pointed to the spot when Kyle Walker bundled into the back of Adam Armstrong in the area, showing the England international a red card.

But the incident was reviewed by VAR and Moss eventually decided to overturn both decisions. The build-up to City's match was dominated by a row over attendance levels at the Etihad, with manager Pep Guardiola urging fans to fill empty seats in comments that irritated some supporters.

But fans were frustrated by battling Southampton, who kept City's attackers at bay despite relentless pressure. The home side thought they had snatched victory in the dying minutes after goalkeeper Alex McCarthy saved a Phil

Foden header and Raheem Sterling tucked in the rebound but the flag was raised.

Watford beat Norwich 3-1 to condemn the newly promoted Canaries to their fifth consecutive defeat. Watford took the lead in the 17th minute through Emmanuel Dennis but Teemu Pukki equalised before half time. Ismaila Sarr put the visitors back in front in the 63rd minute and scored again with 10 minutes to go.

In the early kick-off, Ivan Toney scored a goal and created another as 10-man Brentford beat Wolves 2-0 to maintain their impressive start to their first Premier League campaign. The 25-year-old striker won and converted a penalty before setting up Bryan Mbeumo as the Bees prevailed at Molineux despite Shandon Baptiste's red card in the second half. Tottenham host Chelsea today while Cristiano Ronaldo's Manchester United travel to West Ham. — AFP

Ronaldo's Man Utd return increases scrutiny on Solskjaer

MANCHESTER: Manchester United's shock Champions League defeat to Swiss champions Young Boys has already ratcheted up the pressure on Ole Gunnar Solskjaer despite an impressive start to the Premier League season.

A star-studded side including Cristiano Ronaldo plus £100 million-worth (\$138 million) of new signings in Raphael Varane and Jadon Sancho slipped to an embarrassing 2-1 loss in Bern.

United took the lead in Tuesday's opening Group F encounter in Switzerland but plans went awry after the dismissal of Aaron Wan-Bissaka, with Jesse Lingard's errant back-pass gifting the hosts a winner in time added on. Despite individual errors from his men, it was Solskjaer left in the firing line, with his in-game management once more coming under the microscope.

Ronaldo has hit the ground running since his return to the club from Juventus, scoring three goals in two games. But the fanfare surrounding the five-time Ballon d'Or winner also brings greater scrutiny on Solskjaer in what was always likely to be a defining season for the Norwegian.

The 48-year-old manager was handed a new three-year contract in July, reward for the progress United have made in the three years since he replaced Jose Mourinho. United finished second in the Premier League last season and qualified for the Champions League for a second consecutive season for just the second time since Alex Ferguson stepped down in 2013.

But Solskjaer — who won multiple trophies during his time as a player at Old Trafford — is yet to win silverware as United manager despite several near-misses. Given the talent now at his disposal even a League Cup or FA Cup win might not be enough to save his job if United do not mount a serious challenge for the Premier League or Champions League.



BERN: Manchester United's manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer (left) speaks with striker Cristiano Ronaldo as he leaves the field following a substitution during the UEFA Champions League Group F football match between Young Boys and Manchester United at Wankdorf stadium in Bern on Tuesday. — AFP

Bayern hit seven past Bochum to go top of Bundesliga

BERLIN: Bayern Munich topped the Bundesliga for the first time this season with a 7-0 thrashing of Bochum yesterday as Robert Lewandowski scored for a record 13th consecutive home league game. Joshua Kimmich netted twice while Lewandowski poached a second-half goal to claim another league record as Leroy Sane, Serge Gnabry and Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting all scored for Bayern.

Greek defender Vasilios Lampropoulos scored a first-half own goal as Bochum ran out of luck at the Allianz Arena. "Bochum worked hard, but everything went right for us after the first goal," Sane told Sky. Bayern will lose top spot in the league table if Wolfsburg maintain their 100 percent record with a

fifth straight win on Sunday against Eintracht Frankfurt. Bayern have won their last seven games, scoring at least three goals on each occasion, with Dortmund, Leipzig and Barcelona on the list of defeated opponents. Bochum, who have now won just once in 35 games at Bayern, were 4-0 down at half-time. Fresh from their Champions League win at Barcelona on Tuesday, Bayern head coach Julian Nagelsmann made three changes to the starting line-up. Josp Stanisic and Lucas Hernandez came into the back four with Gnabry on the right wing for Jamal Musiala.

Sane was whistled by disgruntled Bayern fans during the Bavarian giants' opening games this season after a series of below-par performances. However, the 25-year-old has since flourished with five assists and three goals in the last five games and also netted twice for Germany during this month's World Cup qualifiers. "It's not something I want to go through again," admitted Sane when asked about being whistled earlier in the season. "Things are going well for me. I played well today but there are always things to improve on." — AFP