



3 Amir's envoy urges world to unite, coordinate with UN to face COVID



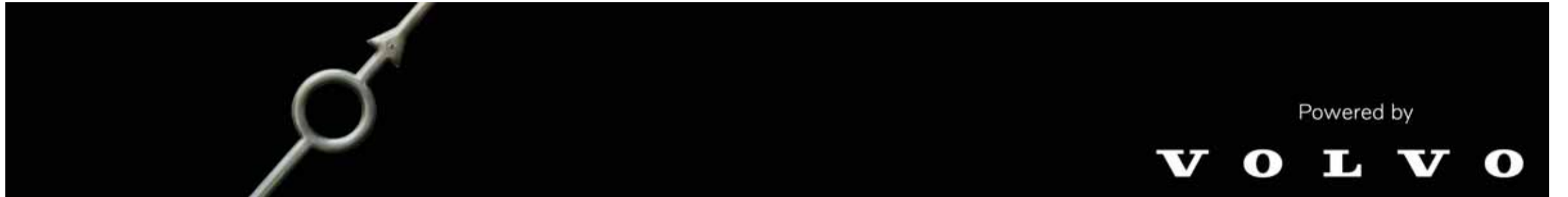
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Cabinet approves decree to convene Assembly on Oct 26

Humaidi says it's time to end disputes • MP calls to cut expat numbers

Amir hails accomplishments of Paralympians



KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Seif Palace yesterday Ahmad Naqa Al-Mutairi, who won a silver medal in the 100m wheelchair race, and Faisal Mubarak Sorour, who won the bronze in the shot put, at the 2020 Tokyo Paralympics. HH the Amir praised the achievements of Mutairi and Sorour, who defied all obstacles to win the medals. — KUNA (See Page 2)

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The Cabinet yesterday approved a draft decree convening the second ordinary session of the 16th legislative term of the National Assembly on Oct 26, 2021. The Cabinet also approved a draft decree appointing Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah as chief of HH the Crown Prince's Diwan with the rank of minister for four years. Both decrees were sent to HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for final approval.

Senior MP Bader Al-Humaidi yesterday called for opening a new chapter in Kuwait's politics by holding a national dialogue under the auspices of HH the Amir, insisting that HH the Amir is the only personality capable of rescuing the country from political paralysis. But he insisted that any dialogue or reconciliation should be preceded by measures to allow the return of self-exiled opposition figures who have been living in Turkey for over three years to escape jail terms.

The call for national dialogue was

reportedly proposed by a number of opposition MPs, but no details have been published yet. The Assembly speaker said two weeks ago that some political initiatives had been taken and expressed hope they would lead to a breakthrough.

Meanwhile, MP Osama Al-Shaheen yesterday urged the government to start implementing a law that calls for reducing the number of expats, who form around 70 percent of Kuwait's population. The lawmakers said the law was issued almost a year ago and became effective in November last year, but the government has so far done nothing to implement the legislation that calls to place a cap on the number of foreigners in the country.

He said the law calls on the government to delegate a minister to be responsible for the implementation of the law, but this has not happened. The government is required under the law to issue executive decisions within one year to implement the law, but this has also not happened although the yearlong period is about to end.

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News in brief

Pfizer jab safe for kids aged 5-11

FRANKFURT: Pfizer and BioNTech yesterday said trial results showed their coronavirus vaccine is safe and produces a robust immune response in children aged five to 11, adding that they would seek regulatory approval shortly. The vaccine would be administered at a lower dosage than for people over 12, they said. The trial results are the first of their kind for children under 12, with a Moderna trial for 6-11-year-olds still ongoing. — AFP

Philippines to reopen 120 schools

MANILA: The Philippines will reopen up to 120 schools for limited in-person classes for the first time since the start of the coronavirus pandemic in a pilot approved by President Rodrigo Duterte, officials said yesterday. While nearly every country in the world has already partially or fully reopened schools for face-to-face lessons, the Philippines has kept them closed since March 2020. — AFP

England withdraw cricket teams

LONDON: England cricket chiefs yesterday withdrew their men's and women's teams from next month's series in Pakistan citing "increasing concerns about travelling to the region". The historic trip, which would have been the first ever by an England women's team and the first by their male counterparts since 2005, was in serious doubt from the moment New Zealand pulled out of their own series in Pakistan on Friday over security concerns. — AFP

Lava engulfs 100 homes

LOS LLANOS DE ARIDANE, Spain: A surge of lava destroyed around 100 homes on Spain's Canary Islands a day after a volcano erupted, forcing 5,500 people to leave the area, local authorities said yesterday. The Cumbre Vieja erupted on Sunday afternoon, sending vast plumes of thick black smoke into the sky and belching molten lava that oozed down the mountainside on the island of La Palma. — AFP

US to end travel ban on all passengers who are vaccinated

WASHINGTON: The United States announced yesterday it will lift COVID travel bans on all air passengers in November if they are fully vaccinated and undergo testing and contact tracing. The unprecedented restrictions had kept relatives, friends and businesspeople around the world separated for many months as the pandemic grinds on.

Jeffrey Zients, coronavirus response coordina-

tor for President Joe Biden, told reporters the new "consistent approach" would take effect "early November". The easing of travel restrictions, imposed by Donald Trump 18 months ago as the COVID-19 pandemic first erupted, marks a significant shift by Biden and answers a major demand from European allies at a time of strained diplomatic relations.

Numerous safeguards will remain in place to suppress spread of the virus, which has already killed more than 670,000 Americans and is resurgent after what many had hoped was a lasting dip earlier this year. "Most importantly, foreign nationals flying to the US will be required to be fully vaccinated," Zients said.

It wasn't immediately clear if the new rule only

applied to US-approved vaccines or if other brands, such as those produced in China or Russia would also qualify. Zients said that would be determined by the US Centers for Disease Control. Restrictions on vehicle movement from Canada and Mexico will remain in place. "We do not have any updates on the land border policies," Zients said.

Zients said passengers will need to show they were fully vaccinated before boarding planes to the United States, as well as providing proof of a negative COVID-19 test taken within three days. Americans not fully vaccinated will still be able to enter but only on testing negative within a day of travel. Masks will be obligatory on US-bound flights and airlines will provide the US health

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Sourcing fuel, Hezb cements role as real ruler

BEIRUT: Iranian fuel has entered Lebanon without state authorization and despite US sanctions following arrangements by Shiite group Hezbollah, consecrating the party's status as the main powerhouse in the crisis-hit country. "This latest event gives yet another confirmation that Hezbollah has considerably increased its sway over the Lebanese state," said

political scientist Karim Emile Bitar. "It is no longer even trying to hide behind the veneer of legality offered by official institutions," he said.

Lebanon, grappling with its worst-ever financial crisis, defaulted on its debt last year and can no longer afford to import key goods, including petrol for vehicles and diesel for generators during almost round-the-clock power cuts. Fuel shortages have forced motorists to queue for hours - sometimes days - while electricity outages have plunged the country into darkness, paralyzing hospitals, schools and government offices.

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Dolphin kill casts shadow over tradition

COPENHAGEN: Every summer in the Faroe Islands hundreds of pilot whales and dolphins are slaughtered in drive hunts known as the "grind" that residents defend as a long-held tradition. The hunt always sparks fierce criticism abroad, but never so much as last week when a particularly bountiful catch saw 1,428 dolphins massacred in one day, raising questions on the

island itself about a practice that activists have long deemed cruel.

Images of hundreds upon hundreds of dolphins lined up on the sand, some of them hacked up by what appeared to be propellers, the water red with blood, shocked some of the staunchest supporters of the "grind" and raised concern in the archipelago's crucial fishing industry. For the first time, the local government of the autonomous Danish archipelago located in the depths of the North Atlantic said it would re-evaluate regulations surrounding the killing of dolphins specifically, without considering an outright ban on the tradition.

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Lebanese celebrate as tankers carrying Iranian fuel arrive from Syria at Al-Ain in Hermel in east Lebanon's Bekaa Valley on Sept 16, 2021. — AFP



TORSHAVN, Faroe Islands: In this file photo taken on May 29, 2019, fishermen and volunteers pull on the shore pilot whales they killed during a hunt as blood turns the sea red. — AFP

Local

Amir praises accomplishments of Kuwaiti Paralympic athletes, inventor

Crown Prince touts Kuwaitis' sports achievements



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Paralympic athletes Ahmad Naqa Al-Mutairi and Faisal Mubarak Sorour, with senior officials in attendance. — Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Engineer Jenan Essam Al-Shehab, in the presence of Information Minister Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Paralympic athletes Ahmad Naqa Al-Mutairi and Faisal Mubarak Sorour, with senior officials in attendance.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Engineer Jenan Essam Al-Shehab, in the presence of Information Minister Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Seif Palace yesterday Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi and honorary chairperson of Kuwait Disabled Sport Club Sheikha Sheikh Abdullah Al-Khalifa Al-Sabah. They were accompanied by Ahmad Naqa Al-Mutairi who won the 100m wheelchair silver medal race and Faisal Mubarak Sorour who won the bronze in the Shop Put, at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics.

His Highness the Amir praised the achievements of Mutairi and Sorour who defied all obstacles to win the medals. Following the audience, Sheikha Sheikh said His Highness the Amir congratulated the athletes for their victories. She said Kuwait was represented by three athletes at the Paralympics, two of them won medals, considering this an "outstanding achievement" which would have never happened without government and public support. Mutairi said they were hon-

ored to meet His Highness the Amir who congratulated "us for this accomplishment." Sorour said His Highness the Amir honored them with this meeting and he was asking about their needs.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir also received Minister Mutairi, accompanied by Engineer Jenan Essam Al-Shehab who won the gold medal at the World Genius Convention (WGC) held in Japan in 2021, as well as winning the gold medal at the 2021 DA VINCI International Innovation and Invention Expo. His Highness the Amir praised her achievements and wished her success. After the audience, Shehab said she was honored to meet His Highness the Amir and this reception would motivate her to seek further accomplishments. "His words touched my heart... and Inshallah the best is yet to come," said Shehab who has so far won six international gold medals.

In the meantime, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-

Sabah also received at Seif Palace yesterday Paralympic athletes Mutairi and Sorour, in the presence of Minister Mutairi, Sheikha Sheikhha, Director General of Public Authority for Youth and Sports Hamoud Fulaiteh Al-Shammari and Chairman of the Kuwaiti Paralympic Committee, Naser Al-Ajami. His Highness the Crown Prince praised the two athletes' achievements, as well as their perseverance to overcome who defied all difficulties to reach the podium during the international event, wishing them further progress and success.

Furthermore, His Highness Sheikh Mishal received minister Mutairi and Engineer Shehab, as His Highness the Crown Prince expressed admiration for her achievements and wished her further success. The meeting was attended by Director of His Highness the Crown Prince's office Jamal Al-Theyab, and His Highness's office undersecretary of foreign affairs Mazin Al-Essa attended both meetings. — KUNA

Sourcing fuel, Hezb cements...

Continued from Page 1

Despite being an integral part of the state - it holds seats in parliament and backs several cabinet ministers - Hezbollah has bemoaned the state's failure and vowed to step in with its own solution. The party, which is designated by the US as a terrorist group and is the only militia to have kept its arsenal after Lebanon's 1975-1990 war, arranged for dozens of trucks carrying Iranian fuel to enter Lebanon via Syria last week.

The delivery was not officially approved by the government and the trucks entered via an illegal crossing for a transaction that violates US and other sanctions. The move, although a first, falls in line with the Iran-backed party's long-standing autonomy from a weak centralized state that has stood idly on the sidelines as the group deployed in Syria in 2013 and repeatedly engaged in military confrontations with southern Zionist neighbor.

"Hezbollah's latest move weakens the state and perceptions of the state," political activist and energy expert Laury Haytayan told AFP. "It's very clear that the state is unable to stop Hezbollah. The state is watching and it's paralyzed and it can't take any action."

A total of 80 trucks carrying four million liters

(one million gallons) of Iranian fuel oil entered Lebanon on Thursday, days after a first Iranian ship reached the Syrian port of Baniyas. Three more Iranian ships are expected to deliver fuel oil and petrol in the coming weeks, according to Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah. The shipments were purchased by Lebanese businessmen, according to Iran, most likely with ties to Hezbollah.

The Lebanese government, headed by prime minister Najib Mikati and which was finally formed last week after a year-long delay, has distanced itself from the scheme. Speaking to CNN last week, Mikati described the Hezbollah delivery as "a violation of Lebanese sovereignty" but said he believed Lebanon would not be hit by US sanctions because the government had not authorized the shipment.

The first fuel delivery - which Hezbollah's Al-Manar TV says can only cover the needs of a single major institution such as a hospital for one month - is a "test", Haytayan said. If it goes unanswered by the US, then many traders may be emboldened to stock up despite the threat of sanctions, especially if shortages persist, the expert said.

Fuel distribution will be managed by Hezbollah auxiliaries that are already sanctioned and run no additional risk. Al-Amana, a fuel distribution company which is owned by Hezbollah and has been under US sanctions since Feb 2020, distributed a first batch of around 100,000 liters of fuel oil in the southern Hezbollah stronghold of Tyre and Beirut on Saturday. Al-Manar reported, without specifying the exact beneficiaries. — AFP

coronavirus pandemic. Kuwait's population now stands at 4.6 million, 1.5 million of whom are citizens and 3.1 million expats, down from 3.4 million before the pandemic.

MP Ali Al-Qattan yesterday sent a series of questions to Finance Minister Khalifa Hamada about the geographic and investment distribution of Kuwaiti assets overseas managed by Kuwait Investment Authority, estimated at around \$700 billion. The lawmaker also inquired about the return on investments in international stock markets every year for the past decade.

Dolphin kill casts shadow...

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"I had never seen anything like it before. This is the biggest catch in the Faroes," Jens Mortan Rasmussen, one of the hunter-fishermen present at the scene in the village of Skala, told AFP. While used to criticism, he said this time round it was "a little different". "Fish exporters are getting quite a lot of furious phone calls from their clients and the salmon industry has now mobilized against dolphin-hunting. It's a first."

The meat of pilot whales and dolphins is only eaten by the fishermen themselves, but there is concern that news of the massacre will hit the reputation of an archi-

pelago that relies considerably on exporting other fish including salmon. Traditionally, the Faroe Islands - which have a population of 50,000 - hunt pilot whales in a practice known as "grindadráp", or the "grind".

Hunters first surround the whales with a wide semicircle of fishing boats and then drive them into a bay to be beached and slaughtered by fishermen on the beach. Normally, around 600 pilot whales are hunted every year in this way, while fewer dolphins also get caught. Defending the hunt, the Faroese point to the abundance of whales, dolphins, and porpoises in their waters (over 100,000, or two per capita).

They see it as an open-air slaughterhouse that isn't that different to the millions of animals killed behind closed doors all over the world, said Vincent Kelner, the director of a documentary on the "grind". And it's of historical significance for the Faroese Islanders: Without this meat from the sea, their people would have disappeared. — AFP

US to end travel ban on all passengers...

Continued from Page 1

authorities with contact tracing information. "This new international travel system follows the science to keep Americans' international air travel safe," Zients said.

Britain and Germany quickly welcomed the lifting of the near total ban. The German ambassador to the United States called it "great news". "Hugely important to promote people-to-people contacts and transatlantic business," Ambassador Emily Haber tweeted. The announcement was also hailed by airlines, which have taken a huge hit during the pandemic shutdown.

The trade group Airlines For Europe predicted "a much-needed boost to trans-Atlantic traffic & tourism and will reunite families and friends". And Doug Parker, CEO of American Airlines, said "we welcome the Biden administration's science-based approach to begin lifting the restrictions." While it

had been widely expected that Biden would reopen borders to the European Union and Britain, the announcement covers the globe. "This applies to all international travel," Zients said.

Currently only US citizens, residents and foreigners with special visas are allowed to enter the United States from most European countries. The restriction has deeply irked EU and British authorities. Yesterday, the European Union recommended that member states reimpose restrictions on American travelers who had earlier been free to enter if vaccinated.

Biden's move comes on the eve of his speech to the annual UN General Assembly in New York, where the pandemic is due to be the headline issue. It also comes as Washington and Paris spar bitterly over Australia's sudden announcement that it will acquire US-built nuclear submarines as part of a new defense alliance, ditching a previous French contract for conventionally powered submarines.

France has recalled its ambassador from Washington and accused the Biden administration of stabbing it in the back. However, US officials denied that the White House's travel decision was an attempt to smooth ruffled French feathers. "This is really driven by the science," a State Department official said. — AFP

Cabinet approves decree to...

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The law calls to reduce the number of expats over the next five years and wants the government to set the mechanisms to do that.

Based on the latest population figures, around 300,000 residents have left the country during the

Local

Kuwait manpower authority suggests suspending work permits for one year

Around 71 percent residents paid between KD 60 and KD 359 a month

KUWAIT: A recent study by the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) indicated work permit issuance should be restricted for one complete year to weed out marginal labor and utilize skilled labor already in the country by allowing transfers. The study stressed that the interior ministry as well as departments related to deporting loose and violating laborers must intensify their efforts as well to resolve the issue of travel bans on those whose residency permits have expired.

The study, published by Al-Anbaa Arabic daily yesterday, made several recommendations including to issue decisions regulating work permits for small and medium projects, as the number of workers in them is estimated at 79,000 registered under only 4,000 small projects, in addition to deciding the actual needs of the marketplace through a workplan to estimate the need in a way that gradually increases as activities increase. All profession estimations should be automatically entered for all approved professions at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

The study said it is necessary to stop issuance of work permits for professions where a Kuwaiti who is seeking work for the same job is available, and ask all ministries and concerned authorities to monitor workers on government contracts, because it is necessary to benefit from workers on expired contracts and shift them to valid ones instead of bringing in new workers.

The study said the issue of bedoons (stateless) should be dealt with by allowing priority of appointment for them in professions Kuwaitis do not wish to work in, such as co-op cashiers and security guards.

Minimally-educated labor

The study issued recommendations to reduce the number of workers who have low qualifications, which represents a large portion of workers, such as at gas stations, shopping centers, car parks, taxi drivers, cleaning worker supervisors and guards on government contracts, and encourage youth to take up these jobs by increasing labor support of some jobs that are shunned by Kuwaitis, such as working in production lines in factories and others, to make them more attractive.

The study said young people must be motivated and made aware and directed to work in the industrial and agricultural sectors through caring for them and removing obstacles to enable them to create and run developmental projects and make sure they endure, especially those with secondary or lower academic qualifications.

It said Kuwaitis in government and private sectors must be allowed to work in more than one job and moti-

vate them in case they work in low-paying jobs in order to increase the individual's income and reduce the number of residents, as the case is in many developed countries. A recommendation was also made to allow Kuwaitis to work independently and in light jobs to replace marginal labor as much as possible, and provide places and support for Kuwaitis, such as in selling from vending stands and customs clearance.

The study said all state departments must tackle the population imbalance, as the issue is not PAM's problem alone; rather it is a joint role between concerned areas including the interior and commerce ministries, among others.

Population imbalance

The study asked all state departments to cooperate in order to remedy the population imbalance, bearing in mind that the imbalance is not in the increase in expat labor, as the state is carrying out development projects according to the state's development plan, and these projects require an increase in the number of workers. The imbalance is rather in expats' qualifications and the market's need for some specialties that can be replaced with national labor, along with the possibility of letting some residents go through the use of modern technology and advanced systems. Finally, the presence of expat workers in residential areas and having labor residences - especially for "bachelors" - in citizens' residential areas creates social and demographic problems, according to the study. It said Kuwait seeks through the development plan and the New Kuwait 2035 vision to reform Kuwait's economy and remedy the population imbalance. The study found an imbalance between those looking for jobs and the needs of the marketplace, leading to unemployment.

Expat salaries and wages

As for the distribution of residents according to salary, the study said 71 percent of the total number of expats (1.2 million) have salaries varying between less than KD 60 and KD 359, as the great majority have salaries between KD 60 and KD 119 (500,000), a salary of KD 120 to KD 179 for around 324,000 expats, KD 189 to KD 239 for around 146,000 residents and a salary of KD 300 to KD 359 for around 96,500 expats. Expats receiving salaries higher than KD 480 number around 231,800, and those with salaries between KD 420 and KD 479 are around 55,000.

About the distribution of Indian workers, the study said Indians are concentrated in the wholesale trade,



KUWAIT: This archive photo shows people resting under a tree near a worksite in Kuwait. The photo is used for illustration purpose only.

restaurants and hotels with 206,700 employees, followed by agriculture and fishing with 89,300.

Allowing students to work

It was recommended that Kuwaiti students be allowed to work part- and full-time from the age of 16 as the case is in many developed countries, which will result in the following:

- Reduction in the number of marginal labor on low salaries and those with higher academic qualifications.
- Encourage new generations to work for the private sector through practice and gaining experience.
- Enhance the level of practical and scientific qualifications and improve students' skills by working in the private sector in various jobs.
- Discover new skills and learn commitment and importance of work, along with strengthening self-confidence and contributing to job readiness in various work sectors.

2.92 million total workforce

The study said the total workforce in Kuwait is 2.92 million distributed over 1.7 million employees in the private sector, 464,400 in the government sector and around 744,000 in the domestic sector. It said the distribution of manpower according to countries is as follows: 35 percent from Arab countries, 57 percent from Asia, 4

percent from the Gulf region and 1 percent from Africa.

Manpower according to professions

The study revealed the distribution of manpower in Kuwait according to professions as follows:
181,000 in scientific and technical professions.
724,400 in agriculture, animal husbandry and fishing.
201,300 in sales.
116,900 office workers.
62,700 managers.
223,500 in services.
891,800 production workers, along with workers in related professions, workers operating transport vehicles and ordinary laborers.

479,400 Egyptian workers

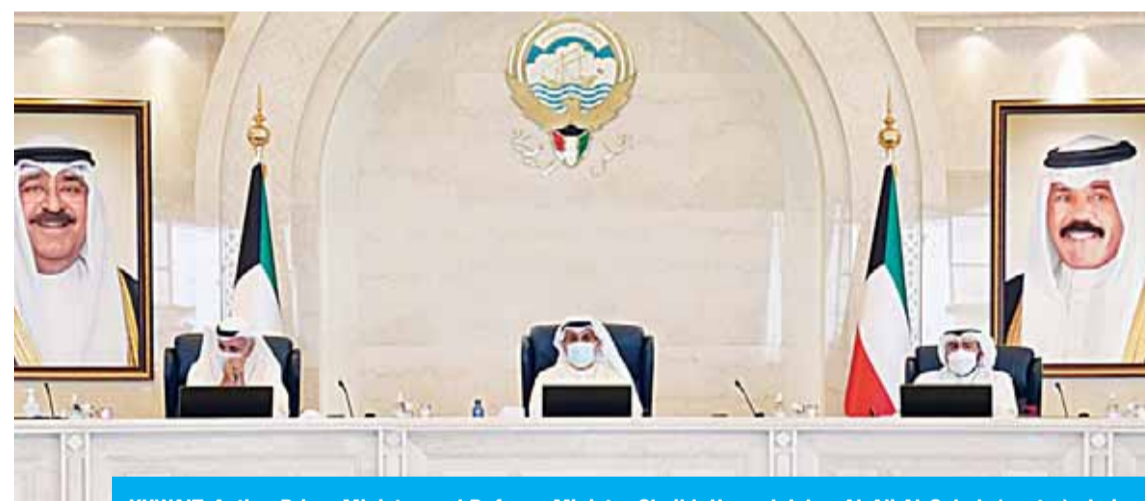
The study said the number of Egyptian workers is 479,400, most of whom are concentrated in restaurants and hotels with 221,900, 64,000 in construction, 22,300 in manufacturing industries, 43,200 in social services, 28,800 in finance and real estate, 35,500 in electricity, water and gas and 30,800 in agriculture and fishing.

It said 79 percent of Egyptian workers receive salaries of less than KD 360, and around 21 percent receive salaries over KD 360. It said 82 percent of Egyptian residents have secondary school or lower certificates, while 18 percent have a diploma or higher degrees.

Kuwait urges public to keep following health guidelines

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti Cabinet yesterday asked the public nationwide to carry on complying with health guidelines until the coronavirus pandemic is over. The call came during the customary weekly meeting presided over by Acting Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah. At the onset of the meeting, Minister of Health Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah gave a briefing on the latest health developments in the country as the number of COVID-19 infections has recently dropped. The Cabinet emphasized that all health precautions should be considered and those who have not yet been vaccinated need to do so soon until the pandemic is totally contained, the health minister said. In this context, all health instructions should be met during elections and general assembly meetings of both public and private sectors, he added.

Regarding the latest Arab and international political developments, the Cabinet condemned a recent



KUWAIT: Acting Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah (center) chairs the Cabinet's meeting yesterday. —KUNA

terrorist attack by Houthi militias against Saudi Arabia's southwestern city of Jazan, using a ballistic missile and four bomb drones. It reiterated that the continuation of such aggressive attempts targeting civilians and properties represents a threat to the kingdom's security and stability and a blatant defiance of international laws and norms. The Cabinet

restated Kuwait's total backing to the kingdom and stands by all measures it is taking to safeguard its security and sovereignty. The Cabinet, furthermore, voiced condolence over the demise of former Algerian president Abdelaziz Bouteflika, praying to Allah the Almighty to have mercy upon his soul and grant his family patience and fortitude. —KUNA

World must unite to confront COVID-19: Kuwait's Prime Minister



NEW YORK: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah (left) meets UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres. —KUNA



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets Sri Lanka's President Gotabaya Rajapaksa.

NEW YORK: The UN General Assembly takes place amidst "exceptional health circumstances," and the world should join hands and coordinate with UN to confront coronavirus, Representative of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah has said. His Highness the Prime Minister made the remarks during a meeting, Sunday night, with UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres on sidelines of the UN General Assembly's (UNGA) 76th session. He conveyed regards of His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and reaffirmed Kuwait's support of the UN to continue its "important and vital" role. He also reiterated Kuwait's support to Guterres in reforming the UN.

Guterres meanwhile praised Kuwait's support of the UN strategic plans and programs, as well as promotion of humanitarian work during crises. He thanked Kuwait for contributing to resolution of conflicts as well as achieving peace and stability in the region. The two senior officials discussed regional and international affairs, in addition to the UN role in boosting international peace and security, and sustainable development. The meeting was attended by Foreign Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet

Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Mohammad Al-Sabah, Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UN Mansour Al-Otaibi and his Deputy Bader Al-Munayyehk.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled met with President Gotabaya Rajapaksa of the Democratic Republic of Sri Lanka on the sidelines of the 76th UN General Assembly meetings. The meeting correlated both nations' consolidated relations as well as interests in strengthening and developing them, in addition to issues on the Assembly's agenda. Sheikh Dr Ahmad and Ambassador Otaibi attended the meeting. —KUNA

Between BRICS and Brexit

By Mohammad Bassam Al-Husseini

In June 2009, Obama's USA was overwhelmed by one of the worst economic crises in its history. The superpower was then suffering from critical wounds, and its preoccupation with its pains - Hollywood style - constituted an opportunity for its adversaries to unite and challenge its political-economic leadership of the world that has been in place since World War II.

The start was with the economic front through the BRICS grouping (comprising of Brazil, Russia, India, China and later South Africa). This ambitious bloc had all the faculties that qualified it for the mission - huge economic growth, natural resources, human capital and a leftist leaning, with the presence of Manmohan Singh at the helm of the Indian government and Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva as Brazil's leader.

America did not feel comfortable, of course, and a few years later, Singh's government collapsed and Lula went to prison as the right returned to India and Brazil again, which led to new positions for India and Brazil besides the US, and the fledgling alliance disintegrated.

The other front over which questions were raised about was the European Union following the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, as it rose as a confederation able to share leadership of the world equally with the US with its own currency and promising capabilities. The EU's rise was met with coolness in the NATO alliance and the start of problems that remained like embers under the ashes, key events like the Balkan conflict and wars in Afghanistan and Iraq (following the September 11 attacks).

These problems returned from the economic front, yet they hide a political, military and security reality, after Britain's choice to exit from the European Union. Brexit struck a blow to an idea whose roots go back over a century ago to French philosopher Victor Hugo and major intellectuals who were united in longing to unite the Old Continent, especially the main countries of France and Germany.

France finds itself in a situation that is not different from that of General Charles de Gaulle's withdrawal from the security committee of NATO in 1959, after it received a hard blow from the US over the cancellation of a submarine deal with Australia, as the latter suddenly opted for American vessels. This move follows losses due to Brexit and its effect on the European Union. It constitutes an embarrassment to France, which cannot bear such a hit to its military industries, especially after the failure of its scientists to develop a vaccine against COVID-19 despite being a beacon of science and medicine in the world at one stage.

All this is going on around us, while China is watching, preparing to be the next superpower that has the leadership capabilities, which will headline the inevitable confrontation between the US and the new Communism after the dust settles on the new international blocs in a world that is slowly changing. America remains globally as the stronger party that is difficult to defeat. The battles will be coming then, and there remains the question whether the coming years and decades will be "cold" or "hot".

Local

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KUWAIT: Amiri Diwan's Advisor Sheikh Faisal Al-Humoud Al-Malek Al-Sabah received Qatari Ambassador to Kuwait Ali bin Abdullah Zaid Al-Mahmoud at Seif Palace yesterday. —KUNA

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: This picture taken on September 4, 2021 shows a neglected chair at a public walkway in Yarmouk. —Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh (To have your picture featured in the Kuwait Times' 'Photo of the Day' section, please send your high resolution, unedited photos to local@kuwaittimes.com, along with the full name and Instagram account, in addition to a description showing the picture's location and date taken)

Alghanim Industries, INJAZ-Kuwait conclude internship program

KUWAIT: Alghanim Industries, one of the largest privately-owned companies in the region, concluded its annual summer internship program, organized this year in partnership with INJAZ-Kuwait. The closing ceremony took place at the Chairman's Club in KIPCO Tower, and was attended by CEO of Alghanim Industries Samir Kasem, CEO of INJAZ-Kuwait Laila Hilal Al-Mutairi, in addition to representatives from both organizations.

The summer internship program commenced in August, following a series of rigorous interviews with the hundreds of applicants who submitted their applications to INJAZ-Kuwait. A joint committee from Alghanim Industries and INJAZ-Kuwait carried out an intensive interviewing process for applicants to learn more about their interests, capabilities, and expectations before matching them with internship opportunities at Alghanim Industries.

Aligned with the Kuwaiti government's vision of encouraging nationals to join the private sector as part of its New Kuwait 2035, the internship program is tailored to foster local talent into promising professionals. With the program's successful comple-

tion, Alghanim Industries and INJAZ-Kuwait hope to encourage more young people to start their career in the private sector.

The annual summer internship program reiterates Alghanim Industries' ongoing commitment to developing youth and refining their professional skills ahead of joining the workforce.

The program reflects the company's dedication to help young people develop their potential as it provides interns with an opportunity to utilize their skills, hone their talents, and acquire professional experience in a proactive and dynamic workplace. Throughout the five-week internship program, students were trained then assigned different projects, working closely with professionals in different fields and departments to accomplish a variety of day-to-day tasks.

Alghanim Industries and INJAZ-Kuwait mark a continued partnership in providing educational and professional opportunities for Kuwaiti youth. Enriching the relationship between education and professionalism within young individuals is at the core of the partnership, with activities ranging from seminars and training programs to internships and direct exposure to work environments.

Through the support of leading private sector entities such as Alghanim Industries, INJAZ-Kuwait have trained thousands of students in Kuwait with educational programs on entrepreneurship, financial literacy, and work readiness.



KUWAIT: CEO of Alghanim Industries Samir Kasem and CEO of INJAZ-Kuwait Laila Hilal Al-Mutairi in a group photo with a number of trainees.

KFAED considers Sudan's debt reschedule

KHARTOUM: The Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) discusses rescheduling Sudan's debt within the framework of the international initiative of heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC), said a KFAED official yesterday.

Deputy Director of the operation department for Arab countries at KFAED Abdullah Al-Musaibeh made the remark in a statement on the occasion of a fund delegation visit to Sudan. He said that the visit to Sudan comes after success of debt relief negotiations with the member countries of Paris Club last July and the approval of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. He added that they also followed up previously signed debts and loans and discussed future projects. KFAED delegation arrived in Khartoum earlier on Sunday to hold talks with the Sudanese side. —KUNA

Kuwait chairs IAEA General Conference for first time



VIENNA: Kuwait's Ambassador to Austria and its Permanent Representative at International Organizations Sadiq Marafi speaks while chairing the 65th session of the International Atomic Energy Agency General Conference yesterday. —KUNA

VIENNA: Kuwait chaired yesterday the 65th session of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) General Conference for the first time since the Gulf state joined the agency over five decades ago. This came after the unanimous election of Kuwait by the 173 member states of IAEA, with the participation of 51 ministers and high-level officials from different countries worldwide.

In a speech before the conference, Kuwait's Ambassador to Austria and its Permanent Representative at International Organizations Sadiq Marafi thanked all member states of IAEA for granting Kuwait the opportunity to lead the session. He commended the member states of the Middle East and South Asia Group for their support of Kuwait's adoption of this nomination. He thanked Ambassador of Morocco to Austria Azzedine Farhane, for his distinguished leadership of the last session, and thanked Director General of IAEA Rafael Grossi, along with the staff.

Marafi commended the efforts made by the agency to work during the pandemic, as well as the efforts it made to support member states to face the repercussions of COVID-19. Kuwait believes in the importance of supporting science and technology, in addition to the pivotal role IAEA plays in its contribution to security and international peace, he underlined.

He underscored the keenness of Kuwait to support the agency's activities, programs and initiatives, calling on member states to provide all the resources that the agency needs to be able to carry out its tasks. Discussions yesterday focused on developing and strengthening the concepts of nuclear security, nuclear safeguards, in addition to other topics, he said.

The conference is the highest policy-making body in IAEA, held annually with the participation of member states to consider the agency's work. —KUNA

ACK holds virtual orientation for new students

KUWAIT: The Australian College of Kuwait (ACK) held a virtual orientation to welcome its new students in preparation for the 2021-2022 semesters, which begins on September 19, 2021. During the session, students were introduced to the policies and procedures at ACK, they were taught about the class structure, attendance rules, grading system as well as the code of conduct.

The orientation also included a detailed explanation of the blended learning system, in order to prepare students for the blend of on-campus and distance learning method that will begin on October 3, 2021. The blended learning policies and procedures were carefully explained for the different programs to acquaint students with the structure of on-campus classes and the health and safety procedures for them to follow when they must come to campus, along with how to navigate

the distance learning platforms for the off-campus session of their programs.

Beside the orientation, campus tour was offered to interested students willing to visit the campus and get to know its facilities and amenities closely. ACK considers orientations very important to be attended, as it helps guiding students and ensure their success throughout their university journey.

Commenting on the orientation session, Hussain Al-Haddad, Manager of Student Affairs at ACK, said: "It gives us immense pleasure to welcome our students, faculty and staff back on campus to start the new academic year. We wish everyone a very successful semester and we hope our students have an enjoyable experience here at ACK. We encourage our students to continue to adhere to the precautionary health measures and guidelines set by the College and by the relevant authorities to ensure a safe environment for our ACK community."



Hussain Al-Haddad



KHARTOUM: Officials attend a meeting during a visit of a Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development delegation to Sudan. —KUNA



Women outraged by Taliban's work restrictions

Rural Finland battles exodus of young women



PERM, Russia: This handout picture shows investigators working outside the building of the university of Perm following a shooting. —AFP

Shock at Russia university campus

Gunman kills six people in Perm State University

MOSCOW: A gunman killed six people on a university campus in Russia yesterday before being detained, investigators said, leaving students and teachers shaken and terrified. It was the second mass shooting in Russia this year to target students and came amid calls for stricter controls on access to firearms. Video on social media showed students throwing belongings from the windows of university buildings in the city of Perm, around 1,300 kilometers east of Moscow, before jumping to flee the shooter.

Witnesses described scenes of panic at Perm State University, saying the city of around one million people was left in shock by the tragedy. State media broadcast amateur footage reportedly taken during the attack showing an individual dressed in black tactical clothing, including a helmet, carrying a weapon and walking through the campus. The gunman, identified as a student at the university, carried out the shooting with a hunting rifle he purchased this year, according to Russia's Investigative Committee.

Ivan Pechishchev, a lecturer at the university, said that when he saw students jumping out of windows he thought there had been a fire. "They were all in shock, there was screaming, with everyone panicking and scared. I said 'What's going on?'" and someone said there was a shooting, the 39-year-old told AFP. Pechishchev said he hid with students in an auditorium for more than an hour before they were told they could leave the building. "The city is shocked and anxious. I walked home because it was impossible to get a taxi," Pechishchev said.

The Investigative Committee, which probes major crimes in Russia, said 28 people were being treated after the attack. "Some of them have been hospitalized with injuries of varying severity," it said in a statement. Investigators said he resisted arrest and was wounded before being taken to a medical facility.

Junior police lieutenant Konstantin Kalinin said he had to shoot the attacker after the man trained a rifle on him. "After that I gave him first aid," the policeman said in remarks released by the interior ministry. The health ministry said 19 among the wounded were being treated for gunshots. President Vladimir Putin



Second mass shooting this year

had been notified of the shooting, the Kremlin said, and ministers had been ordered to travel to Perm to coordinate assistance for the victims. "The president expresses sincere condolences to those who have lost family and loved ones," said Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov.

unemployment and crumbling public services. Nearly 25 million Iraqis are eligible to vote, to elect 329 lawmakers from a field of more than 3,200 candidates in 83 constituencies. A 25 percent quota has been reserved for women in the Council of Representatives, the unicameral assembly located inside Baghdad's high-security Green Zone. A new electoral law expands the number of constituencies and scraps list-based voting in favor of votes for individual candidates.

But candidates can still run on behalf of a party or coalition, meaning the traditional blocs and patronage networks will likely remain powerful. Mohammed, an economics graduate who works in a shop selling olive-, almond and other types of oils, says he feels "the election won't bring change". At age 30, he keeps postponing the idea of marriage because of the searing economic difficulties. "Basic services are not provided to me. Why should I go to vote?" he said, as the country suffers daily power cuts.

"The last time roads were paved in my neighborhood was before 2003," added Mohammed, who like many Iraqis prefers not to give his full name when discussing politics. In his Baghdad constituency, he said he knows two of the five candidates, but hasn't bothered to check their electoral platforms. "The political factions have been the same since 2003; the only thing that changes are the faces," he said. He denounced Iraq's entrenched clientelism, saying "the only people who vote are those who've been promised a job, or people who vote for someone close to them or from their tribe".

'Proliferation of weapons'

It is difficult to predict a winner in the race, where powerful blocs include the pro-Iran Shiite camp around the Hashed al-Shaabi paramilitary network and the Sadrist camp of popular Shiite leader Moqtada Sadr. Political scientist Marsin Alshamary said the election will be held in a climate of "apathy and despair, especially among young people". "Most people think that these elections will achieve nothing," added the

School shootings are relatively unusual in Russia due to tight security at education facilities and because it is difficult to buy firearms. But yesterday's attack was the second this year, after a 19-year-old opened fire in his old school in the central city of Kazan in May, killing nine people. Investigators said gunman suffered from a brain disorder, but he was deemed fit to receive a license for the semi-automatic shotgun he used in the attack.

On the day of that attack Putin called for a review of gun control laws. The age to acquire hunting rifles was increased from 18 to 21 and medical checks were strengthened. Peskov said yesterday that despite the tightened legislation "unfortunately, this tragedy has happened, and it has to be analyzed". "It looks like we are talking about abnormalities in a young man who committed these killings," Peskov said. Authorities have blamed foreign influence for previous school shootings, saying young Russians have been exposed online and on television to similar attacks in the United States and elsewhere.

In November 2019, a 19-year-old student in the far eastern town of Blagoveshchensk opened fire at his college, killing one classmate and injuring three other people before shooting and killing himself. In October 2018, another teenage gunman killed 20 people at a Kerch technical college in Crimea, the peninsula Russia annexed from Ukraine in 2014. He was shown in camera footage wearing a similar T-shirt to Eric Harris, one of the killers in the 1999 Columbine High School shooting in the United States, which left 13 people dead. —AFP



BAGHDAD: A campaign poster is seen in the Iraqi capital Baghdad, ahead of the upcoming parliamentary elections. —AFP

researcher from the US-based Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs.

Voter turnout "has been declining over previous elections cycles," she said. "In 2018 it was very bad. There is a very strong likelihood that this election will be worse." The gloom has deepened after the protest movement that started in October 2019 ended with little change and many dashed expectations. Many activists were murdered, kidnapped or intimidated. No one has claimed responsibility for the violence and no one has been held accountable.

The activists blame the "militias" in a country where Iranian-funded armed groups have steadily gained influence. Another Iraqi who said he won't cast his ballot is 28-year-old Ali, who argues that he does not want to be complicit in the "crime" the election represents for him. "There will be no transparent elections," the young man said. "The money of politicians dominates, there is a proliferation of weapons in all the constituencies. Whoever has the weapons will win." —AFP



PARIS: Borna Tarall (center right) is awarded with the 'Chevalier de l'Ordre National du Merite' by French President Emmanuel Macron during a ceremony in memory of the Harkis - Algerians who helped the French Army in the Algerian War of Independence, at the Elysee Palace yesterday. —AFP

The Harkis: 'Betrayed' soldiers from France's Algeria war

PARIS: As French President Emmanuel Macron formally apologizes to the Harkis yesterday, we look at the grim fate of the Muslim Algerians who fought on the side of France during their homeland's war of independence. Up to 200,000 Harkis - the name comes the Arabic word for "movement" given to the mobile units in which they served - fought for the French colonial power during the 1954-62 war with Algeria's National Liberation Front (FLN).

After a peace accord granting Algerian independence was signed on March 18, 1962, only around 42,000 Harkis were allowed to go to France, some bringing their wives and children. The French government initially refused to recognize their right to stay and many were held for years in squalid internment camps. In all up to 90,000 men, women and children fled. The rest remained in Algeria, where many were massacred. Harki activists in France who tried to prosecute Algeria in 2001 for crimes against humanity claimed 150,000 were killed.

Despised as traitors in Algeria, in France the Harkis were an inconvenient reminder of a painful defeat. The seven-year war of independence in Algeria saw nationalists rise up against and eventually defeat their French colonial rulers. There were atrocities on both sides and the conflict left some half a million dead. Some 400,000 Harkis and their descendants live in France today. They have fought a decades-long struggle, including hunger strikes and demonstrations, for official recognition of what happened to those left behind in Algeria. Their integration into France has been difficult as they are considered immigrants but are rejected by other immigrants. Former Algerian president Abdelaziz Bouteflika compared them with Nazi collaborators during a visit to Paris in 2000. While criticizing the conditions under which they were housed in France, he ruled out their return to Algeria. —AFP

'Apathy, despair' as Iraq looks to October vote

BAGHDAD: War-scarred Iraq will hold a parliamentary election next month but Sajad, a 23-year-old man sitting with his friends in a Baghdad cafe, doesn't really care. "I see the politicians' posters in the street, but I don't know the names or the programs," says the man with a shaved head and tattooed forearms. "I think they all have the same program: 'We will do this, we will do that.' It's all promises," he scoffs, a sentiment shared by his friends.

Iraq is emerging from almost two decades of war and insurgency since the 2003 US-led invasion toppled dictator Saddam Hussein and promised to bring freedom and democracy. Although parliamentary polls are to be held on October 10, there is little popular hope for major change through the ballot box, and widespread disillusionment about a political caste widely seen as inept and corrupt. Sajad, who works in a media production company, says he has no plans to vote.

Many people feel the same, and there are fears voter turnout could drop below the official rate of 44.5 percent from the most recent legislative election in 2018. In Iraq's public squares and along main avenues there are banners of candidates, and rallies, often attended by local notables and tribal chiefs, have sought to mobilize support. But overall, there has been little buzz as most Iraqis worry more about a painful economic crisis deepened by low oil prices and the COVID pandemic.

'Why should I vote?'

The polls were initially scheduled for 2022 but moved forward to June this year by Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhemi, then postponed to October. The early polls were a concession to a protest movement that broke out in the autumn of 2019, venting anger against corruption, soaring youth

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Corporate Office - New Delhi
Notice Inviting e-RFP

RFP No.: AESD/Wt/NDMC/GTE/01/2021-22

Name of work: Selection of Concessionaire for Processing and Disposal of municipal solid waste (mixed waste) by establishing Waste to Energy Plant at Rankhera or alternate suitable municipal land, New Delhi.

Downloading Period: 09/09/2021 to 25/10/2021 @ 1400 hrs. Indian Standard Time

Contact Person: Sh. Bijay Kumar, General Manager (AE).
Ph: +91 (11) 21226004, 24360282. Email: bijaykumar1@indianoil.in

Note: The above RFP is in electronic mode only. Submission of bids shall also be in Electronic Mode only. The bidder to submit their quote/ bid in soft copy only to the secure email addresses specified below:

Part-A: Submit Technical (Un-priced Part) Bid to the email address: AESD_Technical@indianoil.in.

Bids in physical form shall NOT be accepted. Any corrigendum, pre-bid clarification if required to be issued, shall also be issued in Electronic Form only. Visit <https://www.ioc.com/suppliers-notices> for downloading relevant documents and participation

International

Opposition claims mass fraud after Putin party sweeps vote

Ruling United Russia party wins a sweeping majority

MOSCOW: Russia's opposition accused the authorities of mass voter fraud as election results yesterday showed the ruling United Russia party winning a sweeping majority in parliament. The three-day vote that ended on Sunday followed an unprecedented crackdown on critics of President Vladimir Putin and came with pre-election polls showing United Russia's popularity at a historic low.

But the party still claimed a two-thirds majority in the lower house State Duma, with United Russia's Andrei Turchak saying it was a "convincing and clean victory". He told reporters the party had taken 120 seats from the party list and 195 single-mandate seats—a total of 315 seats from 450. It was a drop from the 334 seats United Russia held before the election, but still enough for the party to enact major legislation including changes to the constitution. With 95 percent of votes counted by 1000 GMT yesterday, United Russia was ahead with 49.6 percent of the vote followed by the Communist Party with 19.2 percent.

“

This is truly unbelievable

”

“Truly unbelievable”

Predictions by state-run pollsters had suggested United Russia winning only around 30 percent. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov hailed the “competitiveness, openness and honesty” of the elections, saying it was clear that “United Russia is the main preference of the voters”. But allies of jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny, Russia's leading opposition figure, called the results outrageous. “This is truly unbelievable. I remember the feeling in 2011, when they stole the election. The same is happening right now,” said Navalny's spokeswoman Kira Yarmysh. Claims of widespread fraud in 2011 sparked huge protests led by Navalny, who was arrested in

January and jailed on old fraud charges following a poisoning he blamed on the Kremlin.

His allies said the vote was being falsified on a massive scale, pointing especially to repeated delays in releasing the results of electronic voting in opposition-friendly Moscow. The European Union said the elections had suffered from intimidation and limited “credible” monitoring, while Germany called for fraud claims to be “clarified”. Navalny's organizations were banned as “extremist” ahead of the election and his top allies were arrested or fled and anyone associated with his groups was kept from running.

Gains for Communists

Navalny's team had called for opposition supporters to back other candidates who could potentially defeat United Russia, most of them from the Communist Party, and results indicated the “Smart Voting” campaign may have had some impact. United Russia's share of the vote was down from 54.2 percent in the last parliamentary election in 2016, while the Communists saw their

support grow from 13.3 percent. Three other parties appeared to have met the five percent threshold needed to enter parliament—the nationalist LDPR, the recently formed “New People” party, and “A Just Russia”, all with less than 10 percent.

The Communist Party's veteran leader Gennady Zyuganov said he was sure votes had been stolen from his party. “These are fake elections that nobody needs, and they are deepening social divisions in society,” Zyuganov, whose party has been accused of toeing the Kremlin line in the past, told reporters yesterday. He said the Communists had “received colossal support” and that the “stealing of votes” had undermined trust in Putin and his government. Navalny's top aide Leonid Volkov



MOSCOW: Members of a local electoral commission empty a ballot box at a polling station after the last day of the three-day parliamentary election in Moscow. —AFP

said the tactical voting project had “rattled” Russia's political elite.

“We forced them to either admit defeat or to falsify, in front of everyone, absolutely brazenly, without any shame. To admit moral bankruptcy,” Volkov said during a post-election live stream on YouTube. Authorities took drastic measures to deter the “Smart Voting” campaign, which provided lists of candidates with the best hope of denying Kremlin-aligned politicians a seat.

The campaign's website was shut down and Apple and Google removed the Smart Voting app from their stores, reportedly under threats to arrest their local staff. The popular Telegram mes-

senger also removed Navalny's Smart Voting bot, and Google Docs and YouTube videos containing the lists of recommended candidates were blocked.

Turnout was at 45 percent, according to the latest figures released by the election commission on Sunday. Critics had argued that online voting, new limits on election observers and the polls being spread over three days—a move officials said was to reduce coronavirus risks—all presented opportunities for fraud. Putin, 68, remains widely popular but United Russia has seen its support drop as living standards have declined following years of economic stagnation.—AFP

France vents anger over submarines but alone on world stage

UNITED NATIONS: Choosing a full-fledged confrontation with the United States due to the loss of a mega-contract for submarines for Australia, France is making a risky bet and other nations are not rushing to its defense. After Australia renounced its deal for conventional submarines in favor of US nuclear-powered ones, France took the extraordinary step of pulling its ambassadors from both Washington and Canberra for consultations.

Bertrand Badie, an international relations professor at the Sciences Po institute in Paris, said France had put itself in a position where it can only appear to be backing down or losing face once its ambassador returns to the United States, its historic ally. “When you get into a crisis like this, you better know where the exit is,” he said. Australia said it decided that nuclear submarines were a better choice to ensure its maritime edge as it announced a new three-way alliance with the United States and Britain widely seen as aimed at China — whose rise has been the overriding priority of US President Joe Biden's administration.

French President Emmanuel Macron, who has stayed subdued publicly, is set to speak to Biden in the coming days. But Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian has used language rarely used among friendly nations, alleging “lying” and “duplicitous” and saying France was “stabbed in the back” by Australia. He so far has no meeting scheduled on the sidelines of this week's UN General Assembly in New York with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, himself a French speaker known for his love of Europe.

No backing from Europe

With a contract worth Aus\$50 billion (\$36.5 billion, 31 billion euros) on its signing in 2016, the French anger may show the country's powerful defense industry that political leaders are pressing their case. But the diplomatic impact is less certain, with France appearing isolated at the start of the UN General Assembly.

Fellow EU power Germany, which holds elections next Sunday, is hardly eager to get involved. The government simply said it took note of the dispute. Celia Belin, an expert on transatlantic relations at the Brookings Institution, said that France could rally fellow European nations around shared perceptions that the Biden administration is lacking a Europe strategy. “France needs to share this assessment with European allies and put it on the table with the Americans to find solutions,” she said.

While most European nations rejoiced at seeing Biden defeat the divisive Donald Trump, Biden also triggered criticism from European allies over his determined withdrawal from Afghanistan, which led to a swift Taliban victory after a 20-year NATO-backed war. Another sore point is the continued Covid-19 ban on most Europeans from traveling to the United States, even as the European Union — spurred by nations depending on tourism — relaxed entrance requirements for Americans. —AFP

Rural Finland battles exodus of young women

ENONKOSKI: With its wooden church, tall pines and babbling river, the village of Enonkoski in eastern Finland looks like a dream come true for those seeking to escape the stress of big cities. But for many young women, the village actually equates with boredom and lack of opportunities and they have left in droves, an exodus that is being replicated all over the Finnish countryside in a concern for authorities.

Viivi Rinkinen is one of those who left, moving to Joensuu, a city two hours away, at the age of 16 to start high school. “It was kind of boring, I wanted some action,” she told AFP, now aged 25 and living in Malta. “All my female friends also moved away.” In the 1,400-strong village, men outnumber women two-to-one in the 15-24 age category. Just 28 women in that age bracket remain.

According to official data, over half of rural municipalities in Finland now have fewer than 81 women aged 15-24

for every 100 men of the same age, as they leave in pursuit of higher education or skilled jobs. Finnish girls often outperform boys in school and are more likely to go on to study at higher levels, frequently in a larger town. And in rural areas where the agriculture and construction industries dominate, jobs for highly-skilled women are scarce.

“Our employment market is still polarized into so-called men's jobs and women's jobs,” Timo Aro of regional development consultancy MDI said. Miika Leikas, a 19-year-old buildings manager in Enonkoski, concurred. “The girls aren't interested in working on the farms, unlike us boys,” he said. His friend Leevi Natunen, a trainee forestry machine operator, added that he and Leikas just wanted to stay where they grew up. “We don't fancy leaving and testing the waters,” he said. This migratory trend already existed, but better data and increased awareness mean that “it's being talked about more nowadays,” according to Aro.

Not listened to

The exodus of young women is speeding up an already drastic process of depopulation in rural Finland. Faced with the drain of skilled youngsters and a growing elderly care bill, some rural



ENONKOSKI: A few people enjoy a coffee on a terrace in Enonkoski, Finland. The village of Enonkoski in eastern Finland may look picturesque with its river and tall wooden church, but it is suffering from an exodus of young women. —AFP

municipalities are looking for ways to retain or lure back young women. In remote Kainuu in the centre of the country, authorities polled 500 local young women about their reasons for leaving. “Our politicians are worried,” development specialist Minna Komulainen of Kainuu Regional Council said. “It's natural that people leave elsewhere to study, but our problem is how to get them back afterwards.”

Half of young women felt they were not listened to in local decision-

making, and many cited a perceived intolerance towards different ethnicities or sexual orientation. Komulainen and her colleagues are teaming up with local businesses and politicians to try to create more job and apprenticeship opportunities for young women, and boost their participation in local politics. A PR campaign with a specially written song, “Longing for Kainuu”, aims to promote a more inclusive, dynamic image of the region.—AFP

Trudeau future on the line as Canadians vote

OTTAWA: Voting kicked off yesterday in Canadian elections that are headed for a photo finish, with liberal Prime Minister Justin Trudeau seeking a third term but threatened by a strong challenge from rookie conservative leader Erin O'Toole. Trudeau called the snap election hoping to parlay a smooth COVID-19 vaccine rollout — among the best in the world — into a new mandate to steer the nation's pandemic exit, without having to rely on opposition party support to pass his agenda.

But the contest, after a bumpy five weeks of campaigning, appears set for a repeat of the close 2019 general election that resulted in the one-time golden boy of Canadian politics clinging to power, yet losing his majority in parliament. A sudden surge in COVID-19 cases led by the Delta variant late in the campaign, after the lifting of most public health measures this summer, has also

thrown a wrench into the works.

Voting across Canada's six time zones started in the Atlantic island province of Newfoundland at 8:30 am and was to wrap up in westernmost British Columbia at 7:00 pm. At 49, Trudeau has faced tougher bouts and come out unscathed. But after six years in power, his administration is showing signs of fatigue, and it's been an uphill battle for him to convince Canadians to stick with his Liberals after falling short of high expectations set in his 2015 landslide win.

“The main ballot box question at the start of this campaign was whether the Liberals deserved to have a majority government,” said Daniel Beland, a politics professor at McGill University in Montreal. “But now the question is whether they deserve to stay in power.” Going into the final stretch, the two main political parties that ruled Canada since its 1867 confederation were neck and neck with about 31 percent of voting intentions each and four smaller factions nipping at their heels.

An estimated 27 million Canadians are eligible to cast a ballot to select 338 members of Parliament. To keep his job, Trudeau's Liberals must win a plurality of seats and take at least 170 for a majority. Due to the pandemic, a significant number of mail-in ballots (1.2 million) are expected, which could mean the results may not be known

The candidate unexpectedly turned up in person to the closed-door hearing in Berlin before the parliament's finance committee, after he was initially expected to take part by video link. Scholz was called in front of MPs after the finance and justice ministries were raided by prosecutors on September 9 as part of a probe into the Cologne-based Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU). The body, part of Germany's customs authority tasked with tackling money laundering, is suspected of failing to report potential wrongdoing to the relevant authorities.

Speaking after the hearing, Scholz said his ministry had taken steps to “continually improve” how the FIU works so that “potential offenders do not go undiscovered”. In a statement to the committee, Scholz said that no minister could solve all problems



MAPLE: Liberal Party Leader Justin Trudeau greets supporters during a campaign stop in Maple, Canada. —AFP

in the evening. Pollster and former political strategist Tim Powers advised not counting Trudeau out. “I still think Justin Trudeau will win a minority government,” he said. “But is that a win for him?” he added, suggesting Trudeau may be turfed as leader if the Liberals fare poorly at the ballot box. —AFP

“at the click of a finger”, sources inside the room said. Ahead of the meeting, opposition parties and the SPD's coalition partners, the conservative CDU-CSU alliance, accused Scholz of failures in the fight against money laundering.

CSU committee member Hans Michelbach described a “wide range of failures” that the finance minister would need to answer for. Merkel's conservative bloc has seen a steady decline in opinion polls under unpopular candidate Armin Laschet, allowing Scholz's SPD to move into first place. “Nerves at the SPD are shredded” at the prospect that the scandal could have an impact on the party's poll ratings, according to German weekly Der Spiegel, though prosecutors are also under scrutiny for the timing of the raids. —AFP

German chancellor candidate quizzed in fraud probe

FRANKFURT: German lawmakers yesterday grilled Finance Minister Olaf Scholz, the frontrunner to succeed Angela Merkel in national elections this weekend, over a high-stakes money-laundering probe that could shake up the race. Local media speculated that the scandal had unsettled allies in his centre-left Social Democratic Party (SPD), with less than a week to go before the September 26 vote.

International

Afghan women outraged by Taleban's work restrictions

Taleban tighten grip on women's rights

KABUL: Fears were mounting in Afghanistan yesterday as the Taleban tightened their grip on women's rights, slashing access to work and denying girls the right to secondary school education. After pledging a softer version of their brutal and repressive regime of the 1990s, the Islamic fundamentalists have been stripping away at freedoms one month after seizing power. "I may as well be dead," said one woman, who was sacked from her senior role at the foreign ministry. "I was in charge of a whole department and there were many women working with me... now we have all lost our jobs," she told AFP, insisting she not be identified for fear of reprisals.

The acting mayor of the capital Kabul has said any municipal jobs currently held by women would be filled by men. While the country's new rulers have not issued a formal policy outright banning women from working, directives by individual officials have amounted to their exclusion from the workplace. That came after the education ministry ordered male teachers and students back to secondary school at the weekend, but made no mention of the country's millions of women educators and girl pupils.

The all-male government on Friday also appeared to shut down the former administration's ministry of women's affairs and replaced it with one that earned notoriety during their first stint in power for enforcing religious doctrine. Many Afghan women fear they will never find meaningful employment. Yesterday, World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus landed in Kabul ahead of talks with the Taleban leadership, as the country's already impoverished health system struggles to function following the suspension of aid.



Municipal jobs to be filled by men

'When will that be?'
Although still marginalized, Afghan women have fought for and gained basic rights in the past 20 years, becoming lawmakers, judges, pilots and police officers, though mostly limited to large cities. 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 two decades of conflict. But since returning to power on August 15, the Taleban have shown no inclination to honor those rights.

When pressed, Taleban officials say women have been told to stay at home for their own security but will be allowed to work once proper segregation can be implemented. "When will that be?" a woman teacher said yesterday. "This happened last time. They kept saying they would allow us to return to work, but it never happened." Women in the capital remain deeply suspicious. "The Taleban told us not to come to work and to wait for their second announcement. But it seems like they don't want women to work again," a lawyer in the capital's high court told AFP.

A colleague fears that because of her past role prosecuting Taleban fighters, she will not be allowed to work again, but has noticed some changes in the regime. "They are not like before but we don't know if it will last. Before we had to be accompanied by a man, today we can come alone," she added. During the Taleban's first rule from 1996 to 2001, women were largely excluded from public life including being banned from leaving their homes unless accompanied by a male relative.

In Kabul on Friday, a sign for the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice was erected at the building housing the old government's Ministry for Women's Affairs building in the capital. Vice ministry enforcers were notorious for punishing anyone deemed not to be following the Taleban's strict



KABUL: A Taleban fighter watches as Afghan women hold placards during a demonstration demanding better rights for women in front of the former Ministry of Women Affairs in Kabul. —AFP

interpretation of Islam. Businesswoman Khaledi said her shop in Kabul selling Western style clothes was swiftly closed down after the Taleban took control. "They told us that women should not work as shopkeepers or run businesses," the 34-year-old said.

'Deeply worried'
Women have been at the forefront of a number of small, isolated protests, but the Taleban stamped down on dissent, dispersing crowds with gun fire and issuing new rules for demonstrations. No official from the new regime responded yesterday to requests for comment. In Herat, an education official insisted the issue of girls and women teachers returning to secondary school

was a question of time, not policy. "It is not exactly clear when that will happen: tomorrow, next week, next month, we don't know," Shahabudin Saqib said.

"It's not my decision because we have had a big revolution in Afghanistan." Ten-year-old Marwa yesterday attended her classes at school, but her sister, six years older, was forced to stay home. "I want the new government to reopen her school again. This is my request to the Taleban," she said. 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," the UN's children's agency UNICEF said. —AFP

Haitians angry after US deports them to Port-au-Prince

PORT-AU-PRINCE: Migrant families sent back to Haiti by the United States after attempting to enter the country from Mexico are angry at their treatment and fearful of returning back home to a life punctuated by gang violence. The deportation of Haitian migrants had been temporarily suspended by Washington after a devastating earthquake hit the Caribbean nation last month. But in recent days, more than 15,000 Haitians crossed into the country from Mexico and found themselves stranded for days in Texas under a bridge spanning the Rio Grande river, blocked from moving onwards.

Washington began sending back members of this group on Sunday, with three flights full of Haitian nationals landing in the capital Port-au-Prince after taking off from Texas hours earlier. "(US President Joe) Biden knows well what is happening, but he doesn't care," said one woman, tears streaming down her face as she described her time at a US migrant detention facility in Texas. "He treated us and our children, worse than animals,"

she said.

Fellow returnee Garry Momplaisir, who spent five days at the same facility, said that those held there had been forced to sleep on a concrete floor under thin plastic tarps. "We weren't able to shower. There were toilets, but no space to bathe ourselves," the 26-year-old added, who was deported with his wife and their five-year-old daughter. As they waited for Haitian authorities to complete their re-entry paperwork, many of the returned migrants took the opportunity to give their children a basic wash.

'No one can explain the horror'

According to flight manifests seen by AFP, nearly half of the 327 Haitians deported by the United States on Sunday are under five years old and were born abroad. Before arriving at the US-Mexico border, several of the Haitians had emigrated to Chile and Brazil in 2016 and 2017.

"In Santiago, I had a small business, my husband worked. We were able to save money — that's what allowed us to make the whole trip to the United States," said a 28-year-old woman, who identified herself only as Jeanne. She, her husband and their three-year-old son Mael, who has a Chilean passport, spent two months and \$9,000 traveling through South and Central America and Mexico on their way to the United States along a route that

the case attended. Rusesabagina, who used his fame to denounce Rwandan leader Paul Kagame as a dictator, was arrested in August 2020 when a plane he believed was bound for Burundi landed instead in the Rwandan capital Kigali. His family say Rusesabagina was kidnapped and had rejected the nine charges against him as payback by a vengeful government for his outspoken views.

Earlier this month, Kagame had dismissed criticism of the case, saying Rusesabagina was in the dock not because of his fame but over the lives lost "because of his actions". The trial began in February but the Belgian citizen and US green card holder boycotted it starting in March, accusing the court of "unfairness and a lack of independence". The United States — which awarded Rusesabagina its Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2005 — along with the European Parliament and Belgium were among those to raise concerns about his transfer to Rwanda and the fairness of his trial.

Conflicting testimony

Rusesabagina was the former manager of the Hotel des Mille Collines in Kigali, where he shel-

"These are extremely undesirable and dangerous acts which will upset the strategic balance in the Asia-Pacific region and trigger off a chain of nuclear arms race," North Korean state media KCNA quoted a foreign ministry official as saying. "This shows that the US is the chief culprit toppling the international nuclear non-proliferation system," they added. Nuclear-armed North Korea fired two missiles into the sea last Wednesday, with Seoul successfully test-firing a submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) hours later, becoming only the seventh country in the world with the technology.

South Korea's test is a strategic advance for Seoul. It has been strengthening its military capabilities to counter the threat posed by the North, which is under international sanctions for its nuclear weapons and bal-



PORT-AU-PRINCE: National migration authorities and expelled migrants walk off a plane on September 19, 2021 at the airport in Port au Prince. —AFP

human rights groups consider among the most dangerous in the world.

"It's an inexplicable thing. No one can really explain the horror," Jeanne said. "If I had known what I was going to live through, I would have never made the trip," she said, tearing up. The family thought they would benefit from the extension of the Temporary Protected Status policy in the United States, which allowed Haitians to temporarily stay in the country regardless of their immigration status. —AFP



KIGALI: In this file photo, 'Hotel Rwanda' hero Paul Rusesabagina (right) is handcuffed by a police officer after his pre-trial court session at the Kicukiro Primary court in Kigali, Rwanda. —AFP

tered hundreds of guests during the genocide that left 800,000 people dead, mostly ethnic Tutsis. A decade later the American actor Don Cheadle played Rusesabagina, a moderate Hutu, in the Oscar-nominated blockbuster that brought his story to an international audience. —AFP

istic missile programs. But in a separate statement carried by KCNA yesterday, the chief of North Korea's defense science agency called Seoul's newly developed SLBM a "clumsy piece of work" lacking key technology. "The homegrown SLBM unveiled by South Korea will not be able to serve as an effective means of attack at war," he said. The spate of missile tests and bumper defense deals in the Pacific have highlighted a regional arms race that is intensifying as a China-US rivalry grows. "It is quite natural that neighboring countries including China condemned these actions as irresponsible ones of destroying the peace and stability of the region," the North Korean foreign ministry official said. US President Joe Biden's new Australia-US-Britain defense alliance is widely seen as aimed at countering the rise of China. —AFP

News in brief

Italy inmate shoots at rivals

ROME: An Italian prisoner shot at fellow inmates through the bars of their cell with a weapon believed to have been smuggled in by drone, a prison union said yesterday. The 28-year old, who has links to the Neapolitan mafia, fired three shots Sunday at prisoners he had argued with, but without injuring them. Donato Capece, head of the Sappe prison union said. The man had got permission to leave his cell to have a shower, and once the door was open he pulled out the gun and pointed it at a guard, forcing him to hand over his keys to the other cells, Capece said. Unable to open the cells of his enemies, the inmate shot through the bars instead, he said. The man then used an illegal mobile phone to call his lawyer, who advised him to turn his weapon over to the authorities in the high-security prison, some 100 kilometers south-east of the capital Rome. —AFP

Grenade attack on Burundi bar

NAIROBI: At least two people were killed and a number of others wounded when a grenade exploded in a bar in Burundi's capital Gitega on Sunday evening, a police source said. The blast occurred a day after a series of mortar shells were fired at the airport in the economic hub of Bujumbura in an attack claimed by a rebel group. "A grenade was thrown last night in a bar run by a police officer where many officials and members of the ruling party were gathered," a security source told AFP on condition of anonymity. A police officer said the blast killed two people on the spot while eight people were being treated in medical facilities in Gitega. The attack was confirmed to AFP by two witnesses, who said that many people were injured. —AFP

India seizes \$20m heroin

AHMEDABAD: Indian authorities seized over \$20 million of heroin and detained seven Iranian men in a deep-sea drug bust off the country's western coast, officials said Sunday. Officials intercepted messages sent to the boat's crew and apprehended the vessel — travelling from Iran to Sri Lanka — 180 nautical miles off the coast of Gujarat, the state's anti-terror squad chief, Himanshu Shukla, told AFP. "It is suspected that there is about 30 kilograms or more heroin on the boat which is worth over 1.5 billion rupees (\$20 million) in the international market," Shukla said. Shukla added the boat, captured in a joint coast guard and anti-terror squad operation, was expected to arrive at a Gujarat port late Sunday. —AFP

Climate change: Burundi flee

NAIROBI: Natural disasters sparked by climate change have forced more than 100,000 people to flee their homes in Burundi in recent years, British charity Save the Children said in a new report released yesterday. It said climate shocks — not conflict — were now the main cause of internal displacement in the landlocked East African country, which has a largely rural population. "Over 84 percent of all internally displaced people in Burundi... have been displaced due to natural disasters rather than conflict, mostly due to the rise of Lake Tanganyika, Africa's second-largest lake," the charity said. Children have been particularly hard-hit, it said, adding: "An estimated 7,200 of the displaced people — or 7 percent of the total number — are babies under the age of one." Older children are unable to attend school, with many surviving on just one meal a day, the charity said. —AFP

US' alliance could trigger 'nuke arms race': North Korea

SEOUL: North Korea's foreign ministry yesterday said a new US alliance in the Indo-Pacific and Washington's recent submarine contract with Australia could trigger a "nuclear arms race" in the region. Last week the US announced a new three-way security pact with Australia and Britain, as part of a strategic partnership under which American nuclear submarines will be supplied to Canberra.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 21, 2021

Business

Chinese property tycoon loses \$1 billion in Evergrande panic

Collapse in faith: Behind Chinese real estate firm's cash crunch

BEIJING/HONG KONG: The boss of a Shanghai-based property developer lost more than a billion dollars yesterday, as fears over the potential collapse of Chinese real estate giant Evergrande sent panic across Hong Kong trading floors. Zhang Yuanlin, chairman of Sinic Holdings Group, saw his net worth drop from \$1.3 billion yesterday morning to \$250.7 million by the afternoon, according to Forbes, when his firm was forced to halt trading in Hong Kong following an 87 percent slump in its share price.

Zhang was featured on Forbes' Billionaires list of the world's richest people this year and made his fortune in high-rise apartments—now highly vulnerable as the possible collapse of teetering property giant China Evergrande sparks panic. Sinic saw a sudden sell-off and massive increase in trading volume on its shares in the hours prior to its suspension, which comes just weeks before it must pay a 9.5 percent \$246 million bond due on October 18, according to Bloomberg. A spokesperson for Sinic did not respond to AFP's request for comment.

The firm is one of many seeing fortunes wiped over investor fears that Evergrande—one of China's biggest developers—will default on upcoming interest payments this week as it wallows in debts of more than \$300 billion. With the property sector estimated to account for more than a quarter of China's GDP, there are concerns of a spillover into the domestic and global economy.

The crisis has even triggered rare protests outside the company's offices by investors and suppliers demanding their money—some of whom claim they are owed as much as \$1 million.

Anxious investors, employees and suppliers describe a scramble inside teetering Chinese property giant Evergrande, in a crisis that has shaken public trust as it struggles to tide over a liquidity crunch. The once-mighty Evergrande Group has long been the face of Chinese real estate, surfing a decades-long property boom to expand into more than 280 Chinese cities as it peddled home-ownership dreams.

But it is now smothered by a \$300 billion liabilities burden that has crushed its credit rating, share prices and reputation among a once-adoring public.



HONG KONG, China: An electronic board shows the Hang Seng index after it tumbled more than four percent in the morning session, in Hong Kong yesterday. — AFP

Throughout last week, the concourse outside Evergrande's mirrored offices in the southeastern city of Shenzhen was occupied by unpaid contractors, angry sales agents and investors—scenes echoed across a country where prolonged protest is rarely tolerated.

Now, as default appears all but inevitable, fears are abounding of a contagion within the Chinese property market—and far beyond.

'Severe punishment'

In an apparent response to rumors that riled investors, the company on Saturday vowed "severe punishment" for six managers found to have redeemed their investment products ahead of maturity dates. It

has also offered property and parking spaces instead of cash repayments of its debts. Investors have given the plan a frosty reception, citing a collapse in faith. "What I want is cash," said an investor who identified himself only by his surname Feng. "I'm not considering this plan." AFP has reached out to Evergrande repeatedly in recent days, but the firm has declined to comment.

Disgruntled Evergrande staff told AFP they were pushed to ramp up sales of financial products promising generous returns—or to invest more themselves. Rates of return ranged from seven to nine percent, according to staff and advertisements seen by AFP. "They wildly encouraged us to boost performance, giving us rewards," said an Evergrande Wealth sales consultant

on condition of anonymity. But she claimed it became impossible to reach managers in early September, when the company started facing trouble making repayments—triggering alarm. "Many clients put all their assets and retirement funds into Evergrande because they trusted (chairman Xu Jiayin) would be at the wheel and nothing would go wrong," she said.

Another employee surnamed Huang who bought financial products added: "Ahead of the maturity date, they asked us to put in more money instead of collecting repayment."

She and her relatives collectively put in 1.5 million yuan (\$230,000), enticed by promises of higher interest. "Now we've lost everything," she told AFP in Shenzhen. Sales tactics, according to several suppliers, involved pressure on business partners as well.

Dumbfounded

Big promises also accompanied a residential-retail-entertainment development in the eastern Suzhou city that now has hundreds of investors fearing for their nesteggs. The Evergrande Cultural Tourism City was to include apartments, a theme park and a commercial quarter made to resemble an old European village.

But homebuyers jammed the unfinished site ahead of completion, thrown into a frenzy by the firm's financial troubles. One investor who asked to remain anonymous said buyers were initially persuaded to grant sales staff authority to sign documents in their names, reassured by the firm's reputation.

But what followed were changing schedules for flat deliveries, financial terms slipped in without notice, and bills for property management fees for apartments that were nowhere near complete. "I was dumbfounded," she said.

"The whole story shows that lenders and other suppliers of capital have not done their job in exerting proper checks and balances on Evergrande," University of Hong Kong professor Zhiwu Chen said. Once a symbol of its might, Evergrande's Shenzhen headquarters is now a besieged barometer of the wide swathe of potential collateral damage, with investors, suppliers and other partners holding daily vigil.—AFP



DAX 40 is the new 30

FRANKFURT, Germany: A display showing the chart of Germany's share index DAX is pictured at the stock exchange in Frankfurt am Main, western Germany, yesterday. — AFP

Germany's DAX struggles as index grows to 40 firms

FRANKFURT: The DAX fell 2.6 percent in trading yesterday to its lowest level since July, as market turmoil marred the German blue-chip stock market index's expansion from 30 to 40 companies. The majority of the 10 new companies in the DAX were down shortly after 1100 GMT, with aerospace giant Airbus and e-commerce company Zalando both sinking around four percent, while the value of the revamped index sat at 15,080 points.

The negative development, driven indirectly by the struggles of Chinese real-estate giant Evergrande, meant the "euphoria around the redesigned DAX has fizzled out after one day of trading", said Andreas Lipkow, analyst at Comdirect. The new additions are intended to revitalize the index after a turbulent 2020 that saw national carrier Lufthansa drop out under pressure from the coronavirus pandemic and the collapse of payments company Wirecard after revelations of large-scale fraud. The updated line-up is also meant to reflect the changing face of the German economy, bringing in tech companies like Zalando and the meal-kit supplier HelloFresh. Both companies have benefited from people staying at home more during the pandemic, buying clothes online and ordering in food. The newcomers make the DAX "more attractive", said Norbert Kuhn from the German Stock Institute (DAI), which represents stock market participants.

A number of the companies in the DAX were "founded in the century before last", he said, and younger

companies would give the index more "momentum" going forward. Frankfurt stock exchange operator Deutsche Boerse was "following international standards" with a broader and longer list of companies that better reflected the German corporate landscape as the "concentration of automotive and chemical companies is reduced," Kuhn said. Some of the new names are nonetheless familiar, including Porsche SE, which holds a large stake in top German car group Volkswagen. Likewise, Siemens Healthineers joins parent company Siemens and spin-off Siemens Energy.

New rules

Deutsche Boerse and the DAX suffered a reputational blow last year after digital payments provider Wirecard admitted to a 1.9-billion-euro (\$2.2 billion) hole in its accounts. Wirecard filed for insolvency, executives were arrested and its share price plummeted 98 percent before it was booted off the index, becoming the first DAX-listed company to fail. New rules to better regulate entry into the DAX will be implemented during the expansion, with the aim of preventing another damaging scandal.

In particular, all companies hoping to join the elite will have to demonstrate an operating profit in the past two years—a test not all current members would have passed were the rules to apply retroactively. The mid-tier mDAX shrank from 60 to 50 values as some of its members were promoted to the top index. It began the day down 1.7 percent. Meanwhile, world stocks sank yesterday as trading floors were gripped by contagion fears from the expected collapse of debt-plagued Chinese property giant Evergrande, with investors also on red alert over spiking wholesale gas costs. Sentiment is being dented by strong inflation, the Federal Reserve's plans to taper monetary policy, surging infections with the Delta variant of coronavirus, and signs of weakness in the global recovery.—AFP

UK holds emergency meeting over soaring gas prices

LONDON: The UK government was yesterday holding an emergency meeting with energy and consumer groups, as the country experiences record gas prices that threaten huge bills for households as well as undermining food supplies and casting doubt on energy firms' futures. Prime Minister Boris Johnson sought to reassure consumers fearing surging winter power bills and the possibility of more small British energy firms collapsing from higher costs.

Faced with a fast-moving situation, Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng was meeting with the energy industry and consumer groups. Speaking during a visit to the United States, Johnson said "people should be reassured in the sense that yes there are a lot of short-term problems not just in our country... but around the world caused by gas supplies and shortages of all kinds". "We've got to try and fix it as fast as we can, make sure we have the supplies we want, make sure we don't allow the companies we rely on to go under. We'll have to do everything we can," British media reported him as saying.

'Bleak outlook'

Prices of natural gas in Britain have hit record highs, also driven up after a fire knocked out a vital point connecting the country's power grid to France. Wholesale prices for gas have rocketed 70 percent since August, adding to already strong inflation that has been stoked by staff shortages as economies reopen after pandemic lockdowns. Market prices have soared by 203 percent since January. Many small energy providers have emerged in the UK market over recent years, grabbing large amounts of customers from established players such as British Gas.

But yesterday, Peter McGirr, chief executive of small energy firm Green, said "the outlook is looking bleak". "We just don't have as deep pockets to keep going through this crisis. I think that all suppliers are feeling the pinch of this but some of them just have a lot deeper pockets to try and ride out the storm." McGirr called for government support or "it's unlikely we will see the winter through".—AFP



PARIS: In this file photo, gas hobs burn in Paris. The UK government yesterday sought to dampen the flames from soaring wholesale gas prices that have added to concerns over runaway inflation. — AFP



Pandemic speeds innovation shift to Asia: UN

GENEVA: The COVID-19 pandemic sped up the shift of innovation from Europe and North America towards Asia, UN world rankings showed Monday. The Global Innovation Index 2021, from the United Nations' World Intellectual Property Organization, showed surging performances by South Korea and China.

"The pandemic has accelerated the long-term geographical shift of innovation activities toward Asia, even if Northern America and Europe continue to host some of the world's leading innovators," said WIPO. While the top four in the global rankings remained the same as last year — with Switzerland leading for the 11th year running followed by Sweden, the United States and Britain — South Korea leapt five places to fifth. The index found "substantial increases in brand values in Korea, in trademarks being filed, but also in cultural and creative services exports," index co-editor Sacha Wunsch-Vincent told reporters, citing the K-Pop phenomenon. The Netherlands, Finland, Singapore, Denmark and Germany round out the top 10.

Meanwhile China continued its progress towards the top 10 and is still the only middle-income economy in the top 30, up two places to number 12.

Wunsch-Vincent said the country's innovation players were individually strong and China was now trying to connect them better "so that public research feeds into commercial innovation". Turkey (41), Vietnam (44), India (46) and the Philippines (51) are the only other middle-income nations that are systematically catching up.

"Beyond China, these four particularly large economies together have the potential to change the global innovation landscape for good," WIPO said.

The index ranks 132 economies. Among low income countries, Rwanda leads the way in 102nd place, ahead of Tajikistan (103) and Malawi (107).

WIPO's index found that countries and businesses increased investments in innovation despite the COVID-19 crisis, in a bid to stimulate post-pandemic economic growth. Scientific output, research and development, IP filings and venture capital deals continued to grow in 2020. Companies whose innovations revolved around measures to contain the pandemic and its effects — particularly pharmaceuticals and information technology — redoubled their innovation investments.—AFP

KFH wins 'Best Domestic Bank in Kuwait 2021' award

Asiamoney Magazine honors KFH for its outstanding performance

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH), the world's leading Islamic financial institution, has won the prestigious Best Domestic Bank in Kuwait 2021 award from Asiamoney Magazine, a renowned global financial publication. KFH was awarded for its outstanding performance across a range of core banking activities in the domestic sector over the past 12 months. The award is also a recognition of the bank's contribution to the growth of the Islamic finance industry in Kuwait.



Abdulwahab Al-Rushood

Abdulwahab Al-Rushood, Acting Group Chief Executive Officer at KFH said: "Winning the Award for Kuwait's Best Domestic Bank from Asiamoney Magazine is such an honor. It provides a global recognition of our pioneering role in banking sector through harnessing KFH's capabilities and expertise and the latest technology to deliver accessible, convenient and innovative banking products. This award attests to the KFH leading position in the local and international markets and we are delighted that our significant investment in providing highest standards of Islamic financial services is yielding the desired results."

"KFH's headline-grabbing banking solutions, powered by its robust digital platform provide diverse products and services to governments and corporate and retail clients to meet and exceed their evolving needs and expectations. The digital services offered by KFH witnessed big boom through launching a series of innovative digital banking solutions especially during these challenging COVID-19 times. These solutions include for example and not limited to opening bank account online" service for citizens and residents, digital signature service in personal financing products that includes the electronic handling of all paper documents for personal finance transactions, instant transfer using " RippleNet" network and Swift GPI service through KFHOnline. In addition, KFH was the first bank in the world to use NCR Hybrid Solution to instantly issue banking cards without a prior request."

Al-Rushood emphasized that the award indicates the readiness and capability KFH enjoys and its big efforts to broaden its services for retail investors in response to the coronavirus pandemic. He added that the bank deployed



unique innovative digital banking solutions relying on its advanced IT infrastructure, which was part of a successful digital transformation strategy that the bank has implemented. Al-Rushood explained that the efficiency of KFH's

digital services is reflected in the huge demand of the bank's customers to use digital transactions through KFHonline or the mobile app. This emphasizes the successful efforts KFH exerted to provide innovative banking solutions to enable customers to complete their transactions around the clock, from anywhere, easily and safely.

Asiamoney's award decisions were made by a team of senior journalists after receiving detailed submissions from market participants and in conjunction with research into the banking and capital markets by its editorial committee. The magazine's senior editors also visited each country or territory to meet leading bankers and gather client and competitor feedback.

As a subsidiary of Euromoney, Hong Kong-based Asiamoney magazine cov-

ers the Asian financial service sector and publishes detailed financial and investment reports on issuers, investment companies and financial decision makers in public and private sectors.

It is worth mentioning that KFH won prestigious awards from international magazines and institutions such as the "World's Best Islamic Bank 2021" Award and "Best Treasury and Cash Management Bank in Kuwait" Award 2021 from Global Finance Magazine. Along with other illustrious awards won by KFH based on specific professional standards, the bank won "Best Islamic Bank in Middle East" and "Best Islamic Bank in Kuwait" 2021 Awards from the prestigious "The Banker Magazine", and "Best Islamic Bank in the Middle East" Award and "Best Bank in Kuwait" Awards from EMEA Finance Magazine.

- **Al-Rushood: the award is a global recognition of our pioneering role in banking industry**
- **Successful efforts exerted by KFH to provide innovative banking solutions**
- **The efficiency of KFH's digital services is reflected in the huge demand of customers to use digital transactions**

بيت التمويل الكويتي
Kuwait Finance House



Kuwait Finance House
BEST DOMESTIC BANK IN KUWAIT
2021



Based on Asiamoney Magazine's
Mechanism and Standard

Business

NBK International Report

Delta worries, supply shortages temper global recovery optimism

Weaker-than-expected non-farm payrolls point to slow US recovery

KUWAIT: While the narrative of a recovering global economy has remained broadly intact in recent weeks, worries over the spread of the Delta virus variant together with persistent supply shortages, the impact of rising consumer and producer prices on households and businesses and uncertainties over the Fed's QE tapering timeline, are all injecting a degree of caution over the robustness of the growth outlook. Key US and European equity markets pulled back up to 2 percent in early September reflecting these concerns, though are still up around 10-20 percent year-to-date. Meanwhile, slightly slower-than-expected US inflation in August helped ease inflation worries and supported the Fed's case that recent worryingly-high inflation rates will be transitory - although the debate is by no means over. The figures did help stem the late-summer drift upwards in US treasury yields, however, with the benchmark 10-year yield now just above 1.3 percent, up from below 1.2 percent in early August.

US momentum slowing

The US economic recovery remains on track, but there are increasing signs that momentum is slowing amid the surge in Delta variant cases and ongoing supply chain shortages. GDP growth for Q2, which had missed expectations, was revised slightly up to an annualized 6.6 percent from 6.5 percent previously and 6.3 percent in Q1. Consumer sentiment dropped to a 10-year low of 70.2 in August (81.2 in July), which was mainly attributed to the spread of the Delta variant, but also to high prices. If this weakness is sustained, consumer spending might soften further, after retail sales for July fell by a more-than-expected 1.1 percent m/m. In another sign of easing momentum, non-farm payrolls rose by 235,000 in August, missing consensus expectations (around 740,000) by a wide margin, although the unemployment rate decreased to 5.2 percent from 5.4 percent in July. New jobless claims edged up to 332,000 in the week ending 11 September, albeit from a pandemic-era low one week earlier.

Meanwhile, the House narrowly passed the \$3.5trn budget "blueprint", and locked in a 27 September deadline to vote on the \$1trn infrastructure bill, effectively moving one-step closer to passing both bills later in the year. Nevertheless, the size of the budget bill may be reduced, and will most probably come with an increase in tax rates (corporate and personal), though any increases are expected to be limited, given Democrats' tightrope majority and opposition from moderate Democrats.



Source: Refinitiv

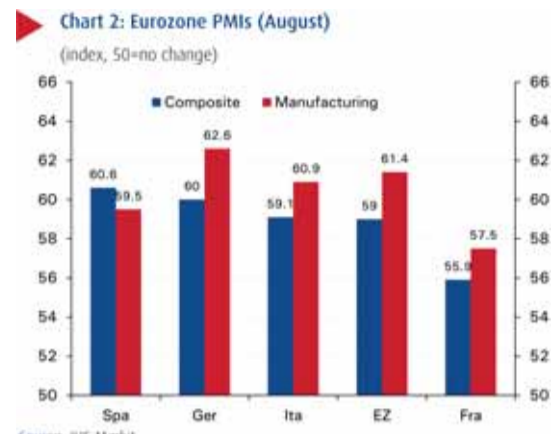
Eurozone activity rebounds

Economic indicators across the Eurozone have been strong in recent months, though may now have passed their peak as the post-lockdown boom fades, supply shortages and cost rises impact businesses and amid worries over the late summer spread of Delta variant cases (although the latter seems now to be abating).

The composite PMI activity gauge stood at a robust 59.0 in August, slightly down from July's 15-year peak of 60.2 but still consistent with rapid growth. Strong demand is also underpinning the labor market recovery, with the unemployment rate falling to 7.6 percent in July from 8.2 percent in April, albeit still benefiting from furlough schemes that are getting closer to being withdrawn. The above metrics look consistent with another big GDP rise of 2 percent or more q/q in Q3, following on from the better-than-expected 2.2 percent gain in Q2.

Japan's economic growth

Japan's economy grew by an annualized 1.9 percent (+0.5 percent q/q) in 2Q21, beating consensus expectations of 1.3 percent. This was a welcome turnaround after output contracted by 4.2 percent in the previous quarter, and came amid a third state of emergency imposed by the authorities to contain the coronavirus pandemic. Private consumption, business investment and government spending were all stronger in 2Q21. The outlook for 3Q21 GDP growth, is, therefore, likely to be weaker as a result. Declines were observed in the August PMIs in both manufacturing (to 52.7 from 53.0) and services (to 42.9 from 47.4).



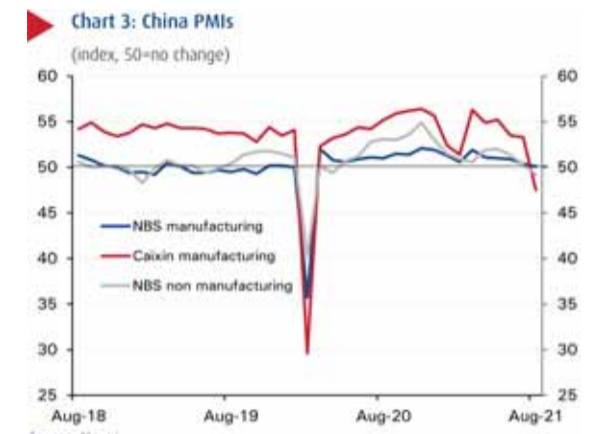
Source: IHS Markit

Chinese indicators

Economic indicators in China are showing signs of a slower recovery and weaker demand as the government responds to Delta variant outbreaks with tighter travel restrictions and local lockdowns (as part of its zero-COVID strategy). In August, retail sales (+2.5 percent y/y) and industrial production (+5.3 percent) both rose at slower rates, missing market forecasts and continuing the six-month downtrend. Amidst surging producer price inflation (+9.5 percent y/y), purchasing manager indices also fell, with both the National Bureau of Statistics manufacturing (50.1) and non-manufacturing indices (47.5) registering their weakest levels since February 2020. However, exports gave a welcome boost to the economy, beating expectations (+26 percent y/y) as solid foreign demand helped offset COVID disruptions.

Meanwhile, China's "common prosperity" framework, championed by President Xi, has led to significant reforms aimed at narrowing the wealth gap. In August, regulatory authorities introduced new anti-monopoly legislation, aiming to curb tech giants' influence, while government crackdowns erased billions of dollars in market value of the largest players.

India's GDP surged 20.1 percent y/y in 2Q21 (1Q FY21/22) mainly on the low base from the pandemic-induced, record slump in activity in 2Q20. However, on a quarterly basis, GDP fell 17 percent reflecting much weaker business activity during the quarter due to a severe surge in virus cases. The virus scene has since improved drastically, leading to a rebound in activity. In August, the composite PMI surged to 55.4 (the highest since April) from 49.2 in July, helped by stronger demand and a much slower pace of job shed-



Source: Haver

ding. Furthermore, inflation fell to 5.6 percent in July from 6.3 percent in June, within the central bank's 2-6 percent target range.

Oil prices recover

International oil prices closed out a turbulent August with their first monthly loss since March and their biggest in almost a year as markets fretted over rising Delta variant infections in East Asia, weakening Chinese economic growth, potentially tighter Fed monetary policy and calls by President Biden for OPEC to release more supplies into the market. While OPEC+ resisted the call and stuck to its 400 kb/d monthly supply increase (to April 2022), the arrival of Hurricane Ida in the US Gulf Coast and the damage it wrought on US oil infrastructure eventually helped prices gain more than 11 percent over the last 8 trading days of the month. Brent dropped 4.4 percent in August, closing a shade off \$73/bbl.

The marker has subsequently edged higher to \$75.3/bbl as of 17 September, continuing to benefit from supply issues: Ida's idling of US crude production (-1.5 mb/d to 10 mb/d in the w/e 3 September) and fears that Libyan crude supplies would be hit by protests at key oil fields and ports. On the demand side, the International Energy Agency, in its September report, estimated that the resurgent coronavirus infections in East Asia in the summer period helped pull global oil consumption down for three straight months. The agency expects oil demand to rebound over the coming months and to grow by 5.2 mb/d this year and by 3.2 mb/d in 2022. Higher global vaccine penetration rates will facilitate the economic recovery.

NBK supports 'Let's Be Aware' campaign

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) is always keen to promote financial culture and raise awareness among different segments of society. To that end, the Bank focused its efforts to support "Let's Be Aware" campaign launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK).



Mohammad Al-Kharafi

Through its platform on social media and other channels, NBK continuously raises awareness about the risks of trading cryptocurrencies and investing in virtual assets, due to potential losses.

Recently, the Bank stepped up its awareness campaign, adding new content and publishing experts' opinions, interviews, and discussions to raise public awareness of the numerous risks associated with these high-risk assets. This campaign supports CBK's efforts to raise customers' awareness of the risks associated with trading virtual assets.

On this occasion, Mohammad Al-Kharafi, Head of Group Operations at National Bank of Kuwait said: "We work to ensure that the public is aware of the inherent risks of investing in virtual currencies due to the high degree of uncertainty and their unregulated nature. Therefore, we strive to promote financial culture and banking awareness, in addition to fully support CBK's campaign to educate customers about their rights and how to protect their data, banking information and funds."

"While we caution our customers of risky investment channels, we also offer safe and diversified investment and savings alternatives to suit everyone," Al-Kharafi added. Al-Kharafi stressed that NBK harnesses all its capabilities and its digital channels to support CBK's efforts to protect customers and the economy.

It is worth mentioning that NBK is a key supporter and partner in all CBK's initiatives and campaigns aiming to raise financial awareness and spread banking culture among all segments of society. As a leading financial institution in Kuwait and across the region, NBK frequently organizes various activities that contribute to raising awareness about all topics related to the banking sector. It also organizes various activities and training courses on combating fraud and financial crimes. CBK launched "Let's Be Aware" banking awareness campaign, in cooperation with Kuwaiti banks, as part of its efforts to spread financial culture and raise awareness among banks' customers of their rights and responsibilities and the best ways to benefit from banking services. The campaign also aims to promote the saving and investment culture, as well as other related topics, by publishing a variety of awareness material and information relevant to financial culture.

KAICO and Michelin open Tyreplus Express outlets at Oula stations

KUWAIT: Kuwait Automotive Imports Company (Al-Shaya Al-Sagar), exclusive distributors of Michelin Tyres in Kuwait over 70 years, has opened Tyreplus Express outlets in Kabd and Shuaiba Oula stations respectively.

Tyreplus outlets are spread across Kuwait in multiple locations. Tyreplus' main branch is located in the prime location of Shuwaikh Industrial area, middle of Canada Dry Street. The facility has pleasant ambience and a wide collection of various recognized Tyre brands to provide customers with best solutions in the market. The store has a professional team with well trained staff with required technical skills.

A global retail concept developed by Michelin in 2002, Tyreplus has a presence in 26 countries with over 1,600 franchises, a network certified by Michelin, and continues to roll forward. Combining high quality products, skilled and knowledgeable technicians and multiple pit stops, Tyreplus offers unmatched levels of service so that you can enjoy a safe and comfortable ride. Tyreplus is an independent professional network of tire retail stores that

offers Michelin Tyres, along with various tyre brands (BFGoodrich, Tigar, and Apollo) complemented with professional tire services such as tire repairs, wheel alignment, wheel balancing and many more.

The first Tyreplus branch in Kuwait was opened in Jahra Industrial area in January 2008 followed by Tyreplus Ahmadi outlet in 2014 and now in Kabd and Shuaiba Oula stations. KAICO aims at reaching its customer and providing them quality products and services no matter where they reside. KAICO's Business philosophy is 'Customer is No 1.'

In addition, Tyreplus also offers free safety checks, nitrogen inflation and air conditioning recharge, also including non-tyre related services and products such as Mobil 1 and Mobil Delvac Oil change, all under one roof with a clean, friendly, safe, pleasant and comfortable environment. Yousef Al-Shaya, CEO of KAICO said, "We are very positive about our long-term prospects and growth opportunities in Kuwait, with great success and heritage between Michelin and KAICO, we plan to expand Tyreplus Express within Kuwait and will continue to provide outstanding products & services."

Ashish Tandon, General Manager of KAICO AISHAYA ALSAGAR added "We are glad to serve Customers through our Tyreplus Express store located in Fahaheel, Kabd and Shuaiba Oula stations. He also stated that, the company wants to



double its Tyreplus outlets in the coming weeks. Tyreplus is committed to providing quality products and services in the automotive industry at competitive prices and ensuring the highest standards of safety of our customers.

Sadiq Ali, Divisional Manager of Tyres and Lubricants at KAICO AISHAYA ALSAGAR, said "Tyreplus represent a one-stop-shop solution to all kind of automotive-requirements with quick and professional service"

Tyreplus has a door-to-door service in addition to its branches in Shuwaikh Industrial, Ahmadi, Jahra, and now in two new Oula stations (Kabd and West Shuaiba). Working hours Saturday-Thursday 8am to 8pm Friday - 4am - 8pm.

Gulf Bank sponsors online talk show 'Lei Wa Lakom'

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank has announced it is sponsoring "Lei Wa Lakom," a digital talk show hosted by Taiba Al-Humaidhi, who interviews women from all walks of life, highlighting their stories and the general challenges women face in the workplace, at home, and across social and community settings.

The program aims to encourage a policy of women supporting women, offering advice on everything women have to offer as individuals and what society can offer in return. The show also aims to highlight advice on how to deal with the most common shortcomings cited by women, and also calls on major societal institutions to support

women, in addition to being a platform that showcases the talents and competencies of female leaders in the country. The program is dedicated to providing insightful content directed primarily to working women who seek to develop and improve their society and environment. The show targets a wide range of audiences, including both young women who are at the start of their careers, and female success stories and role models from the local community.

Commenting on the program, Lujain Al-Qenaie, Assistant Manager of Corporate Communications at Gulf Bank, said: "Based on Gulf Bank's keenness on societal sustainability, our support comes to the "Lei Wa Lakom" program which sheds light on female role models in society who have succeeded in overcoming the obstacles that women face in their practical and social lives. At Gulf Bank, we believe that displaying these models has a great positive role on the new generation of working women and supports the Bank's efforts for gender equality and women's empowerment, as Gulf Bank



Taiba Al-Humaidhi and Lujain Al-Qenaie

was one of the first Kuwaiti entities to commit to implementing the United Nations Women's Empowerment Principles, in addition to its commitment to work to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals."

Yellen urges Congress to raise debt limit to avoid financial crisis

WASHINGTON: US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen pleaded Sunday for Congress to raise the debt ceiling in order to avoid a "historic financial crisis." In an editorial published in the Wall Street Journal, Yellen points out that the United States has always raised the debt ceiling before

exceeding its limit. "The US has never defaulted. Not once." "Doing so would likely precipitate a historic financial crisis," Yellen wrote. "Default could trigger a spike in interest rates, a steep drop in stock prices and other financial turmoil." The debt ceiling, which only Congress can increase, came back into force on August 1 after it had been suspended for two years. It prohibits the United States from borrowing more than the current \$28.4 trillion limit if not raised. The issue is a regular topic of partisan rancor in Washington. The debt ceiling has been raised about 80 times since the 1960s. —AFP

CBK bonds and related Tawarruq

KUWAIT: The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) announced the most recent issues of CBK bonds and related Tawarruq at a total value of KD 200 million for three months with a rate of return at 1.125 percent.

Lifestyle | Features



In this file photo Afghan artist and co-founder of the ArtLords collective, Farshad, poses next to a symbolic drawing of his collective, representing a Taliban fighter whose rocket launcher is filled with pencils. — AFP photos

'Art is dying': Afghan artists hope to resist Taliban rule

Two days after the Taliban seized Kabul last month, 26-year-old artist Sara took the terracotta plates she'd painted with images praising inspirational Afghan women and hurled them to the ground. "Art, for me, was to be able to express everything I couldn't say with words," she said from the capital. "It dealt mainly with violence against women." The last Taliban regime from 1996 to 2001 saw women brutally suppressed, as well as music banned and the destruction of artworks and heritage, including dynamiting ancient statues of the Buddha.

The hardline movement have insisted

plans to use art to protest against the Taliban, hoping to work with a collective of guerilla graffiti painters to spread their message. "I want to go out at night and paint anti-Taliban stencil art," she said.

Another artist, 19-year-old Maryam, whose name AFP has also changed for this story, plans to post digital anti-Taliban creations on Instagram. One example; a little girl unzips the top of a burqa, from which doves escape. "Art is dying in Afghanistan," she said. "I will fight against the Taliban, not with weapons but with my work."

'Dark and uncertain'

Ramin Mazhar was still a child when the Taliban were last in power in Kabul. Two decades later, and now living in France, he has become one of Afghanistan's most recognized poets. "You are not afraid of love, of hope, of tomorrow," he recites in Dari, verses that have become an anthem for Afghan youth. "I kiss you amid the Taliban, you are not afraid!" His poetry, turned into songs, has been watched hundreds of thousands of times on YouTube. But when Mazhar recently tried to search for it, it had already been erased.

People are destroying work and delet-



In this file photo Afghan photographer Rada Akbar takes part in a rally in support of Afghanistan people following the takeover of the country by the Taliban, at the Place de la Republique, in

their new regime will be different, but like many other artists who have destroyed their work, or musicians who have broken their instruments, Sara is terrified. "Art is my life," said Sara, who asked for her real name not to be used. "I no longer have a future."

Guerilla graffiti

Kabul has changed dramatically since the Taliban were last in power, and Sara is part of a social media-savvy youth who grew up in a capital where arts and culture were flourishing. Now, with others, she

ing their social media posts in artistic "suicide", Mazhar said. "Many have been forced to self-censor to protect their lives in fear. This makes the future of art dark and uncertain in Afghanistan. We don't know where we are headed." But Mazhar does not want to give up. "Art exists wherever a human exists," he said. "Maybe art will continue secretly, underground, or illegally." In Paris, artist Rada Akbar is planning an exhibition of miniature paintings to illustrate that "the Taliban are not the real Afghanistan, and that they do not represent the history and culture of the country".



In this file photo Afghan artist Rada Akbar poses during a photo session in Paris.



In this file photo Afghan poet Ramin Mazhar poses during a photo session in Paris.



In this file photo Afghan actress Yasamin Yarmal poses during a photo session in Paris.

Actress Yasamin Yarmal fled to France last month with her family, like dozens of her peers.

In 1997 the Taliban searched her house and beat her disabled son to death, she said. "I didn't want to go through that again." "Art can open people's minds, so of course the Taliban are afraid of artists," she added. Many of those who remain in Afghanistan are holed up at home, fearful of going out, and worried about how to earn a living. Sodaba, an actress, said she has received threatening phone calls-claims AFP was not able to verify-and lives in a "nightmare" of fear. "We have a WhatsApp group with other artists," she said. "People say the Taliban have established a list of people to find, and I'm afraid to be part of it."

'A click away'

But Farshad, one of the founders of ArtLords, an Afghan collective that previously covered the walls of Kabul with hundreds of murals promoting peace and women's rights, still has hope. He said unlike during the Taliban's previous rule, people can now access art, music and films through the internet.

"The world is a click away from them," he said. "So it will be very hard for the Taliban to impose or sanction art." Many ArtLords murals have already been replaced by drab propaganda slogans as the Taliban reimpose their austere vision. Farshad is now in Paris, but asked to speak under a pseudonym, because he wants to return to Kabul to help other artists escape. He pulls out one of the ArtLords' most famous works-a Taliban fighter with a rocket launcher packed with pencils instead of ammunition. "I don't think art will die in Afghanistan," he said. "I am sure one day the Taliban movement will die, but art will be there." — AFP

Nirvana's Nevermind: An album forged by contradictions

Released 30 years ago this week, "Nevermind" was a generation-defining milestone that sold 30 million copies and made a tragic icon of Kurt Cobain. Ranked the most influential band of all time by US magazine Spin last year, Nirvana's ethos continues to reverberate in artists as varied as Billie Eilish, Lana Del Rey and Frank Turner. "Nevermind" was back in the news last month when the man who was photographed when he was a baby for the cover sued the band for sexual exploitation.

He was pictured naked, swimming after a dollar bill on a fish hook, in an image that became another iconic aspect of an album whose lead track "Smells Like Teen Spirit" was ubiquitous across MTV and radio stations around the world. At the heart of the album's success were the strange contradictions of Cobain, who was torn between apathy and rebellion, sweetness and rage.

Mainstream punk

Nevermind united musical tribes that had been largely separate-punk, indie, metal-and added a pop element that made them accessible to everyone else. "It's been building up through the years... Nirvana came along and delivered the goods," said Thurston Moore, of fellow grunge outfit Sonic Youth, at the time. "It was very pop but very honest and very authentic of the whole American punk rock ethic." In doing so, Nirvana made all the permed-hair, spandex-wearing posturing of 1980s rock look ridiculous. "It was the album that made hard rock obsolete-the rock that was popular at the time: superficial, misogynistic, less intense," Charlotte Blum, author of a recent book about the grunge movement, told AFP.

Reluctant ambition

Cobain was ambitious, his diaries filled with intricate plans, ruthlessly firing drummers until they found the perfect fit in Dave Grohl (now of the Foo Fighters). But the quadruple-platinum success of "Nevermind" was a nightmare for his punk-rock ethics. He was

traumatized at the idea that "yuppie scum in BMWs" were listening to Nevermind, and disowned its glossy production. "I haven't listened to it since we put it out. I can't stand that kind of production," he told biographer Michael Azerrad.

Producer Butch Vig pointed out that Cobain had no problems with it in the studio: "If it had only sold 50,000 copies, he probably wouldn't have had any comments on whether it was too slick." It ended in tragedy. Cobain's suicide note was a long screed about the torment of "selling out". But it was Cobain's monomaniacal dedication to the punk cause that gave Nevermind such a ring of authenticity.

Ferocious nursery rhymes

From the immediately catchy riffs of "Come As You Are" and "Lithium" to the quieter anthems of "Polly" and "Something in the Way", the sound was often furious, but the melodies simple-"like nursery rhymes", Cobain said. It was down to the fact that Cobain loved not just underground hardcore bands but also The Beatles, Abba and Queen. This combined with the raw power of Cobain's voice which somehow encapsulated both joyous abandon and tortured adolescence.

Jay-Z said Nevermind was so successful at this that it stalled the rise of hip-hop. "Hair bands" dominated the airwaves and rock became more about looks than actual substance and what it stood for: the rebellious spirit of youth," he told Pharrell Williams in his autobiography. "That's why 'Teen Spirit' rang so loud because it was right on point with how everyone felt. "Hip-hop was becoming this force, then grunge music stopped it for one second... when Kurt Cobain came with that statement it was like, 'We got to wait awhile.'"

Apathetic activist

Crucial to the cult around Cobain was his anti-macho politics. "If you're sexist, racist, a homophobe, or basically an a**hole, don't buy this CD. I don't care if you like me, I hate you," he said. But while Cobain expressed disgust at the apathy of his generation, he also seemed to encapsulate an era marked by the end of the Cold War when political ideologies were dead and it was hard to know where to direct your youthful ennui. In the end, he chose not activism, but a retreat from stardom, descent into drugs and ultimately suicide. As the song says-perhaps in mockery, perhaps in exhausted dejection-"Oh well, whatever, nevermind." — AFP



'Shang-Chi' runs rings around box office competition



"Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings," the Disney blockbuster featuring Marvel's first leading Asian superhero, dominated the North American box office for a third straight week, taking in \$21.7 million, figures showed Sunday. The film-starring Chinese-Canadian actor Simu Liu as a former assassin in the shadow of an evil father (Hong Kong legend Tony Leung) — has so far earned \$176.9 million in US and Canadian theaters, industry tracker

Exhibitor Relations said. Sci-fi comedy "Free Guy," from 20th Century, held steady in second spot with \$5.2 million. It stars Ryan Reynolds as an everyman bank teller who discovers he's actually a non-player character in a huge video game. Third place went to new entrant "Cry Macho," the latest gritty drama by the legendary Clint Eastwood, who directs and stars as a retired rodeo rider helping a teenager and his fighting rooster leave Mexico. The Warner Brothers

film earned \$4.5 million.

In fourth place, for a second week running, was Universal's slasher film "Candyman," a reimagining of the classic 1992 film of the same name. It took in \$3.5 million this weekend, and so far has topped \$53 million overall in North America. Another horror movie, "Malignant," came in fifth with nearly \$2.7 million, while comedy/action new entry "Copshop" opened in sixth spot, with \$2.3 million.

Rounding out the top four were:
"Jungle Cruise" (\$2.1 million, for a total of \$112.6 million)
"Paw Patrol: The Movie" (\$1.7 million)
"Don't Breathe 2" (\$1.2 million)
"The Eyes of Tammy Faye" (\$675,000).- AFP

Jennifer Aniston reveals her holistic approach to wellness

Jennifer Aniston has adopted an holistic approach to wellness. The 52-year-old actress admits that her approach has evolved markedly over the years, and she now thinks it's important to have an open-minded outlook. The Hollywood star reflected: "Universally, we're all going to grow up and get old. You can't deny that, that is a guarantee. "But we can be vital and we can be thriving in our older years. Our society loves to say, 'Oh, you're this age, now you go downhill. And now you go off to pasture and that's it, buh-bye. You're no longer valuable or useful to society.' And that's just so wrong. I just think that's just wrong." Jennifer explained that her new approach to wellness extends well

beyond nutrition. She told E! News: "It's not just nutritional, it's emotional, it's spiritual. Be really mindful about what you put into your ears, your eyes, what you intake, the social media that you put in, the news. It's very, very, very, very crucial to our well-being." Jennifer credits her love of health and wellness to her late mom, Nancy Dow. She shared: "My mom was a big health junkie. "When I was a kid, I didn't get any of the fun Froot Loops or Captain Crunches or Wonder Breads. I was wheat germ and oatmeal, every kind of sprouted anything. My mom was always very health conscious and she did yoga, and so I grew up in it." However, the actress' approach changed dramatically when she left home as a teenager.



Adele makes her relationship with Rich Paul Instagram official!

Adele has made her romance with Rich Paul Instagram official. The 33-year-old singer has 39 million followers on the photo-sharing platform and she's taken to Instagram to post some new snaps of herself and the 39-year-old sports agent. Adele - who finalised her divorce from Simon Konecki earlier this year - captioned the pictures with a simple heart emoji. In the snaps, the London-born star wears a black Schiaparelli gown, which also features a cloud-like off-the-shoulder detail. Adele is also seen sporting a pair of pearl earrings that are suspended in gold teeth, while Rich - who is the agent of several high-profile sports, including LeBron James and Ben Simmons - poses alongside his new girlfriend in a photo booth. Adele hasn't actually released an album since '25' in 2015, but she's been tipped to make her live comeback in December. The award-winning star - who has Angelo, eight, with her ex-husband - is reportedly planning to

mark the release of her long-awaited new album with a gig in Las Vegas - her first live event in over four years - on 10 December, which will be broadcast around the world. A source recently explained: "Adele's new album is the most highly-anticipated record of the year. It's been a long time coming but her label wants it released before Christmas and have their sights set on a performance in

Vegas. "Adele and her management have been in talks with BBC America about broadcasting it around the world. This will be one of few performances as part of her promotional tour. "Obviously with ongoing COVID dramas and concern for safety it could affect recording, but this is the date scheduled right now."



Lifestyle | Emmy Awards



(From left to right) Moses Ingram, Marielle Heller, Scott Frank, Anya Taylor-Joy, William Horberg, Mick Aniceto, and Marcus Loges, winners of the Outstanding Limited Or Anthology Series award for 'The Queen's Gambit,' pose in the press room during the 73rd Primetime Emmy Awards at L.A. LIVE in Los Angeles, California. — AFP photos



Anya Taylor-Joy winner of the Outstanding Limited Or Anthology Series award for 'The Queen's Gambit.'



Josh O'Connor, winner of the Outstanding Lead Actor In A Drama Series award for 'The Crown.'

Netflix dominates Emmys with 'Crown' sweep and 'Queen's Gambit' win

Streaming giant Netflix dominated the Emmys on Sunday, finally winning television's biggest prizes with "The Crown" and "The Queen's Gambit" and bagging an all-time record-equaling awards haul at a scaled-down ceremony. Despite transforming the entire TV landscape since it began to create original programming in 2012, Netflix had never won any top series prize before Sunday at the small-screen equivalent of the Oscars. Now, it has two of them. In the comedy categories, Apple TV+'s "Ted Lasso" was this year's big winner.

Television's top stars gathered in person for the event in Los Angeles for the first time in two years—it was held at a partially outdoor venue due to ongoing Covid-19 concerns, after a mainly virtual show last fall. "We're gonna have a party now. I'm lost for words, and I'm very, very grateful," said "The Crown" creator Peter Morgan, dialing in with fellow cast and filmmakers from a remote London satellite hub. The fourth season of the wildly popular British royal series, which depicted the ill-fated marriage of Prince Charles and Princess Diana, swept the drama awards. Olivia Colman—who previously won an Oscar for playing Britain's Queen Anne in "The Favorite"—scooped best actress for portraying her descendant Queen Elizabeth II.

Colman paid tribute to her father who died during the COVID-19 pandemic, saying he "would have loved all of this." Josh O'Connor, named best actor for playing Charles, said making the show had been "the most rewarding two years of my life." "The Crown" also won both supporting actor prizes—including one for Gillian Anderson for her portrayal of Margaret Thatcher—and awards for best writing and directing. Its tally including technical awards handed out before Sunday's ceremony came to 11 — tied this year with "The Queen's Gambit," and one short of



Cast and crew such as Leann Bowen, Jeff Ingold, Tina Pawlik, Jeremy Swift, Phil Dunster, Bill Lawrence, Brett Goldstein, Hannah Waddingham, Jason Sudeikis, Juno Temple, Brendan Hunt, Bill Wrubel, Phoebe Walsh, and Nick Mohammed, winners of the Outstanding Comedy Series award for 'Ted Lasso.'

the drama record held by "Game of Thrones."

Inspiring 'a whole generation of girls'

The two Netflix shows brought the streaming giant's tally this year to 44 Emmys—matching a record set by CBS network way back in 1974, when shows like "M*A*S*H" and "The Mary Tyler Moore Show" ruled the airwaves. "The Queen's Gambit"—about a troubled orphaned girl who storms the world of professional chess—captivated audiences and sent

chessboard sales skyrocketing worldwide as more and more people watched.

"You brought the sexy back to chess, and you inspired a whole generation of girls and young women to realize that patriarchy simply has no defense against our queens," executive producer William Horberg told star Anya Taylor-Joy on stage. "The one thing that no algorithm can predict and no billion dollar budget can manufacture is word of mouth," he said of the show becoming a global phenomenon. But the limited series lead actress prize went to Kate Winslet for small-town whodunit detective drama "Mare of Easttown," which also won both limited series supporting acting awards for Julianne Nicholson and Evan Peters.

"I just want to acknowledge my fellow nominees in this decade that has to be about women having each other's backs," said Winslet. She praised the show's creators for creating "an middle-aged, imperfect, flawed mother... you made us all feel validated, quite honestly." Ewan McGregor won best limited series actor for fashion designer series "Halston."

'Heck of a year'

Apple TV+ global smash hit "Ted Lasso" won best comedy series and a slew of acting prizes. Co-creator Bill Lawrence praised the show's "fearless leader" Jason Sudeikis, who won best actor as an out-of-his-depth American

football coach handed control of an English soccer team. "Heck of a year," said Sudeikis. "I would say that this show is about family, this show is about mentors and teachers, this show is about teammates. "And I wouldn't be here without those three things in my life." The show also claimed the night's first two awards in comedy for supporting acting.

But it missed out on comedy writing and directing to "Hacks," whose star Jean Smart won best actress for portraying a faded diva scrambling to save her residency in Las Vegas. Veteran TV star Smart earned a standing ovation and paid an emotional tribute to her actor husband Richard Gilliland, who died six months ago, for "putting his career on the back burner." —AFP



Hannah Waddingham, winner of Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Comedy Series for 'Ted Lasso.'



Brett Goldstein, winner of Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Comedy Series for 'Ted Lasso.'



Kate Winslet, winner of the Outstanding Lead Actress in a Limited or Anthology Series or Movie award for 'Mare Of Easttown.'



Jason Sudeikis, winner of the Outstanding Comedy Series and Outstanding Lead Actor in a Comedy Series awards for 'Ted Lasso.'



Evan Peters, winner of the Outstanding Supporting Actor In A Limited Or Anthology Series Or Movie award for 'Mare Of Easttown.'



(From left) Jen Statsky, winner of the Outstanding Writing For A Comedy Series award for 'Hacks'; Lucia Aniello, winner of the Outstanding Writing For A Comedy Series and Outstanding Directing For A Comedy Series awards for 'Hacks'; and Paul W. Downs, winner of the Outstanding Writing For A Comedy Series award for 'Hacks.'



Ewan McGregor, winner of the Outstanding Lead Actor in a Limited or Anthology Series or Movie award for 'Halston.'



Honoree Debbie Allen, recipient of the Governors Award.



Julianne Nicholson, winner of the Outstanding Supporting Actress In A Limited Or Anthology Series Or Movie award for 'Mare Of Easttown.'



Stephen Colbert (right) and cast and crew members, winners of the Outstanding Variety Special (Live) award for 'Stephen Colbert's Election Night 2020: Democracy's Last Stand Building Back America Great Again Better 2020.' — AFP photos



'Hamilton' cast and crew members, winners of the Outstanding Variety Special (Pre-Recorded) award.

Emmy winners in key categories

Here is a list of the winners in key categories for the 73rd Emmy Awards, which were handed out in Los Angeles on Sunday. Netflix had a stellar night, winning its first awards for top series with British royals saga "The Crown" (best drama) and "The Queen's Gambit" (best limited series). Overall, both shows each earned 11 Emmys. On the comedy side, "Ted Lasso" was the big winner, taking home the Emmy for best comedy, best actor, best supporting actor and actress. The Apple TV+ series won seven Emmys overall.

- OUTSTANDING DRAMA SERIES:** "The Crown" (Netflix)
- OUTSTANDING COMEDY SERIES:** "Ted Lasso" (Apple TV+)
- OUTSTANDING LIMITED SERIES:** "The Queen's Gambit" (Netflix)
- LEAD ACTOR, DRAMA:** Josh O'Connor, "The Crown"
- LEAD ACTRESS, DRAMA:** Olivia Colman, "The Crown"
- LEAD ACTOR, COMEDY:** Jason Sudeikis, "Ted Lasso"
- LEAD ACTRESS, COMEDY:** Jean Smart, "Hacks"
- LEAD ACTOR, LIMITED SERIES OR MOVIE:** Ewan McGregor, "Halston"
- LEAD ACTRESS, LIMITED SERIES OR MOVIE:** Kate Winslet, "Mare Of Easttown"
- SUPPORTING ACTOR, DRAMA:** Tobias Menzies, "The Crown"
- SUPPORTING ACTRESS, DRAMA:** Gillian Anderson, "The Crown"
- SUPPORTING ACTOR, COMEDY:** Brett Goldstein, "Ted Lasso"
- SUPPORTING ACTRESS, COMEDY:** Hannah Waddingham, "Ted Lasso"
- SUPPORTING ACTOR, LIMITED SERIES OR MOVIE:** Evan Peters, "Mare Of Easttown"
- SUPPORTING ACTRESS, LIMITED SERIES OR MOVIE:** Julianne Nicholson, "Mare Of Easttown"
- OUTSTANDING TELEVISION MOVIE:** "Dolly Parton's Christmas On The Square" (Netflix). — AFP

Television's best bring glamour to Emmys red carpet



Kate Winslet

Television's A-list returned to the red carpet in high style for the Emmys on Sunday—a more traditional display of sartorial savoir faire after the pajamas and hoodies seen at last year's mostly virtual event. Here are some takeaways as Hollywood's top stars rocked up to the first in-person Emmys in two years:

Get out those gowns

The Emmys comes on the heels of a number of glamour-filled moments for the glitterati, including the MTV Video Music Awards, the Venice film festival and the Met Gala in New York—and the women of Hollywood did not disappoint. Anya Taylor-Joy, the star of acclaimed chess drama "The Queen's Gambit," stunned in a backless slinky butter-colored Dior gown paired with a dramatic bright yellow shawl that descended in a long train. "The Crown" star Emma Corrin also wore butter yellow—she attended the London satellite watch party in a strapless floor-length Miu Miu gown, long fingerless gloves and bonnet.

MJ Rodriguez, nominated for her work on "Pose," a show that explores New York's 1980s underground ballroom culture, indeed struck a pose in a one-shoulder turquoise Versace gown with a thigh-baring slit and killer pointed fingernails. Kate Winslet, the Emmy winner for best actress in a limited series for "Mare of Easttown," went for basic black, donning



Anya Taylor-Joy

an Armani gown with a plunging neckline and airy sheer sleeves. "Ted Lasso" star Hannah Waddingham, the Emmy winner for best supporting actress in a comedy, wore a one-shoulder peach Christian Siriano gown to collect her statuette. And Catherine Zeta-Jones looked elegant in a strapless wine-colored gown with a high slit and perfectly coordinated shoes—the epitome of Tinseltown chic, with Emmy nominee and husband Michael Douglas on her arm.

double nominee Kenan Thompson went for a pink tux—definitely a bold look. The award for best actor in a sharp accessory went to Thompson's "Saturday Night Live" co-star Bowen Yang, who wore silver platform heels. — AFP



Kenan Thompson



Jason Sudeikis



Michael Douglas and Catherine Zeta-Jones

Let's hear it for the boys

For a long time, men's fashion was a bit of an afterthought at awards shows, but in recent years, they have brought the drama. "Pose" star Billy Porter, who shut down the Oscars red carpet in 2019 in a Christian Siriano tuxedo gown, slayed once again in a form-fitting Ashi black shirt with giant ruffled flounces on the sleeves, high-waisted trousers—and diamonds galore.

"I really made the decision with 'Pose' and finally having a platform on film and television to use these red carpets for another form of expressing my creativity—the ladies do it all the time," the 2019 Emmy winner said on the carpet. The night's host Cedric the Entertainer, known for his dapper dressing, did not disappoint in a bright turquoise suit with black lapels and detailing, and sunglasses—necessary for the sunny afternoon in Los Angeles.

"Ted Lasso" star Jason Sudeikis, a winner for best actor in a comedy, also went for a blue suit—a velvet Tom Ford tux with wide lapels and an oversized bow tie. And



Michaela Jae Rodriguez



Billy Porter

Sports

Icardi grabs late winner for PSG vs Lyon as Messi makes home bow

Messi dominates before 'controversial' substitution

PARIS: Lionel Messi had a lively home debut for Paris Saint-Germain but it was his compatriot Mauro Icardi who scored a dramatic stoppage-time winner as the Ligue 1 leaders edged Lyon 2-1 on Sunday. Messi outshone his team-mates in PSG's all-star attack for much of the game at the Parc des Princes but he had been — slightly controversially — taken off by the time substitute Icardi headed in a cross from the left to secure the win.



Messi still looking for first goal

The excellent Lucas Paqueta gave Lyon the lead in the 54th minute, before Neymar won and then converted from the spot midway through the second half of an absorbing contest at the Parc des Princes. "We deserved our victory, even if it was in the last second," insisted PSG coach Mauricio Pochettino.

However, the fact this was a contest might surprise many who expect PSG to run away with the Ligue 1 title this season and perhaps even go all the way in the Champions League. Nevertheless, they were disappointing in drawing 1-1 with Club Brugge in Belgium in midweek in Messi's first start for the club and they were given a run for their money by Peter Bosz's Lyon.

Yet Icardi — in many ways the forgotten man of the PSG attack — allowed his side to make it six wins from six in Ligue 1 this season and they are now five points

clear at the top from Marseille. That gap will surely widen as the weeks go by. Lyon, for all their good intentions here, are already 10 points behind the leaders in ninth place. "It was a cruel defeat," said coach Peter Bosz. "We made a real match of it and showed we were not afraid of losing."

Not Messi's night

Three games into his Paris career Messi is still looking for his first goal, but he was unfortunate not to find the net in the first half when everything PSG did went through the six-time Ballon d'Or winner. Neymar, Kylian Mbappe and Angel di Maria were all on the field too but — unfortunately for such a superstar attack — there is only one ball and it seemed to be drawn to Messi's feet.

He was set up by Mbappe for a shot that was saved by Anthony Lopes in the 17th minute. Then he combined with Neymar for another effort that was turned behind, and soon after the Argentine cracked a free-kick from almost 30 meters off the junction of bar and post.

It was Lyon who went ahead in the 54th minute with a goal they had occasionally been threatening as Karl Toko-Ekambi delivered a low ball from the left and Paqueta swept a first-time shot low into the net at Gianluigi Donnarumma's near post.

Neymar spot on

PSG were back level in the 66th minute as Neymar went down in the box under a challenge from Malo Gusto. It could as easily have been a free-kick the other way, but a penalty was given and the Brazilian sent the goalkeeper the wrong way.

Messi remains short of full fitness and as he faded from the game he was taken off and replaced by Achraf Hakimi 14 minutes from time. He appeared to reject Pochettino's hand as he walked past, but without him



PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain's forward Lionel Messi (left) leaves the pitch after chatting with PSG's head coach Mauricio Pochettino during their team's French L1 football match against Lyon at the Parc des Princes Stadium in Paris on Sunday. — AFP

PSG got the winner as Mbappe's superb cross from the left was headed in by Icardi. "We are here to make decisions. Sometimes people will be happy with them, sometimes they won't be," Pochettino said of the substitution.

PSG are back in league action at Metz tomorrow and host Montpellier next weekend before entertaining Manchester City in the Champions League on September 28. Marseille continued their unbeaten start

as Bamba Dieng and Amine Harit netted in a 2-0 win over Rennes at the Velodrome.

Dieng, the 21-year-old forward from Senegal, has now scored three goals in the last two games for Marseille, who are emerging as the most likely team to give PSG a run for their money this season. Elsewhere, Wissam Ben Yedder's spot-kick secured Monaco a 2-2 draw in the Cote d'Azur derby at Nice, who saw Amine Gouiri miss a late penalty. — AFP

Benzema strikes again as Real stun Valencia

MADRID: Real Madrid moved to the top of La Liga on Sunday after scoring twice in two minutes to pull off an incredible late comeback against Valencia. Valencia looked set for victory at Mestalla when Hugo Duro scored against his former club in the second half but the in-form Vinicius Junior equalised in the 86th minute before Karim Benzema headed home in the 88th for a 2-1 away win.

Real Madrid remain unbeaten this term, having now won five and drawn one of their first six matches in all competitions under returning coach Carlo Ancelotti. "We didn't win through quality, we won through spirit," said Ancelotti. "I have a young team and I cannot say we are playing spectacular football - we have to improve our defensive game, be more aggressive - but I think with this spirit we will fix it."

Valencia, who stay third, have also enjoyed a strong start under new coach Jose Bordalas but leave hugely disappointed not to have taken three points from this game, let alone one. Madrid sit two ahead of Atletico Madrid after Atletico were held to a goalless draw by Athletic Bilbao on Saturday.

Benzema already has six goals this season but the real bonus for Ancelotti has been the form of Vinicius, who has five goals himself, already more than the 21-year-old managed in the whole of the last campaign. "They were both fantastic," Ancelotti said.

Both teams were hampered by early injuries as Real Madrid's Dani Carvajal had to be replaced by Lucas Vazquez while Valencia lost both Carlos Soler and Thierry Correia, with Yunus Musah and Toni Lato coming on. Valencia were faster and more aggressive and they had the better chances too, Gabriel Paulista going closest in the first half with a header from a free-kick.



VALENCIA: Real Madrid's French forward Karim Benzema (center) vies with Valencia's Danish midfielder Daniel Wass during the Spanish League football match between Valencia and Real Madrid at the Mestalla stadium in Valencia on Sunday. — AFP

Duro should have scored seconds after half-time when he ran in behind but Thibaut Courtois saved again and then Duro was thwarted by the Belgian for a second time after a mistake from Casemiro in midfield. Finally the pressure paid, as Vazquez turned away from a deep cross from the right and the ball skidded off his back to the foot of Duro at the back post.

Duro still a lot to do with the bouncing ball but hooked a superb shot past Courtois into the far corner. Summer signing Eduardo Camavinga replaced Casemiro and Rodrygo came on for Modric, with the

through three long distance attempts from Sandro Tonali in the first half. But Croatian winger Rebic preserved Milan's unbeaten league start by heading in a Tonali corner with 14 minutes left.

"We came here to win the game," said Milan coach Stefano Pioli told DAZN. "Juventus did better in the first 20 minutes, were more determined and focused, but we continued playing and did much better towards the end with chances to win, so it was overall a positive



TURIN: Juventus' Swedish forward Dejan Kulusevski (left) challenges AC Milan's English defender Fikayo Tomori during the Italian Serie A football match between Juventus and AC Milan at the Juventus stadium in Turin, on Sunday. — AFP

AC Milan stalemate piles on misery for Juventus

MILAN: Juventus were left struggling in the unlikely surroundings of Serie A's bottom three on Sunday after a 1-1 draw with AC Milan kept them searching for a first league win this season. Alvaro Morata's fourth-minute goal gave Juve the lead but Ante Rebic headed in a 76th-minute equalizer as Milan ended the weekend in second place on goal difference behind city rivals Inter who crushed Bologna 6-1 on Saturday.

Milan could have won the match in the dying moments but Juve keeper Wojciech Szczesny pulled off a brilliant point-blank save to deny Pierre Kalulu. Juventus, still reeling from the departure of Cristiano Ronaldo to Manchester United, are 18th with just two points from four games with only Cagliari and Salernitana propping them up. Coach Massimiliano Allegri had harsh words for some of his stars. "You have to be determined, to bring home the tackle, keep focused. This is part of the general growth process of some players," he said. "I will admit that I made mistakes on the substitutions, I got it wrong. I should've put more defensive players on and put the 1-0 lead under lock and key, so I take responsibility for that."

Milan, missing both Zlatan Ibrahimovic and Olivier Giroud, dropped their first league points of the season. However, they will be relieved not to have lost back-to-back games having gone down to Liverpool in the Champions League in midweek.

Spanish international Morata temporarily allowed Juventus fans to forget about Ronaldo when he sped away from Theo Hernandez before coolly slotting the ball past Mike Maignan in goal. Milan only threatened

Brazilian almost levelling for Madrid when he met Vazquez's cross at the front post.

Valencia were dropping deeper and deeper and in the 86th minute they caved, Benzema showing impressive composure to turn and tee up Vinicius, whose shot nicked off Dimitri Foulquier, wrongfooting Giorgi Mamardashvili and flying in. Madrid were not finished yet as Valencia conceded again two minutes later. Vinicius returned the favor by curling in a cross from the left, as Benzema nipped between Gabriel and Mamardashvili to head in. — AFP

performance." Roma dropped their first points in Serie A under Jose Mourinho as Verona came from behind to earn new coach Igor Tudor a 3-2 victory on his debut. Lorenzo Pellegrini's clever backheel flick gave visitors Roma a half-time lead in the pouring rain as they sought a fourth successive win to start the season.

Mourinho beaten

Antonin Barak equalized for Verona shortly after the interval and Gianluca Caprari put the hosts ahead with a precise finish five minutes later. Ivan Ilic turned a Pellegrini cross into his own goal to bring Roma level before the hour, but Davide Faraoni's brilliant volley secured the win for Verona to halt a run of three straight losses.

"I knew their qualities, even before the change in coach," Mourinho told DAZN. "They'd already posed big problems to their opponents. And when there's a coaching change there's often a reaction mentally, it can happen."

Roma's city rivals Lazio needed a late goal from Danilo Cataldi to salvage a 2-2 draw at home to Cagliari. Ciro Immobile struck for the fifth time in four games as Lazio went ahead just before the break.

Joao Pedro's looping header pegged Lazio back right at the start of the second half, with Keita Balde then firing home against his former club to put Cagliari on top. But the Sardinian club couldn't hold on for victory in Walter Mazzarri's first game in charge as Cataldi fired into the top corner seven minutes from time to rescue Lazio.

Venezia's first Serie A home match since the 2001-02 season ended in a crushing 2-1 loss to Spezia. Simone Bastoni curled in a sensational effort as Spezia grabbed an early lead at the Stadio Pier Luigi Penzo, an intriguing ground set on the south-eastern tip of Venice's main archipelago. Pietro Ceccaroni headed Venezia level on the hour but Mehdi Bourabia's brilliant injury-time strike from distance claimed Thiago Motta's Spezia a first win. — AFP

News in brief

Wolfsburg held at home

BERLIN: Wolfsburg lost their 100 percent record Sunday, missing the chance to regain top spot in the Bundesliga as their 1-1 home draw against Eintracht Frankfurt meant defending champions Bayern Munich finish the weekend first in the table on goal difference. After winning their four previous league games, Wolfsburg's draw leaves them level on 13 points, but second on goal difference behind Bayern, who thrashed Bochum 7-0 on Saturday. — AFP

Pele getting better

SAO PAULO: Brazilian football legend Pele said Sunday he is "punching the air" to celebrate "every better day" after the 80-year-old suffered his latest health scare. "As you can see, I'm punching the air in celebration of every better day," Pele wrote on Instagram beside a photograph of him sitting in a hospital chair, watched over by two medical staff. The three-time World Cup winner was Friday briefly transferred back to an intensive care unit at the Albert Einstein Hospital in Sao Paulo, where he underwent surgery earlier this month, after suffering breathing difficulties. "A good mood is the best medicine and I have plenty of that. It couldn't be different," he added Sunday. His condition had been described as stable. — AFP

Gulf Cup pushed to 2023

KUWAIT: The 25th Arabian Gulf Cup in Basra, Iraq has been postponed until January 2023, the Arab Gulf Cup Football Federation announced yesterday, citing a packed schedule ahead for participating teams. The tournament will be relocated to Kuwait if officials in Basra failed to prove that the city is prepared to host the event by June 30, 2022, the Federation added. The tournament was originally scheduled to take place between December 24, 2021 and January 7, 2022.

Tough loss for Kuwait

AMMAN: Kuwait's women handball team fell short against Japan on Sunday in the Jordan-hosted Asian qualifiers ahead of the World Cup in Spain next year. Japan, one of the favorites to win the world cup, dominated the contest with a final score line of 52-5. The Kuwaiti team needs more matches against experienced sides like Japan, the squad's coach told the press, adding that his team was feeling exhausted, having had four matches in the span of five days. Kuwait, Palestine, Japan, Iran, Jordan and Syria comprise one of the toughest groups in the contest. — KUNA

Kuwaiti racer third

CAGLIARI: Kuwaiti racer Rashid Al-Dawwas snatched third place at the GP3 category as part of the first round of the 2021 Aquabike World Championship that came to a close Sunday evening at Italy's Sardinia Island. Speaking to the press, Dawwas said he was close to win the first position, however some sudden malfunctions happened, hoping for achieving further progresses in the next rounds to raise his country's status. He expressed his delight for the achievement in this round of the championship, which features several outstanding athletes all over the world. He noted that he would take part in the aquabike world tournament to be hosted by the US State of Arizona next month. — KUNA

Sports

FIFA to consult football leaders on international calendar

European, South American federations fiercely oppose proposal

PARIS: FIFA has invited football's national federations to an online summit on September 30 to discuss the international calendar, in its push to hold the World Cup every two years instead of four. World football's governing body wants to launch a "new consultation phase" for the international women's and men's calendar, set to expire at the end of 2023 and 2024 respectively.

"There is a broad consensus within the game that the international match calendar should be reformed and improved," FIFA said in a statement yesterday. "Following invitations to stakeholders, including all confederations, at the beginning of September, discussions are being organized in the coming weeks. FIFA also invited its member associations to a first online summit on 30 September 2021. This is one of several opportunities to establish a constructive and open debate, at a global and regional level, over the coming months."

The controversial proposal for a biennial World Cup was revived in March by former Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger, now head of global football development at FIFA. The idea would be to have an international tourna-

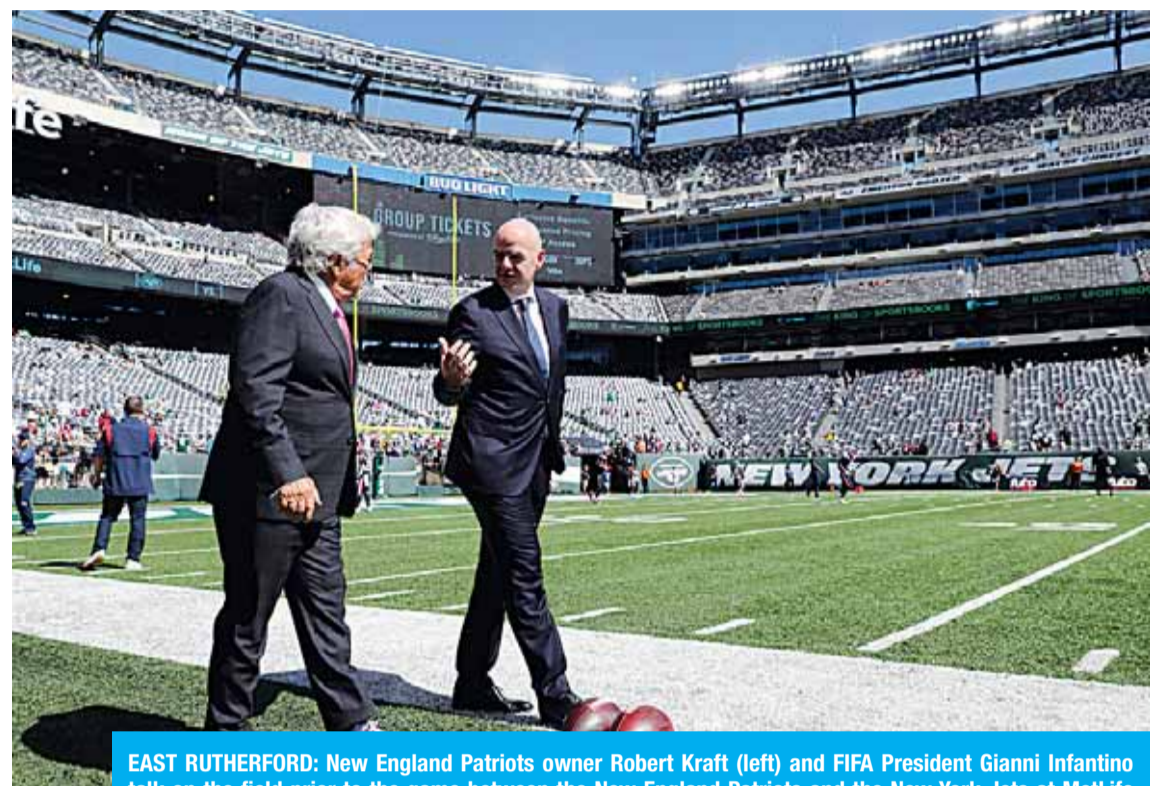
ment each year from 2025-2026, alternating World Cups and continental tournaments like the European Championship and Copa America.

UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin is fiercely opposed to the proposal and threatened that European nations would boycott a biennial World Cup. South American confederation CONMEBOL said the project had "no sporting justification". FIFA president Gianni Infantino has promised decisions on staging a World Cup every two years would be made by the end of the year.

Last week FIFA published an online poll that claimed a majority of football fans support the idea of a "more frequent" World Cup. The results of the survey came in stark contrast to the opposition of numerous national supporters groups worldwide.

Global players' union FIFPro has denounced "the absence of a real dialogue" on the subject, pointing out the "natural physiological limits" of footballers. "Without the agreement of

the players, who bring all competitions to life on the pitch, no such reforms will have the required legitimacy," said FIFPro general secretary Jonas Baer-Hoffmann. —AFP



EAST RUTHERFORD: New England Patriots owner Robert Kraft (left) and FIFA President Gianni Infantino talk on the field prior to the game between the New England Patriots and the New York Jets at MetLife Stadium on Sunday in East Rutherford, New Jersey. —AFP



FIFA poll shows fans 'support idea'

Kuntz feels at home as he signs Turkey deal

ISTANBUL: Stefan Kuntz feels like he is "coming home" after signing a three-year contract as Turkey's national coach with the aim to guide them to their first World Cup finals in 20 years. The 58-year-old former German international striker scored nine goals playing for Istanbul-based side Besiktas in 1995/96.

Kuntz, who has established his coaching reputation on the back of coaching Germany to two European Under-21 titles (2017/21), looked back on those days with longing while formally signing his contract to replace Senol Gunes as Turkey's new head coach. "It's like coming home. It was an unbelievable one year in Besiktas," Kuntz told reporters at the signing ceremony in Istanbul. "My wife even still tells me we made a mistake, that we left Turkey too early."

No financial terms of the deal were disclosed. The football federation decided to part ways with Gunes after Turkey got thumped by the Netherlands 6-1 in a 2022 World Cup qualifier earlier this month — one of the worst losses in their history. Turkey are sitting third behind the Netherlands and Norway in World Cup qualifying Group F. This leaves them in danger of failing to qualify for a fifth



ISTANBUL: Turkey national football team's newly appointed German head coach Stefan Kuntz (right), flanked by Turkish football federation president Nihat Ozdemir, signs his three-year contract during a ceremony at Turkish Football Federation Riva Facilities in Istanbul, yesterday. —AFP

successive World Cup finals.

Their last appearance in 2002 saw them stun pundits by storming into the semi-finals and ultimately finish in third place. "Hopefully, we can play once again in a World Cup finals after 20 years," said Turkish Football Federation president Nihat Ozdemir.

The football-mad nation held out high hopes for the 69-year-old Gunes — who guided Turkey to the 2002 World Cup semi-finals — when he took charge of the team again in 2019. Turkey appeared to have a good mix of veterans and young talent that performed admirably in qualifiers for the pan-

demic-delayed Euro 2020.

But they lost all three matches in the tournament while conceding eight goals and scoring just once. They followed that up with a lackluster draw against Montenegro and a 3-0 victory against lowly Gibraltar before being humiliated by the Dutch.

Kuntz said his immediate task was getting the team ready for their crunch match against Norway on October 8 in Istanbul. "I am full of positive energy because I know the potential of Turkish players," he said. "We are full of self-confidence that we will celebrate future successes." —AFP

Stunning comeback by Mauritanian club Concorde

JOHANNESBURG: Concorde of Mauritania staged one of the great African club competition comebacks by walloping ASC Kara of Togo 4-0 on Sunday to squeeze into the second CAF Confederation Cup qualifying round.

The team from the largely desert country in the north west of the continent entered the second leg of the preliminary round tie trailing 3-0 from the first encounter in Lome last weekend. But a stunning recovery was com-

pleted five minutes into stoppage time in Nouakchott when Idrissa Thiam scored a fourth unanswered goal for Concorde to pull off a dramatic 4-3 aggregate triumph.

Demini Habib had put Concorde ahead seven minutes into the second leg and Saidou Barry scored a second goal for the Mauritanians nine minutes after half-time. Bilal Maouloud netted seven minutes from time to increase the lead to three goals and bring the clubs level on aggregate in the African equivalent of the UEFA Europa League.

With a penalty shootout looming, Thiam struck and Concorde advanced to a round-of-32 date with JS Saoura of Algeria during October. Concorde are making a third Confederation Cup appearance and hoping to progress beyond the first round proper for the first time. The greatest comeback in a CAF club competition was staged by Simba of Tanzania in 1979 when they won 5-0 away to Mfulira Wanderers of Zambia in the African

Cup of Champions Clubs after losing 4-0 at home.

Cash-strapped Mali second-tier club Binga travelled an estimated 1,500 kilometers (930 miles) by road to fulfil a return match with Monrovia Club Breweries in Liberia, and triumphed 2-0. Having built a 3-0 first-leg lead, the lower-league outfit advanced 5-0 overall and will face ASFA Yennenga of Burkina Faso next month. Another second division side to progress were Bayelsa United of Nigeria, who defeated Ashanti Golden Boys Siguiri of Guinea 4-2 in a tie reduced to one match because of the recent Conakry coup.

Okardi Inikurogha starred for the Nigerians, scoring in each half, and the other Bayelsa goals came from Favour Martins and Emo James in Yenagoa, while Moussa Keita netted twice for the visitors. The next opponents for Bayelsa will be CS Sfaxien, the Tunisian club who have won the Confederation Cup a record three times. —AFP

CAF Champions League drama as South African, Eswatini clubs survive

JOHANNESBURG: AmaZulu of South Africa staged a great comeback and Royal Leopard of Eswatini pulled off a shock overall victory in CAF Champions League preliminary round second legs this weekend. Staring at elimination after a surprise 1-0 first-leg loss at home to Nyasa Big Bullets of Malawi last weekend, Durban-based AmaZulu rediscovered their scoring touch to win 3-1 away and march on.

A 3-2 aggregate victory earned the Champions League debutants a challenging round-of-32 clash in October against TP Mazembe, the Democratic Republic of Congo outfit who have won the competition five times.

AmaZulu coach Benni McCarthy, a 2004 UEFA Champions League winner as a player with Jose Mourinho-managed Porto, took his squad to Malawi against a gloomy backdrop. The shock 2021 South African Premiership runners-up to Mamelodi Sundowns, after years of battling relegation, had scored just once in five outings in all competitions since the new season began.

McCarthy had also come under fire for calling Malawi a "jungle" and saying he had "never heard of Bullets", despite the club making six previous appearances in the elite African competition. While McCarthy kept a low profile from the moment he set foot in the central African country, his team did the talking on the pitch in Lilongwe. Recalled Bongzi Ntuli converted a fourth-minute penalty and scored again after 11 minutes to give AmaZulu a two-goal lead on the day and an aggregate advantage.

Rattled Bullets scored three minutes into the second half through Henry Kabichi only for Siphlele Mthembu to restore the two-goal second-leg lead of the South African side soon after and seal survival.

Meanwhile, Leopard fell 2-1 away to 2016 semi-finalists Zesco United of Zambia in Ndola, but secured a place in the second and final qualifying round on away goals having won 1-0 at home. Zesco scored first, through Zimbabwean Tafadzwa Rusike on 30 minutes, only to be rocked by an Andy Magagula equaliser just five minutes later. —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	
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9	22532265	
		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 Thanvisha holding of Indian Passport No. V1967722, residing in Village Ananthampalli that I have change My Name as: Given Name: Thanvisha Surname: Erapuraju. 21-9-2021

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

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Ravens Jackson outduels Mahomes in NFL Sunday

Brady throws five TDs for Buccaneers; Raiders overcome Steelers to improve to 2-0



BALTIMORE: Lamar Jackson #8 of the Baltimore Ravens runs with the ball during the fourth quarter against the Kansas City Chiefs at M&T Bank Stadium on Sunday in Baltimore, Maryland. — AFP

LOS ANGELES: Lamar Jackson rushed for 107 yards and two touchdowns as the Baltimore Ravens edged Patrick Mahomes' Kansas City Chiefs 36-35 in a clash of former league MVPs. Jackson overcame two first quarter interceptions with a dynamic second half performance to get the better of Mahomes for the first time in four meetings since 2018.

The Ravens also rebounded from a frustrating season-opening loss to the Las Vegas Raiders in Nevada last Monday. The 2019 MVP Jackson fumbled late in the game to give the Raiders the chance to snatch victory in overtime.

Jackson started Sunday the way he left off in the opener with a pair of first half mistakes that led to interceptions against the Chiefs. But he recovered and was able to improvise with a patchwork offense that is still trying to cope with the loss of three running backs to injuries prior to the season start. "My team had my back the whole time," said Jackson. "It was a team effort. We lost the first week on Monday night but everybody stayed focused. It was a hard game."

A late fumble by the Chiefs' Clyde Edwards-

Helaire enabled Jackson to seal the win with a fourth-down quarterback sneak for a first down which allowed them to run out the clock. "The coach asked me if we should we go for it. I said we got to go for it. I just wanted to put points on the board," Jackson said.

Jackson also threw for 239 yards, rallying Baltimore from an 11-point deficit. Mahomes passed for 343 yards and three touchdowns, but threw the first September interception of his career.

Elsewhere, Tom Brady tossed five touchdown passes and Mike Edwards returned two fourth quarter interceptions for scores as the Tampa Bay Buccaneers defeated the Atlanta Falcons 48-25. "I certainly wish I had made a few better throws," Brady said. "But it's good to get the win. 2-0. There's a lot to build on."

The seven-time Super Bowl winner Brady completed 24 of 36 passes for 276 yards Sunday and has thrown for nine TDs in the first two contests. Ten different receivers have caught at least one pass this season, with Mike Evans grabbing five for 75 yards against the Falcons.

Brady out-duelled Falcons quarterback Matt Ryan, who finished 35 of 46 for 300 yards and two scores, but also tossed three interceptions in front of a crowd of 63,600 at Tampa, Florida. Falcons receiver Calvin Ridley caught seven passes for 63 yards and a touchdown.

Tampa Bay pulled away in the fourth quarter when Brady threw a 12-yard touchdown to Chris Godwin with just over nine minutes remaining. Edwards intercepted Matt Ryan less than 90 seconds later and took it 31 yards into the end zone to

make it 41-25. Edwards sealed the outcome with just over four minutes left with a 15-yard interception return.

In Pittsburgh, Derek Carr threw for 382 yards and two touchdowns as Las Vegas beat the Pittsburgh Steelers 26-17. Carr completed 28 of 37 passes, including a pair of clutch completions in the fourth quarter, as the Raiders improved to 2-0 on the season.

In Los Angeles, kicker Greg Zuerlein drilled a 56-yard field goal with no time remaining to lift the Dallas Cowboys over the Los Angeles Chargers 20-17 at SoFi Stadium. The Cowboys running game racked up a total of 198 yards. Tony Pollard led with 109 yards and a touchdown on 13 carries.

Quarterback Dak Prescott finished 23-of-27 passing for 237 yards, and an interception. CeeDee Lamb led the Cowboys with eight receptions for 81 yards. Also, Randy Bullock kicked four field goals, including a 36-yarder with 4:50 remaining in overtime, as the Tennessee Titans rallied to defeat the Seattle Seahawks 33-30. — AFP



Cowboys beat Chargers; Titans defeat Seahawks

Pacquiao: King of the ring rumbles for Philippine presidency

MANILA: Manny Pacquiao is idolized by many in the Philippines both for his punching power and rise from poverty to the peak of world boxing. But his support of a deadly war on drugs and homophobic views have drawn plenty of detractors.

Known in the Asian archipelago as "The National Fist", Pacquiao has parlayed sporting success into the political ring, and now has his sights set on a high-stakes rumble for the presidency. Pacquiao declared Sunday he will run for the top job in the 2022 elections, vowing to tackle poverty and corruption as he seeks to win over voters with his rags-to-riches story.

"I feel what you're all feeling, I know the suffering that you have experienced, and I know that you are all tired," said Pacquiao after accepting the nomination of a rival faction in President Rodrigo Duterte's ruling party. After two terms as a congressman and one as a senator, Pacquiao's ambition is not unrealistic in a country famed for its celebrity-obsessed politics. But victory is far from assured.

Fans see Pacquiao, an eight-division world champion, as living proof that success is possible for anyone who works hard, no matter their origins. But critics accuse the high-school dropout of lacking intellect and being a frequent no-show in the senate, raising questions about his ability to run the country of 110 million people.

Less than a year out from the elections,

Pacquiao has risked political capital in a public stoush with Duterte, who rivals the boxer for the affections of many Filipinos and previously mentioned him as a possible successor.

He has also stirred controversy by backing Duterte's deadly drug war, which rights groups say has killed tens of thousands of mostly poor men and sparked an investigation by the International Criminal Court.

A fervent evangelical Christian, Pacquiao has publicly opposed divorce, abortion and contraceptives, and has compared gay couples to animals — a slur that cost him a sponsorship deal with sportswear giant Nike. "His popularity as a boxer will not 100 percent translate to his popularity as a politician," Ted Lerner, a US-born sports journalist in the Philippines, told AFP.

Fame, power and wealth

Pacquiao dropped out of high school at 14, sold doughnuts on the roadside and became a grocery stacker to help his mother support two younger siblings. Within a few years, the diminutive southpaw was a pro boxer.

In the ring, he is a volume power puncher who uses lightning footwork to create angles with which to deliver flurries, the likes of which have felled Oscar de la Hoya, Ricky Hatton, Miguel Cotto, Erik Morales and Marco Antonio Barrera.

But age may be catching up to him. In what could be his last professional fight, the 42-year-old lost against Cuban Yordenis Ugas in Las Vegas last month — the eighth defeat of a glittering career spanning more than two decades.

The sport bought him fame, power, influence and wealth, and with it, the vices: Booze, gambling, cockfighting and romantic links to beautiful film stars that at one point nearly wrecked his marriage. But in 2012 Pacquiao, now a father



MANILA: This file photo taken on January 24, 2019 shows Philippine boxing icon Manny Pacquiao during a press conference shortly after arriving at the international airport in Manila, days after defeating US boxer Adrien Broner in Las Vegas. — AFP

of five, found religion and left his playboy-lifestyle behind.

Pacquiao has also served as a celebrity endorser for products ranging from appliances to pizza and cars, hosted TV shows, starred in movies and had an improbable stint as a professional basketball player and coach. He launched a

professional basketball league in 2017 and founded his own cryptocurrency, the "PAC Token".

Known for his generosity and common touch, he has given away huge amounts of money to friends, supporters and the poor. He is known for accommodating his fans, letting them watch his training sessions. — AFP