



2 Nearly 200K foreign workers left Kuwait's labor market in one year



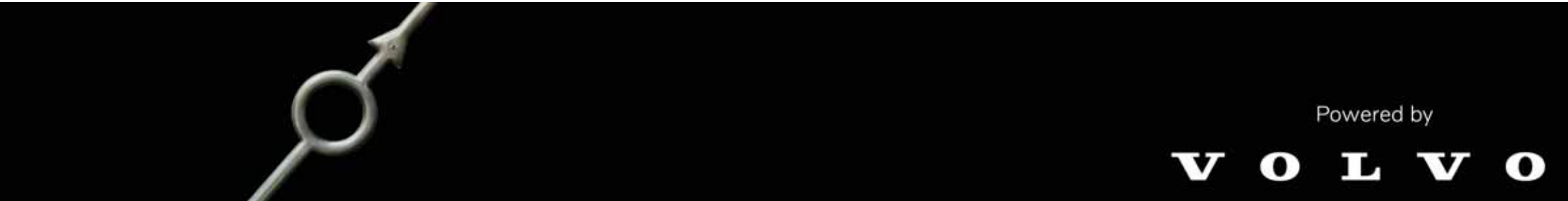
7 Morocco gets first batch of Turkish armed drones



13 Dystopia, BLM themes emerge at Art Basel fair



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PM: Kuwait has given \$327m to COVID vaccine initiatives

Kuwait urges Iran to adopt 'serious measures' to build regional confidence



NEW YORK: HH the Prime Minister of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah addresses the General Debate of the 76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly at UN headquarters on Friday. — AFP

NEW YORK: Kuwait has provided assistance worth \$327.4 million to initiatives worldwide aiming to ensure an equal distribution of COVID-19 vaccines, particularly to impoverished nations, HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's representative said on Friday. Speaking at a United Nations General Assembly session, HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah called to ensure "a fair and safe global distribution of vaccines to all countries to reach a comprehensive immunization level".

Recently, Kuwait contributed \$40 million to Covax, a worldwide vaccine distribution initiative co-led by the World Health Organization, and the GAVI vaccine alliance, which aims to expand vaccine accessibility and improve governments' health systems, administered by civil society and global organizations. Domestically, the country has also ensured a fair distribution of globally-approved vaccines amongst its communities of nationals and residents, with a high coverage rate of 72 percent of the population.

On the repercussions of the deadly coronavirus pandemic, which has so far claimed the lives of over 4.7 million victims and caused widescale damage to economies and livelihoods and food scarcity, Sheikh Sabah said "the extent of the scars will remain present for a long time in the conscience of

the world". The prime minister paid special homage to frontliners and health workers, "who from us, deserve a standing ovation and our appreciation". However, he said an eventual global recovery will require "steps to invest in data and information infrastructure". "This will contribute to improvements in the decision-making process in order to protect societies from similar future crises," he added.

On a positive note, Sheikh Sabah said that in spite of these negative aftereffects, the pandemic has been a "major catalyst for change and rebuilding for the better on the political, economic and social levels". This was demonstrated in the rapid response and cooperation, through domestic and international scientific research, that resulted in the production of multiple vaccines, he explained.

Kuwait also called on Iran anew to adopt "serious measures" towards building confidence in the region based on respect of sovereignty and non-interference in affairs of countries. Iran should also work towards reducing tension in the Gulf region, and preserving safety, freedom and security of maritime navigation from any threats to ultimately contribute to building relations based on mutual cooperation and respect, Sheikh Sabah told the UNGA session.

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News in brief

Kuwait to give booster doses

KUWAIT: The health authorities will soon start sending appointments to people to receive booster shots of the COVID-19 vaccine, the health ministry announced yesterday. The third dose will for the time being be given to people over 60 years of age, healthcare workers and the immunocompromised, provided that they received their second dose at least six months earlier. Those eligible will receive their appointments through text messages automatically without the need for registration.

Abbas gives Zionists ultimatum

NEW YORK: Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas gave the Zionist entity one year to withdraw from occupied territory Friday or he said he would no longer recognize the Zionist state based on pre-1967 borders. "We must state that (the Zionist entity), the occupying power, has one year to withdraw from the Palestinian territory it occupied in 1967, including East Jerusalem," he said in a virtual address to the United Nations General Assembly.

2-year-old Texas boy kills self

WASHINGTON: A two-year-old died in Texas after shooting himself with a gun he found in a family member's backpack, officials said, the latest in a string of similar accidents by US children which have become tragically ordinary. The boy in the city of Waco sustained a gunshot wound to his head and was taken to a hospital where he later died, according to a statement by local police released Thursday. — AFP

Iran hails teen hero

TEHRAN: Iran paid tribute yesterday to a teenager who died of severe burns after having rescued two women neighbors trapped in a fire in their apartment building. Fifteen-year-old Ali Landi died of his injuries on Friday, two weeks after he helped the women escape their burning home and tried to throw a gas cylinder out of the window to stop the fire spreading. — AFP

New vehicle transfer rules against money laundering, fraud

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: No transfer of a vehicle's ownership can now be done without financial evidence of payment (an authorized check, a receipt of payment, bank

transfer, or contract of sale through a dealership). Many people were confused after Assistant Undersecretary for Traffic Affairs Maj Gen Jamal Al-Sayegh issued this decision last week. According to him, this decision will limit money laundering through the sale of luxury vehicles by paying cash.

Clarifying the decision, the interior ministry later announced transfers of ownership of vehicles between relatives (parents, children, siblings, spouses) are excluded from this decision, and the transfer can be done without providing any proof of payment.

An officer at the Traffic Department in Jabriya told Kuwait Times that they sometimes faced com-

Huawei exec lands in China after US deal

SHENZHEN: Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou returned to China yesterday shortly after two Canadians released from prison in China also arrived in Calgary, ending a bitter diplomatic row that has poisoned ties for three years. Meng and the two Canadians - former diplomat Michael Kovrig and businessman Michael Spavor - were detained in a bitter spat critics have called "hostage diplomacy".

Meng, the 49-year-old daughter of Ren Zhengfei, the billionaire founder

of Chinese telecoms giant Huawei, was granted release in a Vancouver court hearing after three years of house arrest in Canada while fighting extradition to the United States. This came hours after US prosecutors announced an agreement under which fraud charges against her are to be suspended and eventually dropped.

She then quickly boarded a flight to the southern city of Shenzhen, returning to China for the first time since her arrest at Vancouver's international airport at the behest of US authorities in Dec 2018. Meng received a red-carpet welcome as her flight landed, according to a live feed on state broadcaster CCTV, with Huawei employees waiting on the tarmac as a staffer in full protective gear held a bouquet of flowers.

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Iraq slams Kurd forum pushing Zionist ties

ARBIL: More than 300 Iraqis, including tribal leaders, called for a normalization of ties with the Zionist entity at a conference in autonomous Kurdistan organized by a US think-tank, drawing a chorus of condemnation yesterday from Baghdad. The first initiative of its kind in Iraq, a historic foe of the Zionist entity and where its sworn enemy Iran has a strong influ-

ence, the conference was held Friday.

The organizers, the New York-based Center for Peace Communications (CPC), advocates for normalizing relations between the Zionist entity and Arab countries, alongside working to establish ties between civil society organizations. Iraqi Kurdistan maintains cordial contacts with the Zionist entity, but the federal government in Baghdad, which has fought in Arab-Zionist wars, does not have diplomatic ties with the Zionist state.

Four Arab nations - the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan - last year agreed to normalize ties with the Zionist entity in a

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SHENZHEN: This screen grab made from video shows Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou waving as she steps out of the plane upon arrival yesterday following her release. — AFP



ARBIL: Iraqis attend a conference organized by US think-tank Center for Peace Communications on Friday. — AFP

Local

Nearly 200K foreign workers left Kuwait's labor market in one year

Fifteen activities affected; real estate, retail sectors hit hardest

KUWAIT: Kuwait's labor market lost 199,000 non-Kuwaiti workers during 12 months from March 2020 to March 2021, according to a local report. The employees were engaged in over 15 different activities. A labor market report indicated the real estate sector lost the most workers with 53,000, followed by the wholesale, retail and car repair sectors, which lost around 37,000 workers.

With the continued suspension of bringing in labor from abroad due to the coronavirus pandemic, there was no increase in labor numbers during the said period except for the electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning sector, which saw an increase of 369 workers. The report showed a notable decrease in the number of workers in the construction sector (more than 30,000), besides manufacturing industries, from which 32,000 workers left, Al-Qabas Arabic daily reported.

Meanwhile, the labor exodus was limited in the fields of information, communications, finance, insurance, education, art, entertainment, human health and social activities. The labor market witnessed an active movement in the transfer of workers within the private sector, with nearly 107,000 transfers. The number of work permits that were renewed totaled 402,000 in the first half of this year, while the number of employees in the private sector remained at around 1.5 million workers.

The Public Authority of Manpower unveiled the mechanism of issuing work permits for those who entered the country on commercial visas, saying if employers register entry visas for work permits on the e-forms site, they must make sure to attach a copy of the visa and police clearance certificate authenticated by official departments. PAM said the next procedures will then be completed at the labor departments.

Meanwhile, a labor market information system report showed that Indians form the largest number of those who left the marketplace in the first



KUWAIT: This archive photo shows a worker at a construction site in Kuwait. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

quarter of this year, as the total number of workers dropped by 67,809, 17,398 of whom were domestic helpers. The report showed 21,431 Indians left

the private sector, followed by 11,135 Egyptians and 6,136 Bangladeshis.

As for the family sector (domestic helpers, etc),

Total number of foreign workers who left Kuwait per sector:

1. Real estate - 53,000
2. Wholesale and retail - 37,000
3. Construction - 30,000
4. Manufacturing industries - 27,000
5. Transport and warehousing - 12,000
6. Farming and fishing - 10,500
7. Lodging and food - 8,500
8. Water and sewerage - 8,000
9. Mining and quarrying - 5,000
10. Education - 2,000

Breakdown of foreign workers who left the private sector:

India - 21,341
Egypt - 11,135
Bangladesh - 6,136
Nepal - 4,185
Philippines - 1,953
Pakistan - 1,250
Syria - 253
Jordan - 236
Iran - 210
Rest of nationalities - 4,268

Indians also left in large numbers (10,169), followed by Filipinos with 2,543 workers. The number of domestic helpers reached 651,265, a drop of 17,398 from the total registered at the end of last year.

Kuwaiti Ambassador praises success of IAEA conference

VIENNA: Kuwait's Ambassador to Austria and its permanent representative to international organizations in Vienna Sadiq Marafi affirmed on Friday the success of the 65th session of the General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), chaired by Kuwait. In a statement to the press, the ambassador said that the conference constituted a good opportunity to exchange views and evaluate progress made towards strengthening and developing national nuclear security and safety. He also went on praising the efforts played by the IAEA Director-General, Rafael Grossi, the agency's staff and members. The ambassador affirmed Kuwait's continued cooperation with the agency, stressing at the same time the

state's keenness to support the IAEA's activities, programs and initiatives.

Meanwhile, Grossi lauded Kuwait's presidency of the 65th general conference of the agency over the past few days. In statements to the press after the conclusion of the conference on Friday, Rafael Grossi said Kuwait was "brilliant as usual" in its presidency of the event. Kuwait's representative has successfully moderated the different sessions of the conference, he noted.

Grossi hailed the outcome of the 65th general conference. "It has met the aspired goals through the fruitful cooperation between the presidency, member states and the general secretariat," he said, adding that the conferees have passed all the draft resolutions proposed during the gathering. He thanked Marafi for his "outstanding moderation of the conference's sessions." This is the first time Kuwait presides over the IAEA General Conference since joining the international agency five decades ago. This conference is the highest policy-making body in IAEA, held annually with the participation of member states to consider the agency's work.

Kuwait stresses importance of protecting nature

VIENNA: Kuwait's Environment Public Authority Director-General, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah stressed yesterday the importance of protecting nature and preserving the environment. In a statement to the press on the sidelines of his participation at the World of Hunting and Nature Exhibition, which kicked off yesterday in Hungary, Sheikh Al-Ahmad said that ecological attention has become one of the most important priorities in the government plans. He also stressed that

participation in these international events aims to enhance cooperation with the various leading countries. Furthermore, he praised the efforts made by the Hungarian government to achieve sustainable development and preserve the natural ecosystem. The Environment Public Authority is participating in Kuwait's pavilion, which contains brochures and publications on all that Kuwait has contributed to preserving the environment, as well as an explanation of the law of hunting and environmental protection. The expo will be held for two weeks, and it is one of the largest international exhibitions in the world, sponsored by Hungarian Deputy Prime Minister Gault Simian, with the participation of 98 countries and 1,500 organizations, six conferences, and more than 500 events aimed at promoting the concept of sustainable use of nature. — KUNA

Huawei exec lands in China...

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Meanwhile, the two detained Canadians arrived back in Calgary, western Canada yesterday , and were shown on TV being greeted and hugged by Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. The "two Michaels" - as they have been dubbed by international media - were detained just days after Meng on what Ottawa has contended were "trumped up" espionage charges. In turn, Beijing called Meng's case "a purely political incident".

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said "the US Government stands with the international community in welcoming the decision" to release the men. Speaking to reporters before heading to China, Meng said: "Over the past three years, my life has been turned upside down. It was a disruptive time for me as a mother, wife and a company executive." China's foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said yesterday that the detention of Meng was an "incident of political persecution against a Chinese citizen".

The resolution of the case removes a deep thorn in the relationship between Beijing, Washington and Ottawa, with China accusing the US of a political attack on one of its technology titans. Beijing also accused Ottawa of doing Washington's bidding by arresting and holding Meng, known inside Huawei as the "princess" of the company and its possible future leader.

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These measures, he added, would honor aspirations of regional countries to enjoy security and stability, which would achieve prosperity and development of the people. Kuwait, HH the Prime Minister said, was looking forward for see regional and international efforts to bring about success to an international conference on clearing the Middle East from nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction,

Washington had accused her of wire fraud and deceiving HSBC bank, saying she tried to hide violations of US sanctions on Iran by Huawei affiliate Skycom. But on Friday, US prosecutors settled for Meng agreeing to a statement of facts in the case. In exchange, they agreed to defer the charges until 2022, and then drop them if Meng abides by the terms of the agreement.

In China, news of Meng's agreement was being scrubbed from the Internet. State news agency Xinhua said she was returning to China "through unrelenting efforts of the Chinese government", while the editor of state-run Global Times said she had been "finally released on a not guilty plea". A red banner hanging at Shenzhen airport arrivals hall read "Welcome home Meng Wanzhou" and a crowd of several hundred supporters gathered waving Chinese flags and banners.

Some chanted "Go Huawei!" and sang the national anthem. "I think China is going to... turn Meng Wanzhou's release into a big victory, a diplomatic victory," said Jean-Pierre Cabestan, Professor of Political Science at Hong Kong Baptist University. He said the government would build a propaganda campaign to "ignore the accusations against her and give the illusion that she was wrongly accused of crimes she never committed."

The charges and Meng's arrest were enmeshed in a broader campaign against Huawei. Washington says the firm has close links to the Chinese government and military, accusations it denies. The company yesterday said it will "continue to defend itself against the allegations" in US courts. Caught in between, Ottawa sought to rally allies, including Washington, to hike pressure on Beijing to release the two Canadians. — AFP

due in the UN in New York in November.

Kuwait also said on Friday it hopes the United Nations climate change conference, COP26, scheduled to be held in Glasgow in November, leads to a constructive review of progress and deficiencies in relation to environmental responsibility-sharing. Climate change has severely affected achievements made on the global scale to reach sustainable development goals, Sheikh Sabah said in his speech.

The effects of climate change have been evident in noticeable temperature rises, increasing intensity of storms and floods and decreasing green spaces due to the widespread recurrence of forest fires around the world, he added. Neglecting the matter "will have severe environmental repercussions", he warned. — KUNA

113 Ennahdha members resign amid Tunisia crisis

TUNIS: More than 100 members of Tunisia's Ennahdha party announced yesterday their resignation from the Islamist-inspired party over "bad choices" by their chief that had deepened the country's political crisis. Members of parliament, former cabinet ministers and party leaders are among the 113 Ennahdha members who left, they said in a statement.

"The current party leadership is responsible for (Ennahdha's) isolation and largely for the deteriorating situation in the country," it said. It pointedly blamed party leader Rached Ghannouchi for making "bad political choices" and striking "inappropriate alliances" with other movements that "undermined Ennahdha's credibility". Ghannouchi had "failed" and "refused all the advice" that was given to him, the statement added.

Iraq slams Kurd forum pushing...

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US-sponsored process dubbed the Abraham Accords. "We demand our integration into the Abraham Accords," said Sahar Al-Tai, one of the attendees, reading a closing statement in a conference room at a hotel in the Kurdish regional capital Arbil.

"Just as these agreements provide for diplomatic relations between the signatories and (the Zionist entity), we also want normal relations with (the Zionist entity)," she said. "No force, local or foreign, has the right to prevent this call," added Tai, head of research at the Iraqi federal government's culture ministry. However, Iraq's federal government rejected the conference's call for normalization in a statement yesterday and dismissed the gathering as an "illegal meeting".

The conference "was not representative of the population's (opinion) and that of residents in Iraqi cities, in whose name these individuals purported to speak," the statement said. The office of Iraq's President Barham Saleh, himself a Kurd, joined in

In July, President Kais Saied sacked the government, suspended parliament, removed the immunity of lawmakers and put himself in charge of prosecutions. On Wednesday, Saied announced decrees that strengthen the powers of his office at the expense of the government and parliament, saying he will rule by decree. Ennahdha, Saied's archfoe with the largest bloc in parliament, had already condemned the president's July power grab as a "coup d'etat". It said this week that Saied's measures risked setting in motion the dismantling of the state. And on Thursday, Ghannouchi called for a "peaceful struggle" against a return to "absolute one-man rule" in Tunisia.

Speaking in an interview with AFP, Ghannouchi admitted however that his party was in part responsible for Saied's power grab. "Ennahdha is not in power but it backed the government, despite some criticism we had," he said.

Tunisia has seen years of political deadlock since its 2011 revolution that ousted autocratic president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. Fractious coalitions and short-lived governments since the uprising have failed to resolve mounting social and economic crises. — AFP

the condemnation. Powerful Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr urged the government to "arrest all the participants", while Ahmed Assadi, an MP with the ex-paramilitary group Hashed Al-Shaabi, branded them "traitors in the eyes of the law".

The culture ministry, in a statement, said its employee Tai who attended the Arbil forum did not represent the ministry, but she had taken part as "a member of a (civil society) organization". The 300 participants at the conference came from across Iraq, according to CPC founder Joseph Braude, a US citizen of Iraqi Jewish origin. They included Sunni and Shiite representatives from "six governorates: Baghdad, Mosul, Salaheddin, Al-Anbar, Diyala and Babylon," extending to tribal chiefs and "intellectuals and writers", he told AFP by phone.

Other speakers at the conference included Chemi Peres, the head of a Zionist foundation established by his father, the late president Shimon Peres. "Normalization with (the Zionist entity) is now a necessity," said Sheikh Rissan Al-Halboussi, an attendee from Anbar province, citing the examples of Morocco and the UAE. Kurdish Iraqi leaders have repeatedly visited the Zionist entity over the decades and local politicians have openly demanded Iraq normalize ties with the Zionist state, which itself backed a 2017 independence referendum in the autonomous region. — AFP

Local

Kuwait's statement at UNGA session covered main regional, int'l issues: Foreign Minister

COVID impact, sustainable development, climate change on the agenda

KUWAIT: Representative of His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah arrived in Kuwait yesterday after leading the Kuwaiti delegation in the 76th session of UN General Assembly. His Highness Sheikh Sabah was received by Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Nazaha (Integrity) Enhancement Abdullah Yousef Al-Roumi, Head of the Prime Minister's Diwan Abdulaziz Dakheel Al-Dakheel and a number of senior state officials.

Meanwhile, Kuwait's Foreign Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah said yesterday the statement of Kuwait to the 76th session of the UN General Assembly dealt with the main issues inside and outside the Middle East, with emphasis on the impacts of the coronavirus (COVID-19). Many other topics, such as sustainable development, climate change and renewable energy, featured prominently on the agenda of this year's session, he said in statements to the press.

As many as 109 heads of delegations attended the session, and several meetings were held on the sidelines to address regional and international issues in the political, economic security and social areas, Sheikh Dr Ahmad pointed out. "Subjects as artificial intelligence and cybersecurity were also discussed during the meetings with speakers highlighting the need to enhance cooperation on a global scale in this regard," he revealed.

Regarding the activities of Representative of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah during his presence in

New York, the minister said His Highness the Prime Minister held several meetings on the bilateral and multilateral levels. "His Highness the Prime Minister delivered a speech to the UNGA on behalf of Kuwait where he outlined the pros and cons in the global approach to addressing the COVID-19 pandemic. He stressed the need of drawing lessons from this crisis and sharing information to make the world safer and promote the efficacies of the healthcare systems," Sheikh Dr Ahmad noted. His Highness Sheikh Sabah also underscored the adverse impacts of the pandemic on food security and education particularly in countries disadvantaged in information technology.

On regional issues, His Highness the Prime Minister recalled, in his speech, the tragic events in the occupied Palestinian territories and the repeated aggressions by the Zionist entity on the defenseless Palestinian people, Sheikh Dr Ahmad went on. His Highness the Prime Minister renewed the call for helping the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) exercise its mandate and prevent the emergence of desperate generation, which could lead to serious security spillover on the region and the world at large.

His Highness the Prime Minister called on Iran to meet its obligations to the international law and the UN Charter, refrain from interfering in the domestic affairs of other countries and respect the principles of dialogue sovereignty and neighborliness. Ahead of the UNGA session, the Arab League Ministerial Council convened a meeting, presided over by Kuwait, to outline the stances of the group of Arab states towards the agenda topics of the session, Sheikh Dr Ahmad added. —KUNA

Need to enhance cybersecurity cooperation



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah (left) is welcomed upon arrival in Kuwait yesterday. —KUNA

Foreign Minister takes part in GCC-Russia ministerial meeting

NEW YORK: Kuwait's Foreign Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Naser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah participated in the ministerial meeting of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states and Russia which was held in New York on Friday on the sidelines of the 76th session of the UN General Assembly. The conferees explored prospects for enhancing cooperation between the GCC countries and Russia on all domains. They also touched upon the regional and international developments of common concern.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Dr Ahmad expressed appreciation to the US envoy to Yemen Tim Lenderking for his endeavors to find a political solution to the decade-long conflict. This came during his meeting with Lenderking in New York. Sheikh Dr Ahmad Naser reiterated Kuwait's principled and firm stance in support of all regional and international efforts to reach a political solution for the Yemen crisis in order to restore peace and security in the Arab country. Lenderking, meanwhile, lauded Kuwait's sincere and effective role for ending the conflict as well as its humanitarian and developmental aid to the Yemeni people.

In the meantime, Sheikh Dr Ahmad met on Friday with UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini, on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly session. During the meeting, Sheikh Dr Ahmad expressed his utmost thanks and appreciations on behalf of the state of Kuwait to UNRWA's work and its refugee,



NEW YORK: Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Naser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah participates in the ministerial meeting of the Gulf Cooperation Council member states and Russia. — KUNA photos

health, and education services to ease the suffering of Palestinians. Lazzarini, meanwhile, hailed Kuwait's humanitarian and principled vital role to UNRWA, and overall support to the agency, particularly to Palestinians and all refugees around the world.

Furthermore, Sheikh Dr Ahmad met with President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Peter Maurer on the sidelines of the session. During the meeting, Sheikh Dr Ahmad spoke highly about the ICRC humanitarian efforts worldwide and its close cooperation with Kuwait in this realm over 30 years. He added that Kuwait is looking forward to broadening this cooperation to implement humanitarian goals around the world.

Maurer was appreciative of Kuwait's outstanding humanitarian role and its aid to people affected by natural and man-made disasters worldwide. Kuwait has been elevated to prominence on the regional and international humanitarian stage thanks to its huge contributions to humanitarian endeavors across the world, he said.

Moreover, Sheikh Dr Ahmad has mulled with Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Yousef Al-Othaimen enhancing cooperation to serve the Muslim nation and defend its causes. This came in a meeting they held on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly session. Sheikh Dr Ahmad reviewed with Othaimen the OIC work to

unite Muslim countries' stances and actions in face of challenges. The Kuwaiti top diplomat also voiced appreciation to the OIC chief for the great efforts he exerts to materialize the organization's objectives.

In other news, Kuwait's Foreign Minister held separate meetings on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly session with Nepalese Foreign Minister Dr Narayan Khadka, Senegalese Foreign Minister Aissata Tall Sall, Foreign Minister of Kyrgyzstan Ruslan Kazakbaev, and Thailand's Minister of Foreign Affairs Don Pramudwinai, discussing with them boosting bilateral relations as well as several regional and international issues of common interest. —KUNA



Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Naser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah meets the UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini.



Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Naser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah meets President of the International Committee of the Red Cross Peter Maurer.



Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Naser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah meets Nepalese Foreign Minister Dr Narayan Khadka.



Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Naser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah meets Senegalese Foreign Minister Aissata Tall Sall.



Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Naser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah meets Foreign Minister of Kyrgyzstan Ruslan Kazakbaev.



Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Naser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah meets Thailand's Minister of Foreign Affairs Don Pramudwinai.

Local

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ABK, Al-Mogahwi offer free school supplies to students

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) held a special event in collaboration with Al-Mogahwi in Sharq, offering ABK customers a customized school supply box to welcome students back to school, after a long absence due to the pandemic. Yasmeen Al-Salem from ABK's Marketing Department said: "It has been a very difficult time for children and parents due to the pandemic. Many children have not seen their friends for a long time and have not had regular interaction whether it be in class, play days or sport activities. Parents too have had to put an enormous effort into online schooling. To congratulate the children for their efforts and to celebrate going back to school, we decided to offer our customers a special 'back to school' gift box. We wish everyone a successful academic year."



ICSK Junior hosts ceremony for new student council

KUWAIT: September 19, 2021, was a momentous day for ICSK Junior as it witnessed a beautiful ceremony for the newly elected student council who were bestowed with responsibility signifying the trust and faith that the school assigns in the newly invested student council. Vice Principal Sheeja Ravi welcomed the chief guest, principal and the audience. She gave a clear and vivid idea as to how the election was conducted in school.

Dr Siju Thomas, Corporate Mentor, famous as happiness coach, graced the occasion. His words of wisdom and experience on a true leader was highly praiseworthy. He advised the children and gave tips on how to lead a life with purpose, having a pleasant disposition. The melodious song and a beautiful invocation dance were presented by the students with full zest and zeal. Glimpses of the previous year's investiture took everyone back the memory lane. Parents had the honor of investing the badges for their children.

The Principal Sherly Dennis administered the oath of office to the student council. The president and vice president along with the other 13 senate members took the oath to fulfill their responsibilities to the best of their abilities and promised to maintain the honor of their position. In her address, the principal congratulated the student council and urged the audience to be devoted leaders so that they can become the finest human beings and reach greater heights together as a team.

The president, in his maiden speech, thanked the chief guest, principal, vice principal, teachers, parents and students for their guidance, love and support. The idea of supporting the school and teachers for a smooth transition from online to offline classes was highly thoughtful of him.

The academic coordinator, Santhi Krishna, thanked the school administration and board members for their positive help and guidance in all situations, as well as the principal, vice principal, parents, teachers and the students.

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A picture taken on September 20, 2021 shows high-rise buildings in Kuwait City. —Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh (To have your picture featured in the Kuwait Times' 'Photo of the Day' section, please send your high resolution, horizontal, 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)

NATO lauds 'great cooperation' with Kuwait

BRUSSELS: A top NATO official has praised the growing partnership between the 30-member Alliance and Kuwait and expressed his appreciation to Kuwait for hosting the NATO-ICI Regional Centre. "I want to highlight the great cooperation between Kuwait and NATO and how happy we are that this partnership is growing every day," Giovanni Romani, head of the Middle East and North Africa section within the Political Affairs and Security Policy Division of NATO, said in an interview. He described his recent visit to Kuwait earlier in September as "very nice" and said he held meetings at the foreign ministry, defense ministry and the bureau of national security apparatus. He also visited the NATO-ICI regional center which, he said, "is a fruit of the cooperation between NATO and Kuwait."

NATO's Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) was launched at the Alliance's Summit in the Turkish city in June 2004. "Cooperation between Kuwait and NATO is going on very well. We always had excellent relationship," stressed Romani who previously served in the Italian Navy. Kuwait's Ambassador to NATO, the EU and Belgium Jassem Al-Budaiwi hosted a lunch at this residence Friday for Romani together with Javier Colomina, NATO Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs and Security Policy and NATO Secretary General's Special

Representative for the Caucasus and Central Asia.

"We very much appreciate the kind offer of Kuwait for this Centre which allows us to better engage in the Gulf within the framework of the ICI with the four countries, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and UAE but also with the two other countries of the GCC," Saudi Arabia and Oman, he said. The NATO official said that the work at the Centre had paused due to the Coronavirus crisis but they had been working virtually and now little-by-little they started to work and look forward to the operational use of the center in physical presence. "We hope to leverage the Centre to its full capacity and to strengthen the cooperation with the other Gulf countries in the ICI," he said.

The center is the only presence NATO has in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, he noted. He also expressed his appreciation to Kuwait for the support that was provided during the evacuation from Afghanistan. "We had an urgent need to get the people out from Afghanistan and it was important for us to have the support of the Gulf countries including Kuwait for facilitating this operation which was complex and very dangerous," he said. It aims to contribute to long-term global and regional security by offering countries of the Gulf practical and bilateral cooperation with NATO. Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and



BRUSSELS: Kuwait's Ambassador to NATO Jassem Al-Budaiwi (center) with NATO officials Giovanni Romani (right) and Javier Colomina. —KUNA

UAE are members of the ICI. In January 2017, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg inaugurated NATO-Istanbul Cooperation Initiative Regional Centre in Kuwait. Stoltenberg has described this Centre as "a new home for the Alliance in the Gulf" whose "potential is enormous". —KUNA

Fighting corruption in Kuwait with an international perspective

By Dhari Buyabes

Kuwait Anticorruption Authority, also known as Nazaha, is an agency that is mandated by the law to prevent and combat corruption in Kuwait. It was established in 2016 as per the Anticorruption Act number 2 for the year 2016. Nazaha, which means "integrity" in the Arabic language, was established in response to the requirements set by United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC).

The UNCAC is considered the "only legally binding universal anti-corruption instrument," as Article 6 of this convention stipulates that: "Each state party shall, in accordance with the fundamental principles of its legal system, ensure the existence of a body or bodies, as appropriate, that prevent corruption." The UNCAC, which Nazaha aims to implement, promotes the fight against corruption in several fields such as prevention, law enforcement, international cooperation, and asset recovery.

With the UNCAC in mind, the law has identified several goals for Nazaha to achieve. The agency aims to establish the principle of transparency and integrity in the economic and administrative transactions to ensure the good governance of the state's funds, resources and property and their optimal use. Nazaha also strives to protect state bodies from bribery, trading in influence and abuse of power for personal benefits and prevent mediation and nepotism. It further encourages and activates the role of institutions and organizations of the civil society in the fight against corruption and educates members of the society of its risks and expands the awareness of the means and methods of prevention.



Dhari Buyabes

Furthermore, Nazaha has a specialized mandate and undertakes unique measures in order to fulfill the said goals. The agency receives and studies reports, complaints and information submitted to it regarding the crimes of corruption and when ascertained that they constitute a suspected crime, they are referred for prosecution. Nazaha also receives statements of financial disclosure; these are documents in which state officials disclose their assets, properties, movables, and other financial information. These statements must be periodically updated by these officials. The statements are then subject to inspection and examination by Nazaha, which refers cases of illicit enrichment for prosecution.

Moreover, Nazaha aims to enhance the legal framework in the country in the field of anticorruption. It periodically studies legislations and legal instruments related to the fight against corruption and proposes the necessary amendments thereof to keep pace with international conventions and treaties ratified or acceded to by Kuwait.

Nazaha also gives great importance to prevention. The agency coordinates with the media in order to educate and raise awareness in society of the risks of corruption, corrupt practices and effects and how to prevent and fight them. Not only that, Nazaha was mandated by the law to develop a comprehensive national strategy for integrity, transparency and anticorruption, prepare its implementing mechanisms, plans and programs, and follow up its implementation with the concerned bodies.

In fact, Nazaha launched the "Kuwait Integrity and Anticorruption Strategy 2019-2024" in cooperation with the United Nations. The strategy was developed in consultation with stakeholders from the public sector, private sector, and non-governmental organizations. Further, with 13 priorities and 47 initiatives, the strategy enhances integrity and promotes anticorruption measures in the public and private sectors, society, and the relevant specialized bodies.

While Nazaha leads anticorruption efforts on the national level, it remains keen to take part in the global fight against corruption through cooperation with other countries and international organizations. It actively participates at international conferences and events related to anticorruption. For instance, Nazaha participates at the Conference of State Parties to the United Nations Convention

against Corruption, which is the largest global meeting for anticorruption practitioners. Nazaha also takes part at the working groups of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (the secretariat of the UNCAC). Working groups are more specialized meetings within the UNCAC and discuss vital issues in corruption prevention, asset recovery, and international cooperation.

On the regional level, Nazaha also joins the sessions of the Conference of the State Parties to the Arab Anticorruption Convention. Similarly, Nazaha regularly participates at the Gulf Cooperation Council meetings for the agencies responsible for promoting integrity and combatting corruption.

Yet, the world is constantly changing, and the current global health situation with regards to COVID-19 has certainly affected such international participation. In this regard, COVID-19 has presented both opportunities and challenges to Nazaha's work in the international scene. At the beginning of the pandemic, many meetings and events were postponed. But given the prolonged period of lockdowns, meetings started taking place online, some of them for the very first time. Nazaha continued to participate at international events virtually, even when COVID-19 restrictions were at the highest levels.

The pandemic was still an opportunity to promote international cooperation, given that it was easier than ever to conduct meetings with Nazaha's international partners online.

Fortunately, with COVID-19 restrictions being loosened in different countries, some anticorruption conferences are being conducted in a hybrid format. Delegates can either participate physically at the event, or remotely from their own countries. Both formats have their own unique advantages, and this is something to be appreciated.

To conclude, corruption is a global phenomenon, and tackling it requires a unique set of skills and prompt action. Despite being relatively a new agency, Nazaha has gone a long way in implementing various measures in combatting and preventing corruption. Whether before, during, or after the pandemic, Nazaha will continue its efforts to face corruption and promote integrity, transparency, and accountability.

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Morocco gets 1st batch of Turkish armed drones

Merkel’s final push for party, stability in knife-edge polls

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VANCOUVER: In this file photo, protesters hold photos of Canadians Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig, who are being detained by China, outside British Columbia Supreme Court in Vancouver. Two Canadians imprisoned in what China’s Western critics branded ‘hostage diplomacy’ headed home September 24, 2021, after being released. —AFP

Canadians freed in ‘hostage diplomacy’

An end to a bitter China-Canada 3-year diplomatic row

BEIJING: Two Canadians detained in 2018 and accused of spying in China were freed from harsh detention conditions and are heading back home yesterday, bringing an end to a bitter three-year diplomatic row. Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou was returning to Shenzhen from Vancouver yesterday as the two Canadians – Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig – were released from prison after what analysts have called “hostage diplomacy”.

Michael Spavor

Michael Spavor is a fluent Korean speaker whose relationships in Pyongyang go right to the top. He focused on introducing foreign businesses to North Korea – which is subject to multiple sets of sanctions over its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs – and is among only a handful of Westerners who met Kim Jong Un after the leader inherited power in 2011. Spavor has been pictured sitting next to Kim, sharing cigarettes and cocktails, aboard the North Korean leader’s private yacht.

For years Spavor, now in his forties, was based in the Chinese city of Dandong, on the border with North Korea. He was detained in 2018 and Chinese prosecutors later charged him with “espionage and illegally providing state secrets (to third parties).” He told AFP before his detention that he was getting enquiries from investors interested in market research and “face-to-face matchmaking with

potential DPRK ministries and future partners” for when sanctions are lifted.

Hailing from Calgary, Alberta, Spavor first became intrigued by North Korea during a short stay in Seoul in the late 1990s. He also lived in Pyongyang in 2005 while working for a Canadian NGO. He now speaks fluent Korean – with a distinct northern accent. Michael Spavor’s brother Paul told reporters at a march to raise awareness in Canada that in prison his brother “spends a lot of his time reading, meditating, doing yoga.” After being sentenced to 11 years in August, Spavor conveyed a brief message to the outside world through embassy officials that he was “in good spirits.” “I want to get home,” he said.

Michael Kovrig

Michael Kovrig is a former Canadian diplomat who was working as a senior advisor for the think tank International Crisis Group when he was detained along with Spavor in December, 2018. He was accused of espionage in May, 2019 but no verdict was announced after his closed door trial in March. Kovrig’s employer said he was based in Hong Kong and regularly invited to the mainland by Chinese officials, and could not be viewed as hostile to China. At first he was held in a cell with about 20 inmates in Beijing, AFP was told by another former Canadian diplomat in China, and allowed outside for 15 minutes per day.

His wife Vina Nadjibulla told AFP in December last year that songs and books kept him going during the harsh detention. She said he continued to be “mentally and physically strong, and has been doing everything he possibly can to maintain his positive mindset”. In the first weeks following Kovrig’s arrest, even books were denied, and at one point his reading glasses were seized. Kovrig has since sent requests for books on philosophy, his wife said, plus “biographies of other people who’ve been through these kinds of experiences.”

During a virtual consular visit with Canadian officials in October, Kovrig’s boss Robert Malley told Canadian media that he’d deadpanned he’d be late filing a report. A fan of Leonard Cohen and Sisters of Mercy, he also sang to help pass the time. “He’s a big fan of music and he knows a lot of lyrics by heart and I think that’s helping him,” said Nadjibulla at the time. According to her, he tried to get a bit of exercise by walking 7,000 steps daily around his cell, which reportedly measured only three meters by three meters. — AFP

Arrests, anger and court battles - the case of Wanzhou

NEW YORK: The 2018 arrest in Vancouver of Huawei chief financial officer Meng Wanzhou on a US warrant, followed by China’s detention of two Canadians, sparked an unprecedented dispute between Beijing and Ottawa. On Friday, a legal agreement in New York paved the way for Meng to board a plane to China after nearly three years of detention in Canada and for the two Canadian men to also set off home. Here are the key dates in the case:

Wanted: Meng Wanzhou

In August 2018, a New York court issues an arrest warrant for Meng, Chinese telecommunications giant Huawei’s number two, dubbed the “Princess of Huawei.” The US justice department accuses Meng – the daughter of Huawei founder Ren Zhengfei – of having lied to HSBC about Huawei’s relationship with its Iran-based covert subsidiary Skycom, putting the bank at risk of violating US sanctions against Iran.

Meng’s arrest

On December 1, Meng is arrested at the request of US authorities as she changes planes in Vancouver. On December 6, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau says there was no “political intervention” and that Canada’s judicial system is acting independently in dealing with the US extradition request. Two days later, on December 8, China threatens Canada with severe consequences.

Two Michaels detained in China

On December 10, China detains former diplomat Michael Kovrig, who was employed by the International Crisis Group think tank, and business consultant Michael Spavor under suspicion of “engaging in activities that threatened China’s national security.” The arrests are widely seen by observers as retaliation for Meng’s detention.

Trudeau and Trump

In January 2019, Trudeau and then US president Donald Trump denounce China’s “arbitrary detention” of the two Canadians. Later that month, Trudeau dismisses Canada’s ambassador to China, John McCallum, for saying in an interview with Chinese media that

Meng had solid grounds to contest her extradition to the United States.

Death sentence

Also in January 2019, diplomatic tensions heighten when a court in northeast China sentences Canadian Robert Lloyd Schellenberg, 36, to death at a hastily scheduled retrial after his previous 15-year prison term for drug trafficking was deemed too lenient. Schellenberg was detained well before the diplomatic feud, back in 2014. Following the death sentence, Canada updates its travel advisory for China, warning citizens of the “risk of arbitrary enforcement of local laws.” In response, China warned its citizens of the “risks” of travel to Canada citing Meng’s arrest.

Trade woes

In March 2019, Beijing cites “hazardous pests” found in Canadian shipments of canola to justify a ban on imports of the seed used to make cooking oil, biodiesel and animal feed. In June, China suspends all imports of Canadian beef and pork, saying it had uncovered false veterinary health certificates. In November, Beijing announces it will resume Canadian meat imports.

Formal charges

In June 2020, China formally charges Kovrig and Spavor, more than 18 months after their arrests. The Supreme People’s Procuratorate says they are “suspected of foreign espionage” and “providing state secrets.”

Request to relax bail conditions

In January 2021, Meng’s lawyers ask a court to ease her bail conditions, which include a curfew, an ankle bracelet, and daytime supervision by security guards at the Vancouver mansion where she has lived since her arrest. The judge sides with government lawyers who objected.

A deal is done

Kovrig and Spavor are tried in March. Spavor is sentenced to 11 years in prison in China. No outcome is yet announced in Kovrig’s case. On September 24, Meng reaches a deal with US prosecutors to avoid felony fraud charges, and is granted release in a Vancouver court hearing. She quickly leaves for the Chinese city of Shenzhen. Shortly afterwards, Trudeau announces that the two Canadians, Kovrig and Spavor, are headed home to Canada after being released by China. — AFP



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International

Catholic Church apologizes to Canada indigenous peoples for school abuses

Canada convulsed; 1,200 unmarked graves found

OTTAWA: The Catholic Church has apologized “unequivocally” to Canada’s indigenous peoples for a century of abuses at church-run residential schools set up by the government to assimilate children into the mainstream. But indigenous leaders are still awaiting a mea culpa from the pope himself. “We, the Catholic Bishops of Canada, express our profound remorse and apologize unequivocally,” read a statement, in which they said they were “fully committed” to reconciliation.

The move follows recent discoveries, which convulsed Canada, of some 1,200 unmarked graves at three sites where indigenous children were forced to attend the schools. In total, some 150,000 Indian, Metis and Inuit children were enrolled from the late 1800s to the 1990s in 139 of the residential schools across Canada, spending months or years isolated from the families. It also comes less than a week before Canadians mark the first National Day for Truth and Reconciliation on September 30.

The solemn commemoration for the thousands of indigenous children who died or went missing from the schools was set by Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, who said in June that Canadians were “horrified and ashamed of how our country behaved.” In the statement, the bishops said they “acknowledge the suffering experienced” by indigenous students and the “grave abuses” inflicted upon them, including “physical, psychological, emotional, spiritual, cultural, and sexual” mistreatment at the hands of headmasters and teachers.

“Many Catholic religious communities and dioceses participated in this system, which led to the suppression of Indigenous languages, culture and spirituality, failing to respect the rich history, traditions and wisdom of Indigenous Peoples,” they said. “We also sorrowfully acknowledge the historical and ongoing trauma and the legacy of suffering and challenges faced by Indigenous Peoples that continue to this day.”



Thousands of indigenous kids died, missing

‘Cultural genocide’

A truth and reconciliation commission concluded the failed government policy amounted to “cultural genocide.” Today, the residential school experiences are blamed for a high incidence of poverty, alcoholism and domestic violence, as well as high suicide rates, in Canada’s indigenous communities. Searches for more possible grave sites using ground



BRITISH COLUMBIA: Jennifer Nickel holds her daughters as they look up at the former Kamloops Indian Residential School where flowers and cards have been left as part of a growing makeshift memorial to honor the 215 children whose remains have been discovered buried near the facility, in Kamloops. — AFP

penetrating radar continue after discoveries in British Columbia and Saskatchewan provinces.

Meanwhile, tribes are trying to piece together old documents that might help identify the deceased in the unmarked graves and shed light

on the fate of others who never returned home. The bishops committed to “providing documentation or records (requested by tribes) that will assist in the memorialization of those buried in unmarked graves.” — AFP

Merkel’s final push for party, stability in knife-edge polls

BERLIN: Chancellor Angela Merkel travels yesterday to Aachen, hometown of her would-be successor Armin Laschet, in a last-ditch push to shore up his beleaguered campaign 24 hours before Germans vote. Laschet, 60, has been trailing his Social Democrat challenger Olaf Scholz in the race for the chancellery, although final polls put the gap between them within the margin of error, making the vote one of the most unpredictable in recent years.

Merkel had planned to keep a low profile in the election battle as she prepares to bow out of politics after 16 years in power. But she has found herself dragged into the frantic campaign schedule of the unpopular chairman of her party, Laschet. In the last week of the campaign, Merkel took Laschet to her constituency by the Baltic coast and on Friday headlined the closing rally gathering the conservatives’ bigwigs in Munich. Merkel tugged at the heartstrings of Germany’s predominantly older electorate on Friday, calling them to keep her conservatives in power for the sake of stability – a trademark of Merkel.

“To keep Germany stable, Armin Laschet must become chancellor, and the CDU and CSU must be the strongest force,” she said. A day before the vote, she will accompany Laschet to his constituency Aachen, a spa city near Germany’s western border with Belgium and the Netherlands, where he was born and still lives. At the other end of the country, Scholz will be holding “dialogues on the future” with voters in his constituency of Potsdam – a city on the outskirts of Berlin famous for its palaces that once housed Prussian kings.

‘Could backfire’

Scholz, currently finance minister from Merkel’s junior coalition partners SPD, has avoided making mistakes on the campaign trail, and largely won backing as he sold himself as the “continuity candidate” after Merkel in place of Laschet. Also on the campaign trail on Friday, Scholz demanded a “fresh start for Germany” and “a change of government” after 16 years under Merkel. Described as capable but boring, Scholz has consistently beat Laschet by wide margins when it comes to popularity.

But with the clock ticking down to election day, Laschet’s conservatives were closing the gap, with one poll even putting them just one percentage point behind the SPD’s 26 percent. Laschet had gone into the race for the chancellery badly bruised by a tough battle for the conservatives’ chancellor candidate nomination. Nevertheless, his party had enjoyed a substantial lead ahead of the SPD heading into the summer. But Laschet was seen chuckling behind President Frank-Walter Steinmeier as he paid tribute to victims of deadly floods in July, an image that would drastically turn the mood against him and his party.

With the conservatives running scared as polls showed the race widening for the SPD, they have turned to their greatest asset – the still widely popular Merkel. Yet roping in the chancellor is not without risks, said political analyst Oskar Niedermayer of Berlin’s Free University. “Merkel is still the most well-liked politician. But the joint appearances can become a problem for Laschet because they are then immediately being compared to each other,” he said. “And it could therefore backfire because people could then think that Merkel is more suitable than Laschet.” — AFP

Iceland votes as hung parliament predicted

REYKJAVIK: Icelanders began voting yesterday in an election that could see its unprecedented left-right coalition lose its majority, despite bringing four years of stability after a decade of crises. With the political landscape more splintered than ever, the process of forming a new coalition could be more complicated than in the past. Prime Minister Katrin Jakobsdottir, whose Left-Green Movement had never led a government before, is seeking a second mandate but the large number of parties could stand in her way. Opinion polls suggest a record nine parties out of 10 are expected to win seats in the Althing, Iceland’s almost 1,100-year-old parliament.

That makes it particularly tricky to predict which parties could end up

forming a coalition. First results were expected shortly after polling stations close at 10:00 pm, but a clear picture was not expected to emerge until Sunday. Jon Sigurdsson, a 47-year-old entrepreneur, was among the first to cast his ballot in the capital Reykjavik. “There are a lot of parties threatening to raise taxes and I think that is not the right thing to do. Enough already!” he told AFP, refusing to disclose who he voted for.

‘Different opportunities’

With 33 of 63 seats, the outgoing coalition is made up of the conservative Independence Party, the centre-right Progressive Party and the Left-Green Movement. Some opinion polls suggest it will manage to secure a very narrow majority but others say it will fail. “Because there are so many parties, I think there will be a lot of different opportunities to form a government,” Prime Minister Jakobsdottir told AFP in an interview this week.

While she is broadly popular, her party is hovering around 10-12 percent in the polls and risks losing several seats. During her four-year term, Jakobsdottir has introduced a pro-



REYKJAVIK: People are seen in a park in Reykjavik, the capital of the north atlantic island of Iceland. —AFP

gressive income tax system, increased the social housing budget and extended parental leave for both parents. She has also been hailed for her handling of the COVID crisis, with just 33 deaths in the country of 370,000.

But she has also had to make concessions to keep the peace in her coalition, including a promise to cre-

ate a national park in central Iceland which is home to 32 active volcano systems and 400 glaciers. This is only the second time since 2008 that a government has made it to the end of its four-year mandate on the sprawling island. Deep public distrust of politicians amid repeated scandals sent Icelanders to the polls five times from 2007 to 2017. — AFP

Catalan ex-leader released from jail, free to leave Italy

SASSARI: Exiled former Catalan president Carles Puigdemont, arrested in Italy at Spain’s request over an independence referendum that Madrid ruled illegal, was released from prison Friday with no apparent restrictions on his liberty. Puigdemont, a member of the European Parliament who fled Spain following the 2017 vote, walked out of jail in the Sardinian town of Sassari to cheers from supporters outside.

The 58-year-old separatist leader, who spent the night behind bars after being taken into custody Thursday, was free to leave the island but would return for a hearing in October, his lawyer said. “We always thought this could happen, but we also knew how it could end,” a newly liberated Puigdemont told

the crowds. “What happens is that Spain never misses an opportunity to make a fool of itself,” he said.

The court in Sassari will examine an extradition request for Puigdemont on October 4, his lawyer Agostinangelo Marras said. Marras insists there is no basis for either the arrest or extradition of Puigdemont, who has been based in Brussels in recent years. Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said Friday he would respect the Italian system, but added: “It’s clear that Carles Puigdemont must be brought to justice and stand trial.”

‘Freedom’

The arrest drew a sharp rebuke from the Catalan government, with regional leader Pere Aragonès demanding Puigdemont’s “immediate release” and saying he would travel to Sardinia to “stand by” him. It also sparked anger in Catalonia as several hundred pro-independence supporters demonstrated Friday evening outside the Italian consulate in Barcelona, slamming Spanish “repression”.

It also comes at a sensitive time, nine days after

the left-leaning Spanish government and regional Catalan authorities resumed negotiations to find a solution to Spain’s worst political crisis in decades. Ahead of Friday’s hearing, supporters gathered outside the court in Sassari, with one holding up a large Catalan independence flag. And in Catalonia’s regional capital Barcelona, hundreds of demonstrators gathered outside the Italian consulate, some holding makeshift signs reading “Freedom” in Catalan over Puigdemont’s picture. Others shouted “Free our president” in Italian and waved Catalan independence flags.

The October 2017 referendum was staged by Catalonia’s separatist regional government despite a ban by Madrid and the process was marred by police violence. Several weeks later, the separatists issued a short-lived declaration of independence, triggering a huge political crisis with Spain during which Puigdemont and several others fled abroad. Madrid swiftly moved to prosecute the Catalan separatist leaders that stayed behind, handing nine of them long jail terms. — AFP

Flights scrapped as volcanic eruptions hit Canaries

MADRID: Fresh volcanic eruptions in Spain’s Canary Islands prompted the cancellation of flights, airport authorities said Friday, the first since the Cumbre Vieja volcano came to life again. New evacuations were also ordered as large explosions and new openings were reported at the volcano on La Palma island on Friday. A large cloud of thick, black ash spewed into the air, forcing several airlines to call off flights.

La Palma had six inter-island flights scheduled for Friday operated by Binter, Canaryfly and Air Europa, while the national carrier Iberia had a single service from Madrid to the mainland. All were scrapped. They were the first flights to be cancelled since the volcano erupted on Sunday. “It is not yet possible to say when we can resume flights,” Spanish carrier Binter said on Twitter. Authorities also ordered new evacuations, adding to the 6,100 people already forced to leave to area this week, including 400 tourists.

The compulsory evacuation order was issued in parts of El Paso town on La Palma island “given the increased risk for the population due to the current eruptive episode”, the regional government said. According to the European Union’s Copernicus Earth Observation Program, the lava has so far destroyed 390 buildings and covered more than 180 hectares of land. Video footage from the civil guard showed a garden in the area completely covered in thick ash. Visiting the island, Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez announced La Palma would be declared a zone affected by a catastrophe” which opens financial aid to residents.

Toxic gas fears

The speed of the lava flowing from the mouth of the volcano has steadily slowed in recent days, and experts are hoping it will not reach the coast. If the molten lava pours into the sea, experts fear it will generate clouds of toxic gas



LOS LLANOS DE ARIDANE: The Cumbre Vieja volcano is seen from Los Llanos de Aridane on the Canary island of La Palma yesterday. — AFP

into the air, also affecting the marine environment. Authorities set up a no-go zone this week to head off curious onlookers. No casualties have been reported so far but the damage to land and property has been enormous, with the Canary regional head Angel Victor Torres estimating the cost at well over 400 million euros (\$470 mil-

lion). The eruption on La Palma, home to 85,000 people, was the first in 50 years. The last eruption on the island came in 1971 when another part of the same volcanic range – a vent known as Teneguia – erupted on the southern side of the island. Two decades earlier, the Nambroque vent erupted in 1949. — AFP

International

Gangster among three killed in Delhi courtroom shootout

Gunmen dressed as lawyers shot dead notorious gangster

NEW DELHI: Gunmen dressed as lawyers shot dead a notorious Indian gangster inside a Delhi courtroom on Friday before police killed the two assailants. Jitendra Gogi, a mobster detained last year, was standing before a judge when two men suddenly opened fire, police said. Witnesses said about a dozen shots were fired during the battle in the courtroom. Gogi was hit up to five times before the fake lawyers were killed by police.

The gunmen were from a rival gang, police told reporters. At least one of the two attackers was also on the Delhi police's wanted list. The gunfight erupted just after Gogi entered the court for a hearing on murder and other charges. He had been linked to at least 19 murder cases. Mobile phone videos of the shooting showed lawyers and litigants running for their lives in the corridor outside the courtroom as gunshots rang out.



NEW DELHI: A policeman (left) stands guard outside the Rohini district courtroom in New Delhi after a notorious Indian gangster was killed by gunmen dressed as lawyers in a bloody shootout in a courtroom where three people died.— AFP

had been linked to brutal gang battles, murders, robberies and extortion in Delhi and states across northern India. His victims included a folk singer who had witnessed a murder and a teacher, as well as rival gang members. He was first arrested in 2016 but escaped from police custody, and had evaded capture until last year.

Media reports said he had been in a murderous turf war with other gangs. Police said he had a particular rivalry with a gang leader known as Tillu for control of regions in northern India. Tillu is also in custody but it was members of his gang who were killed in the court, media reports said. The reports said about two dozen people had died in clashes between followers of the rival gangsters over the past decade. Delhi police said Gogi and Tillu had first fought each other when they were students, reportedly around a student body election during which two people were shot, and that their enmity had escalated since.

Indian state hit by protests

In another development, thousands staged protests in India's Assam state on Friday, a day after two people were killed when hundreds clashed with police over the state government's eviction of Muslim families from their homes. Assam's government has faced widespread condemnation over the tactics used to eject the families, with critics pointing to them as the latest example of discrimination against Muslims under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata

Party (BJP). Opposition leader Rahul Gandhi called the police use of guns against protesters "state-sponsored fire". Police said they were attacked with machetes and bamboo sticks. Assam's chief minister Himanta Biswas Sarma, a BJP member, said the police were only doing their duty, but halted the evictions on Friday. Authorities had imposed an indefinite ban on gatherings in the northeastern state after a social media video from Thursday's protests showed police with batons raining down blows on a man.

But on Friday Gandhi's Congress party organized a rally in Darrang, where the evictions took place, while thousands more took part in another demonstration outside the Darrang district headquarters. Other rallies were organized by student groups, with some burning an effigy of the chief minister. In New Delhi, a dozen students were detained by police as they too protested against the incident.

The viral video from Thursday showed police in riot gear beating a protestor who had fallen to the ground seconds after gunshots were heard. A photographer, hired by district officials to film the evictions, jumped on the man and was seen punching the body multiple times. The photographer has since been arrested, according to police. Leaders of India's 170 million Muslims say they have been unfairly targeted since Modi's party came to power in 2014. They say a controversial nationality law that sparked riots in Delhi in 2020, and hate crimes including lynchings, have all increased fear in their community.— AFP



LEFKONAIKO: In this file photo, the Turkish-made Bayraktar TB2 drone is pictured at Gecitkale military airbase near Famagusta in the self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). — AFP

Morocco gets 1st batch of Turkish armed drones

RABAT: Morocco took delivery earlier this month of Turkish combat drones, the Far-Maroc unofficial website dedicated to military news reported. The report, also carried by several local media outlets, comes as tensions have spiked between Morocco and neighboring Algeria in recent weeks. The two countries are mainly at odds over the disputed Western Sahara territory, and Algeria severed ties with Morocco in August claiming "provocations and hostile" action by its neighbor.

Relations took another blow this week when Algeria on Wednesday said it has closed off its airspace to all Moroccan civilian and military traffic. According to Far-Maroc, the North African kingdom ordered 13 Bayraktar TB2 drones from Turkey in April and a first batch of the unmanned aircraft arrived this month. Rabat, said the report, seeks to "modernize the arsenal of the Moroccan Armed Forces (FAR) in order to prepare for any danger and recent hostilities", but did not elaborate on these topics. It did however add that Moroccan military personnel have trained in Turkey in recent weeks to work with the drones. Media reports said Morocco signed a \$70 million contract with the private Turkish company Baykar. The firm is run by one of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's son-in-laws and has been exporting its Bayraktar TB2 model to Ukraine, Qatar and Azerbaijan for some years.

According to the company's website, the Bayraktar TB2 is a "medium altitude long endurance tactical unmanned aerial vehicle capable of conducting intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance and armed attack missions" with a range of up to 27 hours. Morocco already uses drones for intelligence and surveillance operations along its borders, according to military experts. The Western Sahara dispute pits Morocco against the Algeria-backed Polisario Front which fought a war of independence with Rabat from 1975 to 1991.

Morocco laid claim to the former Spanish colony with rich phosphate resources and offshore fisheries after Spain withdrew in 1975, and controls around 80 percent of it. Rabat has offered autonomy there and maintains the territory is a sovereign part of the kingdom but the Polisario is demanding a referendum on self-determination, in line with the terms of a 1991 UN-backed ceasefire deal.—AFP

News in brief

Car bomb kills 8 in Somalia

MOGADISHU: A car bomb exploded at a checkpoint near Somalia's presidential palace yesterday, killing eight people, police said, as the Al-Shabaab jihadist group claimed responsibility for the attack. "We have confirmed that eight people most of them civilians died and seven others wounded in the car bomb blast", district police chief Mucaawiye Ahmed Mudey told reporters. The bombing took place within a kilometer of Villa Somalia, the presidential palace. A witness said the car bomb was detonated when police stopped the driver for a security check. "They normally stop to check and clear vehicles before they can pass by the checkpoint. This car was stopped by the security guards and it went off while there were several other cars and people passing by the nearby road. I saw wounded and dead people being carried," said witness Mohamed Hassan. — AFP

Eight Nigerian troops killed

KANO: At least eight Nigerian soldiers were killed and several others were missing Friday after being ambushed by IS-affiliated jihadists in violence-wracked northeast Borno state, two military sources told AFP. A military convoy came under rocket fire by Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) militants as it made its way between the town of Dikwa and Marte in the Lake Chad region, the sources said. Eight other soldiers and an anti-jihadist militiaman were injured in the attack, a military officer said. According to a second military source, who asked not to be identified because they were not authorized to speak about the incident, the jihadists took away two military vehicles and burnt three others. It was the second high-profile attack in less than two weeks by ISWAP jihadists who are waging a 12-year Islamist insurgency in Nigeria's northeast. — AFP

Tunisia lifts nighttime curfew

TUNIS: Tunisian President Kais Saied on Friday announced the lifting of a nighttime curfew in place since March 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic, but imposed vaccine certificates for public events. The curfew, currently in place between midnight and 5:00 am, will end today, Saied's office said in a statement. A certificate proving the holder is fully vaccinated against COVID-19 will be necessary to "attend or take part in demonstrations, public and private activities or gatherings in open and closed spaces", it said. After a sharp spike in COVID-19 cases in early July with 3,000 cases and more than 100 deaths per day, the North African country of 11.7 million people has seen its caseload tumble in recent weeks. On Wednesday the country recorded just 556 new cases and seven deaths, according to the health ministry. — AFP

Monks rally against junta

YANGON: Scores of pro-democracy Buddhist monks took to the streets of Myanmar's second-biggest city yesterday, rallying against the military coup in demonstrations that coincided with the 14th anniversary of previous clergy-led mass protests. Myanmar has been in turmoil and its economy paralyzed since February when the military ousted Aung San Suu Kyi's civilian government, ending a ten-year experiment with democracy. Around the country an anti-junta resistance has taken root, prompting the military to unleash a brutal crackdown on dissent. More than 1,100 civilians have been killed and 8,400 arrested, according to a local monitoring group. Historically, monks in predominantly Buddhist Myanmar have been seen as a supreme moral authority, organizing communities and at times mobilizing opposition to the military regimes. But the coup has exposed a schism in the monkhood, with some prominent clerics giving the generals their blessing and others supporting the protesters. — AFP

Palestinian killed by troops

RAMALLAH: A Palestinian was shot dead by Zionist troops Friday when clashes broke out on the sidelines of a demonstration in the occupied West Bank, the Palestinian health ministry said. The victim was hit in the head by live fire, the ministry said, in the flashpoint town of Beita, scene of regular demonstrations against settlement expansion, which often degenerate into clashes. A family member identified the dead man as Mohammed Ali Khabisa, 27. He was taken to hospital in the northern West Bank city of Nablus where he died shortly afterwards, the ministry said. Another eight Palestinians were wounded by rubber-coated bullets, the Palestinians' official Wafa news agency reported. The Zionist military said it launched an investigation into "reports that a Palestinian was killed". — AFP



Indian state hit by protests; 2 killed

Suits and guns

The gunmen wore grey suits and were posing as lawyers before they pulled out guns, police said. "Two criminals opened fire at gangster Jitendra Mann Gogi when he was taken to the court for a hearing. In retaliation, police shot dead both the attackers," said Delhi police commissioner Rakesh Asthana. Questions were immediately raised about security at the Rohini court complex, which often deals with hearings of high-profile criminals. Since his capture, Gogi's protection had been placed in the hands of a police intelligence unit.

But some reports said metal detectors at the court entrances were not working and other security rules were not applied. Delhi Bar Association president Sanjeev Nasir said the deaths were "shocking" and told AFP that lawyers in all Delhi district courts would go on strike in protest at what he called "a high-level security lapse". "How can something like this happen inside the court? The police holds regular security review meetings with us and outsiders still managed to enter the premises with weapons," he added.

Delhi police said only that an investigation would be held into the court's security. Gogi, who was about 30,

Over 140 killed as fighting intensifies in Yemen's Marib

DUBAI: More than 140 rebels and pro-government troops have been killed this week as fighting intensifies for Yemen's strategic northern city of Marib, military and medical sources told AFP Friday. At least 51 loyalists were killed in the past four days, most of them in clashes in the province of Shabwa and the neighboring governorate of Marib, multiple military sources said. They added that at least 93 Iran-backed Houthi rebels also died in the fighting and from air strikes by the Saudi-led military coalition backing the government. The Houthis rarely report casualty numbers, but figures were confirmed by medical sources.

The Houthis in February escalated their efforts to seize Marib, the government's last northern stronghold, and the fighting has killed hundreds on both sides. Control of the oil-rich region would strengthen the Houthis' bargaining position in peace talks. According to the military sources, who spoke on condition of



SANAA: Yemeni supporters of the Shiite Houthi movement take part in a ceremony commemorating the seventh anniversary of the Houthi takeover of the capital Sanaa. — AFP

France worried as Mali junta flirts with Russians

PARIS: France and its European allies are casting a worried eye at Mali's military junta over its plans to hire Russian mercenaries to help fight jihadist insurgents. European nations in a French-led campaign to shore up Mali have warned of far-reaching consequences at a time when the junta is already under scrutiny over its progress to restore civilian rule. Alarm bells sounded last week after sources in the French presidency and security services said Mali's rulers were close to hiring a thousand paramilitaries from the so-called Wagner group.

The shadowy organization has long been suspected to be the Kremlin's paramilitary arm, and its members

have already been accused of abuses in the Central African Republic. In a visit on Monday, French Defence Minister Florence Parly warned it would be impossible for the French military to "cohabit" alongside "mercenaries" - forces with no legitimacy or accountability. She said international partners seeking to fight jihadism in the Sahel have "never been so numerous."

But "a choice (to hire Russian paramilitaries) would be that of isolation," she said. Parly left without gaining any commitment from Malian counterpart Sadio Camara. On Friday, the defense ministers from 13 European countries that are being pressed to join the French-led campaign also cautioned the junta against hiring the mercenaries. "We want to send a clear message: we are not willing to accept the Wagner group entering the Malian theatre," Swedish Defence Minister Peter Hultqvist said after chairing a meeting of the European Intervention Initiative, a military scheme aimed at undertaking missions outside of existing structures like NATO.—AFP

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2021

Business

China's central bank rules all crypto transactions are illegal

Beijing sounds the death knell for digital trade in China

BEIJING: China's central bank on Friday said all financial transactions involving cryptocurrencies are illegal, sounding the death knell for the digital trade in China after a crackdown on the volatile currencies. The global values of cryptocurrencies including Bitcoin have massively fluctuated over the past year partly due to Chinese regulations, which have sought to prevent speculation and money laundering.

"Virtual currency-related business activities are illegal financial activities," the People's Bank of China (PBOC) said in an online statement Friday, adding that offenders would be "investigated for criminal liability in accordance with the law."

The notice bans all related financial activities involving cryptocurrencies, such as trading crypto, selling tokens, transactions involving virtual currency derivatives and "illegal fundraising". Bitcoin, which had already been falling before the announcement, sank by as much as 8.9 percent to \$41,019 in European afternoon trading before recovering slightly later in the day.

The central bank said that in recent years trading of Bitcoin and other virtual currencies had become "widespread, disrupting economic and financial order, giving rise to money laundering, illegal fundraising, fraud, pyramid schemes and other illegal and criminal activities."

This was "seriously endangering the safety of people's assets," the PBOC said. While crypto creation and trading have been illegal in China since

2019, further crackdowns this year by Beijing warned banks to halt related transactions and closed much of the country's vast network of bitcoin miners.

Friday's statement by the central bank sent the strongest yet signal that China is closed to crypto.

Control

Bitcoin, the world's largest digital currency, and other cryptos cannot be traced by a country's central bank, making them difficult to regulate. Analysts say China fears the proliferation of illicit investments and fundraising from cryptocurrency in the world's second-biggest economy, which also has strict rules around the outflow of capital. The crypto crackdown also opens the gates for China to introduce its own digital currency, already in the pipeline, allowing the central government to monitor transactions.

In June, Chinese officials said more than 1,000 people had been arrested for using the profits from crime to buy cryptocurrencies. Several key Chinese provinces have banned the operation of cryptocurrency mines since the start of this year, with one region accounting for eight percent of the computing power needed to run the global blockchain-a set of online ledgers to record bitcoin transactions. Bitcoin values tumbled in May on the back of a warning by Beijing to investors against speculative trading in cryptocurrencies.

"China's ban on all cryptocurrency trading activi-



BEIJING: China's central bank on Friday said all financial transactions involving cryptocurrencies are illegal. —AFP

ty will have some short-term impact on currency valuation, but long-term implications are likely to be muted," said Ganesh Viswanath Natraj, Assistant Professor of Finance at Warwick Business School.

"This ban will result in the migration of crypto investment opportunities to other hubs in Asia, such as Singapore's launch of the DBS digital currency exchange earlier this month," he added. —AFP

UK to issue visas to ease lorry driver shortage

LONDON: The UK government is poised to temporarily ease visa rules to attract more foreign lorry drivers, reports said yesterday, as it grapples with a growing shortage that has now hit fuel supplies.

The lack of tanker drivers has led to huge queues at petrol stations in recent days, as people ignore government pleas not to panic-buy fuel after some garages closed due to the lack of deliveries. Up to 5,000 temporary visas could be issued under the short-term scheme, according to media reports, amid an estimated shortfall of around 100,000 heavy goods vehicle (HGV) drivers.

The move would represent a U-turn by Prime Minister Boris Johnson, whose government has tightened post-Brexit immigration rules and repeatedly insisted Britain's reliance on foreign labor must end. Johnson has been under increasing pressure to act, after the pandemic and Brexit combined to worsen the haulier shortage and he faces other immediate crises including escalating energy prices.

As well as threatening timely fuel supplies, the lack of lorry drivers has caused disruption to deliveries of food and other goods. As the lines of cars waiting at petrol stations have lengthened, particularly in south-east England, Johnson's office confirmed late Friday



the government was "looking at temporary measures to avoid any immediate problems".

A Downing Street spokesman said any measures would be "very strictly time limited" while reiterating the country has "ample fuel stocks" and that "there are no shortages". However, drivers appeared less than reassured Saturday, as queues again formed for fuel. Mike Davey, 56, had been waiting more than half an hour to fill up at a petrol station run by the super-

market chain Tesco in Kent, southeast of London. "I just want to get some fuel to get to work. People are just like filling up jerry cans-it's ridiculous," he said. "Maybe they need to bring some army drivers in," Davey added.

There have been calls to deploy soldiers to help deliver petrol, while some have also suggested using them to process the backlog of HGV license applications that has ballooned during the pandemic. —AFP



WASHINGTON: Sales of new homes rose faster than analysts expected last month in the United States, according to government data released Friday.

US new home sales surprisingly strong in August

WASHINGTON: Sales of new homes rose faster than analysts expected last month in the United States, according to government data released Friday, though prices remained high and supply was still tight. The Commerce Department reported sales rose 1.5 percent from July's upwardly revised rate to a seasonally adjusted pace of 740,000, annualized, its second consecutive monthly increase.

The housing sector has been a popular place despite the overall economic downturn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, as cheap mortgage rates and the disruptions caused by the virus spurred people to shop for homes. Ian Shepherdson of Pantheon Macroeconomics said the two months of gains indicate the fast-spreading Delta variant of the virus could again be pushing people into the market.

"We think the upturn in mortgage demand has been triggered by the Delta COVID wave, in an echo of the surge in demand for suburban homes following the initial COVID shock," he wrote in an analysis.

"The increase in demand this time will be much smaller, and we expect it to flatten again later in the fall as Delta fear recedes." The trend over the past year and a half caused a tightening of supply and concurrent increase in prices, which the data said improved little last month.

Supply in August was at a seasonally adjusted 6.1-month pace at the current rate of sales, a notch higher than in July. Median home prices remained unchanged from that month at \$390,900, but well above the \$325,500 median in August 2020. US jobless claims rise again amid Delta, hurricane

New applications for US unemployment benefits

rose for the second straight week last week, according to government data Thursday, as the economy grapples with the Delta variant of COVID-19 that has made businesses skittish again. Initial claims for jobless aid rose just 16,000 in the week ended September 18, to 351,000, seasonally adjusted, the Labor Department reported, which was above analysts' expectations. After spiking into the millions as the pandemic began in March 2020, the closely watched metric of labor market health has been on a downward trend for most of this year, but the recent uptick takes it back to its level of about a month ago.

Rather than a sign of the Delta variant's disruptions, Ian Shepherdson of Pantheon Macroeconomic said last week's increase was more likely a consequence of seasonal adjustments in the data and the impact of Hurricane Ida which caused a backlog at

state unemployment offices.

"The trend in claims likely will continue to fall, slowly, but the seasonals likely will prevent new lows until November," he wrote in an analysis.

The report also showed another 15,162 new claims, without seasonal adjustment, submitted under the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program, likely backlogged applications for the emergency aid for freelance workers, which expired two weeks ago. All told, nearly 11.3 million people were receiving aid under all government programs as of the week ended September 4. That was the last week when the PUA and the Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation program for the long-term jobless were available. At the time there were 4.9 million and 3.6 million people on the programs, respectively. —AFP

IMF chief says she 'did not pressure anyone' while at WB

WASHINGTON: After an investigation found she used her senior role at the World Bank to manipulate data in favor of China, IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva on Friday issued a statement again denying misconduct and rejecting the report. "Let me be clear: the conclusions are wrong. I did not pressure anyone to alter any reports. There was absolutely no quid pro quo related to funding for the World Bank of any kind," Georgieva wrote in a statement.

An independent investigation released last week found that during her time as World Bank CEO, Georgieva was among top officials who pressured staff into changing data to China's benefit in the 2018 edition of its closely watched Doing Business report. The bank has since scrapped the report, while the US Treasury called the findings "serious."

In a statement released through US strategic communications firm SKDK rather than through the IMF, Georgieva, who took the top job at the Washington-based crisis lender in 2019, pledged changes to her management style. "As much as I have strived to be open and inclusive, I was very sorry to learn that some staffers felt their concerns were not heard. Moving forward, I will make sure to be even more attentive to hearing staff views," she wrote.

The probe from an outside law firm found that Georgieva along with her associate Simeon Djankov, a former Bulgarian finance minister who created the report, and Jim Yong Kim, then-president of the bank, pressured staff to change the calculation of China's ranking to avoid angering Beijing.

The push came while bank leadership was engaged in sensitive negotiations with Beijing over increasing the bank's lending capital. Nobel Laureate Paul Romer, who was chief economist for the World Bank during her time there and later resigned after raising separate concerns about the Doing Business rankings, told AFP "the kind of intimidation this report describes was real" and said Georgieva arranged a "whitewash" of his criticisms. —AFP

Rolls Royce wins US Air Force deal worth up to \$2.6bn

WASHINGTON: The US arm of Britain's Rolls Royce won a contract worth up to \$2.6 billion Friday to supply engines for the US Air Force's B-52H bomber fleet, the Air Force announced.

The company's Indianapolis, Indiana manufacturing unit was awarded a \$500.9 million "indefinite-delivery/indefinite quantity" contract over six years for replacement engines for the B-52s, the long-range Stratofortress bombers that have been a mark of US strategic power since the 1950s.

The contract has a potential total value of \$2.6 billion "if all options are exercised," the Air Force said. The Air Force chose Rolls Royce for the contract ahead of GE Aviation and Pratt & Whitney. —AFP

Business

KIB receives ‘Best Bank Capital Sukuk’, ‘Best Bank Sukuk’ awards

Bank nabs 2 global awards from The Asset Magazine for recent sukuk issuances and deals

KUWAIT: Kuwait International Bank's (KIB) deals and issuances continue to stand out within the region's Islamic finance sector, cementing themselves as success stories and earning the bank a slew of prestigious recognitions and accolades in the process. Accordingly, KIB announced that it had received two awards from the Asset Magazine, as part of the Magazine's 'The Asset Triple A Islamic Finance Awards' program: the "Best Bank Capital Sukuk" award, for its issuance of \$300 million in Tier 2 sukuk, and the "Best Bank Sukuk" award for its participation as a Joint Lead Manager in Boubyan Bank's \$750 million sukuk issuance.

The Asset Magazine's Triple A awards is considered one of the world's largest award programs that recognize banks and institutions involved in Islamic finance. Each year, it awards the best banks and institutions for their participation in the most important financial transactions in the sector. KIB's wins followed a nomination



Jamal Al-Barrak

based on various criteria and a series of evaluations, including: the significance of the deal; its impact on further developing the Islamic capital markets; innovation factors; and the response from the market and investors. It also serves to note that KIB had previously nabbed two awards in The Asset Triple A Islamic Finance Awards 2019 program, namely the "Best Bank Capital Sukuk in Kuwait" award and the "Best Bank Capital Sukuk in Qatar" award.

Speaking about these latest awards, Jamal Al-Barrak, General Manager of the Investment Department at KIB said: "We are immensely proud and pleased to see our deals and transactions continue to

receive recognition, not only in Kuwait and the region, but on a global scale. This only serves to drive us further and push us towards greater innovation and expansion when it comes to investment solutions and deals. In fact, we continue to be focused on playing an active and positive part in driving sustainable growth and innovation-driven development in the Islamic investment sector, both in Kuwait and across the region."

Al-Barrak further explained that amongst the reasons for KIB receiving the "Best Bank Capital Sukuk of the Year" for its sukuk issuance was the fact that it was the first-ever Basel III-complaint US dollar-denominated Tier 2 sukuk to come out of Kuwait. Moreover, the judging panel noted that the transaction achieved an optimum yield on a Tier 2 issuance from the Middle East, with a low coupon of 2.375%, and the deal generated a strong investor demand on the back of scarcity of sukuk issuances from financial institutions, resulting

in an oversubscription rate of nine times.

Al-Barrak concluded by saying, "The international recognition these transactions have received from prominent international platforms - such as Islamic Finance News (IFN) and Asian Banking and Finance (ABF) - serves as a clear indicator of KIB's success in this area and the soundness of its investment diversification and expansion strategies. All this only further affirms our position as a competitive player within the regional capital market."

It is also worth mentioning that The Asset magazine first launched the Triple A Islamic Finance Awards program in 2001. Over the past 20+ years, it has honored the best banks and institutions providing Islamic banking and finance services. The program has also sought to recognize and honor individuals and organizations that contribute to the further development of the Islamic finance industry, with an increased focus on sustainable financing and investment.

Burgan Bank launches back to school offer with Dabdoob

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced its exclusive Back to School campaign in collaboration with Dabdoob application, confirming its commitment to continue providing its customers with ongoing offers in addition to special seasonal promotions. This campaign falls under the Bank's strategy to enhance the customers' overall banking experience and maximize its added value proposition by providing exclusive benefits and year-round offers.

Starting September 26th, the first 100 Burgan Bank customers who use the special offer promocode will get an exclusive KD10 discount on their purchases from Dabdoob App using any of Burgan Bank cards. The promotion covers the stationary boxes currently available on Dabdoob App that include a package of all the necessary school supply. Burgan Bank will also surprise customers with a special mystery gift with each purchase online in celebration of the long-awaited return to school.

Burgan Bank remains keen on tailoring campaigns that cater to the needs of its customers across all seasons and special occasions. As the new academic year begins, the Bank sought to play an active part in its customers' back to school preparations and to celebrate this special time of the year with the community of parents, educators and students. This partnership with Dabdoob, the largest online store in Kuwait offering a wide variety of high-quality toys and stationery items from top brands, further highlights Burgan's strategic focus on offering customers a rich experience through a wide range of special offers and exclusive deals at popular and upcoming outlets in addition to the best-in-class services and products.

Established in 1977, Burgan Bank is currently the third largest bank by assets in Kuwait. From its earliest days, the Bank has significantly focused on the corporate and financial institution sectors, in addition to diversifying its offering to cater to its growing retail and private banking customer base.

Burgan Bank has majority-owned subsidiaries, collectively known as the "Burgan Bank Group", in the MENAT region. This Group is supported by one of the largest branch networks across the region and includes: Gulf Bank Algeria - AGB (Algeria), Bank of Baghdad - BOB (Iraq & Lebanon), Tunis International Bank - TIB (Tunisia), and the fully owned Burgan Bank Turkey. Furthermore, Burgan Bank has a presence in the UAE through its corporate office, Burgan Financial Services Limited.

The Bank has continuously improved its performance over the years, through an expanded revenue structure, diversified funding sources, and a strong capital base. The adoption of state-of-the-art services and technology has positioned it as a trendsetter in the domestic market and within the MENA region. Moreover, Burgan Bank's brand has been built on a foundation of real values - trust, commitment, excellence and progression - which serve as a reminder of the high standards to which the Bank always aspires. In fact, the Bank's core philosophy of 'Driven by You' is the foundation on which its products and services are continuously developed.

The Bank obtained the ISO/IEC 27001:2013 Information Security Management Systems certificate (ISMS) and was re-certified with the prestigious ISO 9001:2015, making it one of the few banks in the GCC and Kuwait to receive such a certification for five consecutive times. The Bank also has the distinction of being the only Bank in Kuwait to have won the JP Morgan Chase Quality Recognition Award for twenty consecutive years.

Burgan Bank is a majority owned subsidiary of KIPCO (Kuwait Projects Company), one of the largest holding companies in the MENA region.



TILLABERI, Niger: Niger soldiers stand guard and patrol near the construction site of the first dam that the country builds on the Niger river near the village of Kandadji, in the western region of the "three borders" (Niger-Mali-Burkina Faso). — AFP

Niger speeds up efforts to build first hydroelectric dam

DESSA, Niger: In a busy construction site, soldiers armed with guns watch over workers as Niger speeds up efforts to build its first hydroelectric dam to stem power shortages and food crises, despite security concerns in a restive area. Long in the works and long delayed, the Kandadji dam project aims to free the world's poorest nation of its energy dependence on neighboring Nigeria and boost agricultural production to try and end chronic food insecurity.

At the bottom of an enormous crater dug out with dynamite, excavators smash blocks of granite.

"Here, a major branch of the river has been drained - it's here that the dam wall will be erected," says a Chinese engineer, his helmet tightly fixed. "We are making good progress!" In this huge Sahel state which is two-thirds desert, plans for the dam on the Niger river in the country's west have long been afoot. In the 1970s, after a severe famine, General-President Seyni Koutche (1974-1987) nurtured the idea of providing Niger with a large-scale hydroelectric dam.

All the heads of state who succeeded him made this infrastructure "a priority", but the dam never saw the light of day. A first stone was laid in 2008 under the presidency of Mamadou Tandja, but the political instability of the years that followed put a halt to the project. Initially entrusted to the Russian firm Zarubezhvostroy, the work has since been given to the Chinese company Gezhouba Group. Already postponed many times, first to 2016 and then to 2023, the date to fill the reservoir behind the dam is set at 2025 according to the authorities, after further delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Massive scheme

According to the UN's Human Development Index, Niger is the poorest nation on Earth, ranking 189th out

of 189. This mammoth project of 740 billion CFA francs (1.1 billion euros / \$1.3 billion) is co-financed by the World Bank, African Development Bank (AfDB), Islamic Development Bank and French Development Agency. With its 28-metre-high dam wall, it will have a retention capacity of 1.5 billion cubic meters, or 600,000 Olympic pools.

The project also entails the displacement of 50,000 people, of whom 7,000 have already been relocated, according to the Kandadji Dam Agency. Now, "all the obstacles have been lifted (...) all the funding problems have been resolved. In a few months you will see the project taking shape," said Niger's President Mohamed Bazoum, who visited in mid-September.

Located some 180 kilometers (112 miles) upstream from the capital Niamey, in the heart of the "three borders" area that also includes Burkina Faso and Mali, the project has thus far been spared from the jihadist attacks that regularly plague the volatile region. But Bazoum promised to "increase the number of soldiers to enable" the site to run day and night.

'Large-scale energy needs'

An environmental impact study was completed in 2018 by the AfDB. While other options such as solar or wind power were also evaluated, the report concluded that alternative energies could "not meet large-scale energy needs." "The only solution that can solve the recurring problem of food insecurity in Niger is the Kandadji dam because there will be 45,000 hectares (111,200 acres) of land that will be developed to improve production," says Ousmane Danbadji, head of the Network of journalists for water and sanitation (Rejea) and an expert on the matter.

The dam agency forecasts that 400,000 more tons of rice, corn and vegetables will be produced each year in a country where 80 percent of the population lives off traditional agriculture, dependent on rains. A 130-megawatt power station is due to be built in Kandadji, aiming to generate enough electricity annually to enable Niger to free itself from its energy dependence on neighboring Nigeria.

Barely 15 percent of more than 20 million Nigeriens have electricity, according to the Nigelec electricity company. — AFP

stand at \$42,967, down almost four percent.

US traders had seen the Fed's Wednesday move towards tapering its massive stimulus program as a vote of confidence in the world's top economy.

But as well as Evergrande, "the continued stalemate among lawmakers on whether to raise the debt ceiling, the Delta variant, and supply chain challenges continue to fester," Charles Schwab analysts commented.

The supply chain woes were highlighted by sports giant Nike Thursday as it cut its sales forecast for the coming quarters. Brent oil prices, meanwhile, jumped to a three-year peak, boosted by tight supplies particularly in the United States



Investors are keeping a close eye on developments surrounding troubled Chinese developer Evergrande. —AFP

Chinese police detain top execs from troubled HNA Group

BEIJING: Chinese police have detained two top executives of the debt-laden conglomerate HNA Group on suspicion of "illegal crimes", the group said late Friday, as the government in Beijing further cracks down on the country's corporate sector. Transport and logistics giant HNA Group said its chairman Chen Feng and CEO Tan Xiangdong have been detained by police in southern China's Hainan island, where the firm is headquartered.

"Measures have been enforced against (Chen and Tan) in accordance with the law for suspected illegal crimes," the group said in a statement, without elaborating on the alleged offences. It added that the firm's operations remain "stable" and "have not been impacted". The group-which owns Hainan Airlines, one of China's biggest carriers, and is China's largest private aviation conglomerate-filed for bankruptcy in January and is in the middle of a restructuring process overseen by the local government, after struggling to resolve a drawn-out cash crisis.

Chen founded Hainan Airlines in 1993, growing it from a regional airline into a sprawling conglomerate. Once an aggressive dealmaker, HNA previously held stakes in the Hilton hotel group and Deutsche Bank, and had investments spanning the aviation, tourism, real estate and financial services sectors as part of an acquisition binge. In 2017, the Chinese government cracked down on HNA's aggressive global expansion, forcing it to slim down its assets to focus on its airline and tourism businesses.

Weighed down by billions of dollars of debt, the struggling conglomerate has since been trying to dispose of its assets. The move comes as Chinese real estate behemoth Evergrande faces a potential collapse, with over \$300 billion in liabilities-equivalent to two percent of China's GDP. It is widely expected to default on bond payments due this week.

Like HNA, it expanded in recent years via aggressive borrowing but its accumulated mountain of debt poses looming risks to China's financial system and social stability, leading to sustained protests from investors in recent weeks. In addition, other "grey rhinos"-overleveraged Chinese corporate giants seen as risks-such as real estate empire Wanda, insurance provider Anbang and investment giant Fosun have all faced similar crackdowns to HNA in recent years.

HNA executive Gu Gang, head of the working group responsible for the firm's restructuring process, announced news of the detentions Friday at a company meeting attended by more than 2,700 staff, the group said in a separate statement. In a speech at the meeting, Gu emphasized the need for greater Communist Party oversight of the firm-a nod to the increased influence of authorities over its operations. HNA did not immediately respond to a request for comment. — AFP



No 'Lehman moment'

Market players are keeping close tabs on Evergrande, with no sign that it had paid interest to overseas bondholders on a note due Thursday.

While the firm has a 30-day grace period to stomp up before it is considered in default, the lack of information is keeping investors anxious.

Markets were sent spinning at the start of the week by fears that the company — one of China's biggest developers in the crucial property sector — would go under and drag others with it, in turn jolting the domestic economy and possibly beyond.

But for now, there is a feeling that there will not be a "Lehman Moment", such as when the bankruptcy of Wall Street titan Lehman Brothers in 2008 sparked a collapse on world markets. Stock markets had enjoyed a couple of strong days prior to Friday on what appeared to be easing concerns over Evergrande. But its share price tumbled more than 11 percent Friday, having surged more than 17 percent a day earlier.

It was not all gloom in Asia, as the Bombay Stock Exchange Sensex index crossed the 60,000 mark for the first time. India's markets have enjoyed whirlwind growth despite the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, more than doubling in value since April last year. "Expectations of solid economic recovery and sustained growth in the next couple of years is keeping the bulls enthused," Sandeep Bharadwaj of IIFL Securities said. — AP

Business

NBK branches fully equipped to serve special needs customers

Bank continues to support 'Let's Be Aware' campaign

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) is committed to best serve its customers with special needs, dedicating branches with the latest services to accommodate and facilitate their banking experience. This comes in line with NBK's commitment to social corporate responsibility as it establishes a business culture that caters to serving all segments of society. The Bank continues to focus its efforts to support "Let's Be Aware" financial campaign launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK), aiming to promote financial inclusion.

NBK now has dedicated branches with the latest services to accommodate and facilitate banking for customers with special needs. Several modifications were introduced to facilities and equipment, as well as adopting the necessary procedures to provide all banking services and products to customers with disabilities.

The services provided in these branches

include ATMs which have braille keyboards and earphones, enabling visually impaired customers to withdraw money, braille printing facilities, staff trained to provide services in sign language, for hearing-impaired customers, ATMs with voice commands, and iPads providing speech to text functionality for visually impaired customers.

Moreover, NBK equipped its special needs friendly bank branches with wheelchair access, which is available in all its branches, reserved and clearly marked parking spaces, and easily accessible safe deposit boxes. On this occasion, Ali Al-Mulla, Head of Domestic Branches at National Bank of Kuwait, said: "We strive to best fulfill our duties and serve our customers with special needs by developing and introducing services especially dedicated to them. We also equipped our branches with all necessary accommodation to make banking comfortable for them."

He also pointed out that NBK is keen to fulfill

its responsibilities towards all segments of society, especially towards its customers with special needs, in line with the Bank's leading position in performing its social responsibility, a key component of NBK's 6 pillars of sustainability.

He 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 committed to providing accommodations to hire employees with special needs in cooperation with the Public Authority for Disabled Affairs and Public Authority for Manpower.



Ali Al-Mulla

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.

AUB sheds light on customer protection, raises awareness

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank (AUB) pursues to provide banking awareness to customers and the public within the Be Aware ("Diraya") campaign launched at the initiative of CBK in cooperation with Kuwaiti banks with the aim of disseminating financial culture to the widest segment of society, promoting awareness among the public of their rights and duties and how to best benefit from the various services provided by banks, in addition to raising awareness of ways and mechanisms to combat fraud and financial crimes, and urging customers to report any fraud that they may be exposed to.

In this respect, Ahli United Bank underlines in a press release the importance of raising customer awareness of their rights, providing them protection and familiarizing them with the procedures to follow to ensure that their rights are protected, stressing that customer protection and ensuring that best practices are followed in the banking sector is a safety valve for the banking industry.

On this occasion, Sahar Dashti General Manager of Customer Protection at AUB said, "At Ahli United Bank, we are keen to focus our attention on the quality of service provided to our customers. In this regard, AUB launched the "Customer Experience Evaluation System", which allows customers to share their opinions, remarks and suggestions with the bank, on the services and products the bank provides as soon as they receive these services and products, through an advanced dynamic system. This system has strengthened banking links to customers, which helps the bank to take the necessary measures to further develop its services and maintain customer satisfaction. The bank's Service Quality Unit is also expanding the bank's internal service quality measurement tools through a direct digital system that includes all the bank's departments to achieve integrated quality management and create a culture of excellence and endless development, taking into account the best techniques in this regard.

Dashti added: We value the efforts of "Diraya" campaign to educate customers about their rights and to advise them about the proper steps to follow to raise a complaint in the event of dissatisfaction with any product or service provided by their banks.

Dashti reiterated that Ahli United Bank focuses great attention to any complaint raised by its customers and works hard through the bank's Complaint Unit to efficiently solve all complaints, advises complainants and helps them recognize the procedures related to their complaints, ensuring that all complaints are resolved in a timely manner. The bank warrants to reply customer complaints at the agreed time and follows up on all required corrective actions until full execution and attaining customer satisfaction.

Dashti pointed out that promoting awareness among customers, concerning for their protection and maintaining their satisfaction not only provide support for customers, but also reflect positively on the support and protection of the banking sector as a whole, which helps to achieve financial inclusion.

Annual event 'Huawei Connect 2021' kicks off

DUBAI: Huawei's annual flagship event for the global ICT industry - Huawei Connect 2021 - kicked off on Thursday. Huawei Rotating Chairman Eric Xu opened the event with a keynote speech titled "Innovating Nonstop for Faster Digitalization".

This year's event, themed "Dive into Digital", explores how digital technology can better integrate with business scenarios and industry know-how to address critical business challenges, and how stakeholders can work together more effectively to foster an open industry ecosystem and drive shared success.

In his keynote, Xu spoke about how helping industries go digital is a critical aspect of Huawei's mission to bring digital to every person, home and organization for a fully connected, intelligent world. He said, "Digital development relies on digital technology. For digital technology to stay relevant, we must continue to innovate and create value. Cloud, AI, and networks are three critical digital technologies."

At the event, Xu launched the industry's first distributed, cloud-native service called UCS - a ubiquitous cloud-native service available on Huawei Cloud. With UCS, Huawei plans to provide enterprises with a consistent experience while using cloud-native applications that are not constrained by geographical, cross-cloud, or traffic limitations, thereby accelerating digital transformation in all industries.

Huawei Cloud also announced two new regions, and ten new services including MacroVerse aPaaS, OptVerse AI Solver, Huawei Cloud Stack 8.1, Pangu drug molecule model, and SparkRTC. It was also revealed that the first virtual human, Yunsheng, is set to join Huawei Cloud.

Xu added that Huawei Cloud, the company's cloud service that was launched just four years ago, has already brought together more than 2.3 million devel-



Huawei Rotating Chairman Eric Xu opens the annual event with a keynote speech titled "Innovating Nonstop for Faster Digitalization".

opers, 14,000 consulting partners, and 6,000 technology partners, and also made more than 4,500 services available in the Huawei Cloud Marketplace. It has become an important platform for Internet companies, enterprises, and governments alike to take their organizations digital. As of September 2021, Huawei cloud and partners operate 61 Availability Zones (AZs) in 27 geographic regions worldwide, covering more than 170 countries and regions.

Zhang Ping'an, CEO of Huawei Cloud and President of Huawei Consumer Cloud Service, commented: "The key to successful digital transformation is to think cloud native and act cloud native. Huawei Cloud joins our customers and partners to dive into digital and explore the potential of Everything as a Service - Infrastructure as a Service for global accessibility, Technology as a Service for flexible innovation, and Expertise as a Service for shared excellence."

Huawei's full-stack, all-scenario AI portfolio released back in 2018 is also progressing as expected. Its MindSpore framework has become the mainstream AI computing framework in China. Meanwhile, the Atlas 900 cluster, as well as the cloud services based on it, currently serve more than 300 enterprises, supporting the training of many models, which include the Huawei Cloud Pangu large models. Huawei Cloud ModelArts

has made AI application development incredibly simple with its full-pipeline, scenario-based services. The end goal of ModelArts is to enable each and every engineer to independently develop their own AI applications.

Xu also introduced Huawei's innovations in the network domain. As organizations go digital, they tend to see exponential growth in network complexity. To tackle this, Huawei has been innovating solutions for global networks based on the concept of autonomous driving network (ADN). The company has been working with customers in the finance, education, and healthcare sectors to innovate and deploy new applications, and build networks that are self-fulfilling, self-healing, self-optimizing, and autonomous.

Xu went on to explain how Huawei is using digital technology to support low-carbon development, as part of global efforts to achieve peak CO2 emissions and carbon neutrality.

Huawei hosts Huawei Connect 2021 online from September 23 to October 31. The theme of this year's event is Dive into Digital. The company will dive deep into the practical application of technologies like cloud, AI, and 5G in all industries, and how it can make organizations of all shapes and sizes more efficient, more versatile, and ultimately more resilient as we move towards economic recovery.

AUB congratulates winners of Al-Hassad weekly draw

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank (AUB) held the weekly draw of 22 September 2021 of Al-Hassad Islamic account, the first Islamic prizes account in Kuwait which offers over 750 prizes over a 12 month period and provides numerous features. Such features include the simplest and easiest savings program, highest number of winners, largest prize value, loyalty multipliers, and unique account opening feature online with all ease with instant deposit option.

The bank announced 20 winners of KD 1,000 as follows: Maasoumah Jraq Darweesh, Hassan Abdulsalam, Mohammed Aqeel Khan, Samar Mohammed Waleed, Ahmad Saleh Al-Daaij, Anita Bukharey Tayyeb, Mohammad Ibrahim Al-Abboudi, Faisal Hammad Al-Kafeef, Mussbeh Mutlaq Al-Azmi, Hamad Abdullah Al-Dabbous, Jehan Ali Ahmad, Hulwah Ali Abbas, Abdullah Mansour Al-Foraih, Salamah Saad Al-Enezi, Ahmad Maleeh Al-Rasheed, Khatoun Taher Al-Dallal, Noureyah Ahmad Al-Fahad, Batchaa Bahej Al-Nomas, Sarvan Kumar Ram and Mouyassar Mohamad El- Rawas.

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

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



KUWAIT: Eng Faisal Saud Al-Hasawi inaugurates the 'LuLu Food Fiesta 2021'

LuLu Hypermarket launches LuLu Food Fiesta 2021

KUWAIT: LuLu Hypermarket, acknowledged as one of the world's most powerful retailers, and by far the largest retailer in the region, is holding a week-long food festival, 'LuLu Food Fiesta 2021', at all its outlets in Kuwait.

The food fiesta kicked off on Wednesday, 22 September will last till Tuesday, 28 September. It is an annual celebration of the best of foods from around the world. The event was inaugurated on 22 September at the Fahaheel branch of the hypermarket, by Eng Faisal Saud Al-Hasawi, General Manager and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources, in strict adherence to all COVID-19 health protocols and best practices.

The resplendent inauguration of the festival featured an array of street-food stalls, food-sampling counters, live-cooking stands, alluring traditional-style grocery stores, and large food-related cut-outs and decorations that added to the food fiesta atmosphere.

The seven-day-long fiesta presents shoppers with amazing offers on a wide range of products across all categories, including groceries, fresh and frozen foods, meat and fish, as well as non-food items, beauty products, electronics, and white goods such as refrigerators



and air conditioners. Special discounts are also being offered on a large variety of top food brands.

A special attraction during 'Food Fiesta 2021' is the 'End-of-Season' sale, which offers buyers super-discounts ranging from 25 percent to as much as 75 percent off on prices for an assortment of products in fashion, footwear, ladies handbags, baby-accessories and eyewear. Due to the rush for products at these highly discounted prices, the End-of-Season sale has been extended from 15 September to 12 October, so shoppers can buy these incredible value-items at their leisure.

The Food Fiesta 2021, which celebrates the foods and cuisines of countries worldwide, is symbolic of the hypermarket's values of providing shoppers with the best of world products at amazingly competitive prices.

Lifestyle | Features

R Kelly jury weighs singer's fate after grim testimony

Following 21 days of evidence including 50 witnesses and hours of searing testimony, jurors on Friday began considering whether internationally famous singer R Kelly orchestrated a sex crimes ring for nearly three decades. The case, delayed over a year by the pandemic, is seen as landmark for the #MeToo movement as it is the first major sex abuse trial where the majority of accusers are Black women. The prosecution painstakingly wove the threads of alleged wrongdoing into an intricate pattern of crimes they say the artist born Robert Sylvester Kelly perpetrated with impunity, capitalizing on his fame to prey on young



women and teenagers for his own sexual gratification.

The state was tasked with proving the 54-year-old singer is guilty of racketeering, a serious charge commonly associated

with the mafia that casts Kelly as the boss of an enterprise of associates who facilitated his abuse. He is also charged with eight counts under the Mann Act, a law prohibiting transportation of people across state lines for sex. Judge Ann Donnelly sent the jurors home Friday afternoon without a verdict. They will continue deliberating Monday.

To convict Kelly on racketeering, jurors must find him guilty of at least two of 14 "predicate acts"—the crimes elemental to the wider pattern of illegal wrongdoing. Disturbing testimony intended to prove those acts included accusations of rape, druggings, imprisonment and child

pornography. Accusers' stories ran in parallel: many of the alleged victims described meeting the singer at concerts or mall performances, and being handed slips of paper with Kelly's contact by his entourage.

Several said they were told he could bolster their music industry aspirations. But all were instead "indoctrinated" into Kelly's world, according to prosecutors, groomed for sex at his whim and kept in line by "coercive means of control" including isolation and cruel disciplinary measures. "He's not a genius. He's a criminal. He's a predator," said Nadia Shihata, the assistant US attorney told jurors. "Writing

hit songs and performing for audiences onstage doesn't give you license to commit crimes."

The defense painted a drastically different portrait of the superstar, arguing he was a "sex symbol" and "playboy" who was being attacked by scorned exes and money-hungry superfans. "They're all working on these paydays," said attorney Deveraux Cannick. Shihata attacked that argument in her rebuttal, telling jurors that witnesses-nine women and two men detailed devastating abuse on the stand—"relived some of the worst periods of their lives for you."—AFP

US returns ancient Gilgamesh tablet to Iraq

A 3,500-year-old tablet recounting the epic of Gilgamesh was returned to Iraq Thursday after being stolen three decades ago and illegally imported to the United States. Iraqi Cultural Minister Hassan Nazim accepted the tablet during a ceremony in Washington. "To me, it means restituting self-esteem and the confidence in Iraqi society," he said.

Despite its small size, the ancient artifact has immense cultural and historical value. It contains portions of the "Epic of Gilgamesh," considered one of the oldest works of literature in human history, which tells the story of a powerful Mesopotamian king on a quest for immortality. "It's a story which has influenced all the great monotheistic religions, leaving traces also on the Iliad and the Odyssey," said UNESCO Director General Audrey Azoulay, who called the tale a "treasure" for "our common humanity."

She added that the stone's return to its rightful home is "a major victory for the international community over those who mutilate heritage." "Its repatriation itself is a tale of epic proportions," said US Assistant Attorney General Kenneth Polite. The clay tablet, carved with cuneiform characters, is believed to have been stolen from an Iraqi museum in 1991, around the time of the first Gulf War. It reappeared in Britain in



2001, according to Polite.

An American art dealer bought it from a London-based Jordanian family in 2003, before sending the piece to the United States without declaring its true nature to customs. It was then sold to antique dealers in 2007 for \$50,000 under a false certificate of origin. The tablet was sold once again in 2014 for \$1.67 million to the owners of craft chain Hobby Lobby, the Green family, fundamentalist Christians who wanted to display the stone at their Museum of the Bible in Washington.

A museum curator became concerned about the tablet's origins in 2017, feeling that its documentation was incomplete. It was finally seized in 2019. Iraq's Ministry of Culture called on other organizations to scrutinize artifacts of dubious provenance in an effort to uncover other missing treasures of antiquity. "We invite all universities, museums, institutes (and) antiquities collectors to confront the illicit trafficking of artifacts to show more care and interest in restituting those which have been trafficked to the country of origin," the ministry said.—AFP

Ancient footprints re-write humanity's history in Americas

Footprints dating back 23,000 years have been discovered in the United States, suggesting humans settled North America long before the end of the last Ice Age, research published Thursday showed. The findings push back the date at which the continent was colonized by its first inhabitants by thousands of years. The footprints were left in mud on the banks of a long-since dried up lake, which is now part of a New Mexico desert.

Sediment filled the indentations and hardened into rock, protecting evidence of our ancient relatives, and giving scientists a detailed insight into their lives. "Many tracks appear to be those of teenagers and children; large adult footprints are less frequent," write the authors of the study published in the American journal Science.

"One hypothesis for this is the division of labor, in which adults are involved in skilled tasks whereas 'fetching and carrying' are delegated to teenagers. "Children accompany the teenagers, and collectively they leave a higher number of footprints." Researchers also found tracks left by mammoths, prehistoric wolves, and even giant sloths, which appear to have been around at the same time as the humans visited the lake.

The Americas were the last continent to be reached by humanity. For decades, the most commonly accepted theory has been that settlers came to North America from eastern Siberia across a land bridge - the present-day Bering Strait. From Alaska, they headed south to kinder climes. Archaeological evidence, including spearheads used to kill mammoths, has long suggested a 13,500-year-old settlement



Fossilized footprints found in New Mexico. — AFP

associated with so-called Clovis culture - named after a town in New Mexico.

This was considered the continent's first civilization, and the forerunner of groups that became known as Native Americans. However, the notion of Clovis culture has been challenged over the past 20 years, with new discoveries that have pushed back the age of the first settlements. Generally, even this pushed-back estimate of the age of the first settlements had not been more than 16,000 years, after the end of the so-called "last glacial maximum" - the period when ice sheets were at their most widespread.

This episode, which lasted until about 20,000 years ago, is crucial because it is believed that with ice covering much of the northern parts of the continent, human migration from Asia into North America and beyond would have been very difficult. — AFP

Ex-model Evangelista seeks \$50m over 'beauty gone wrong'

Former supermodel Linda Evangelista is seeking \$50 million in damages from the company behind a fat-reducing procedure that she says left her deformed and unemployable when she suffered a rare side effect. Evangelista, 56, said in a message on Instagram this week that she underwent "CoolSculpting" five years ago and that it had caused her fat cells to increase rather than decrease, leaving her looking horribly bloated.

Evangelista, a 1990s modeling icon from Canada who dominated the catwalks with the likes of Cindy Crawford and Naomi Campbell, said in the post Wednesday that Zeltiq, the company that devised and markets the procedure, never warned her about this possible side effect. She said her current appearance - the result of a condition called paradoxical adipose hyperplasia (PAH) - explained her absence from the public spotlight in recent years.

"To my followers who have wondered why I have not been working while my peers' careers have been thriving, the reason is that I was brutally disfigured by Zeltiq's CoolSculpting procedure which did the opposite of what it promised," Evangelista wrote. "It increased, not decreased, my fat cells and left me permanently deformed even after undergoing two painful, unsuccessful, corrective surgeries. I have been left, as the media has described, 'unrecognizable,'" she added.

Bad hair day: India salon told to pay \$271,000 for botched trim

An Indian salon has been ordered to pay more than \$271,000 in damages to a model for a botched haircut which she claimed caused a "severe

mental breakdown". Aashna Roy went to the salon at a top New Delhi hotel in 2018 and asked staff to trim a conservative four inches from her tips, according to a judgment by the city's consumer court.

"However, to the utter shock and surprise of the complainant, the hairdresser chopped off her entire hair leaving only 4 inches from the top and barely touching her shoulders," it added. The court determined that as Roy had already established a career lending her skills to advertisements for hair products, the botched haircut had led to "severe mental breakdown and trauma".

"There is no doubt that the women are very cautious and careful with regard to

French luxury brand Saint Laurent goes fur-free

French high-end fashion brand Saint Laurent will stop using fur in its collections from next year, its parent company Kering said on Friday, joining a growing list of global companies. Kering brand Brioni will also forsake fur, the company said, making all the fashion group's houses fur-free. Animal rights groups have long lobbied the global fashion industry to give up fur and several, including Versace, Chanel and Michael Kors, had already stopped using it. People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) took the lead in protesting against Saint Laurent, demonstrating outside its store in the fashionable Avenue Montaigne in Paris this year after supermodel Kate Moss appeared in an advertising campaign for the brand wearing a fox coat.

"There is nothing glamorous about fur," PETA told Saint Laurent. Within the Kering group, Gucci was the first to drop fur in 2017, followed by Balenciaga, Bottega Veneta et Alexander McQueen. "The world has changed, along with our clients, and luxury naturally needs to adapt to that," Kering CEO Francois-Henri Pinault said in a statement. Kering would be entirely fur-free from the Fall 2022 collections.



In this file photo taken on Feb 25, 2020, a model presents a creation for Yves Saint Laurent. — AFP

On Friday, among the fur items still available in Saint Laurent's webstore were a rabbit coat priced at 5,500 euros (\$6,450), a sleeveless fox vest for the same price, and a pair of mink mules for 995 euros. "We believe that killing animals not to eat them but only for their fur doesn't correspond to modern luxury which must be ethical, in sync with its times and the questions of our societies," Marie-Claire Daveu, head of sustainable development at Kering, told AFP. LVMH, the world's largest luxury group and Kering rival, meanwhile told AFP that it continued to allow its brands to meet customer demand for fur products.

These were being made "in the most ethical and responsible way possible", LVMH said, adding that it had banned all fur from endangered species. According to PETA, 85 percent of fur sold in the world originates from animals who live their entire lives in captivity, often in conditions "of misery" and "extreme suffering". They are usually killed by poison gas, electrocution or beaten to death with clubs, it said.—AFP

their hair," said the ruling by the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission. "They spend a handsome amount on keeping the hair in good condition. They are also emotionally attached with their hairs," it added. "She lost her expected assignments and suffered a huge loss which completely changed her lifestyle and shattered her dream to be a top model." The court told the salon, which can still appeal the verdict, to pay 20 million rupees within eight weeks of the order. —AFP

Dulce Martinez de la Rosa shows garments made with indigenous fabrics at "Fabrica Social".

Denouncing Weinstein 'didn't help me': Argento

Asia Argento, the actress whose rape allegations against Harvey Weinstein helped trigger the #MeToo movement, has paid the price for her bravery. "I can't say it helped my life very much," the 47-year-old told AFP. Argento's revelations four years ago that she had been raped by the US producer in 1977 at the age of 21 set off a wave of allegations across the film industry and far beyond. "It became a tsunami," she said. "It didn't help me, it put me in a huge depression, but my conscience told me I had to tell the truth."

The daughter of great Italian horror filmmaker Dario Argento, she is now recounting that episode and the rest of her tumultuous life in an autobiography, "Anatomy of a Wild Heart". It caused a stir when it was published in Italy in January for recounting another alleged sexual assault - this time by Rob Cohen (director of "The Fast and the Furious"). Argento accuses Cohen of drugging and raping her during the filming of "xXx" in 2002. Cohen has denied the accusation, but faces other sexual assault claims, including by his own daughter.

'Loses its meaning'

Despite the whirlwind it caused, Argento has no regrets about speaking out against Weinstein. "When I discovered that there were several women who experienced the same thing... that this guy was a serial predator... I couldn't escape this voice that told me: 'How will you feel if you know all this and you don't say anything,'" she told AFP.

"And it wasn't a failure, because I succeeded in sending this guy to prison." Weinstein was found guilty in 2020 of dozens of charges of rape and sexual assault, and sentenced to 23 years in prison. He is appealing the verdicts. But she has mixed feelings about the MeToo movement, fearing it has become "almost a fashionable thing". "When we hear a word

too many times, it loses its meaning. When we speak about something too much, it becomes hysterical."

Allegations

Argento has faced her own accusations, accused by former child actor Jimmy Bennett of sexually assaulting him when he was 17. Argento denies the charges, saying Bennett, who once played her son in a movie, was obsessed with her and was trying to extort money from her boyfriend, the celebrity chef Anthony Bourdain. According to her lawyer, Bourdain chose to pay Bennett \$380,000 for his silence but she froze the remaining payments after Bourdain's death by suicide in 2018. Today, she avoids the subject, telling AFP: "These are things that don't belong to my present. I don't carry any resentment."

'Not my fight'

Argento does, however, resent the idea of being "a symbol" of any women's movement. "I thought my mother had carried out the fight for women's liberation, sexual liberation... To find myself now talking about the same thing, it bothers me a little. "It's not my fight, I did what I had to do, it doesn't interest me." Her autobiography is the account of a tumultuous life, a wild but painful childhood in Rome, trapped with a neglectful father and violent mother. It hardly calmed down after that as she found success in acting, directing and music in a swirl of drugs, love affairs and tragedy - not least the shocking death of Bourdain. For the "eternally misunderstood", as she sees herself, the writing has been an act of therapy. "When I vomited all this on to the paper, I could take a step back and look at it with some distance, like looking at a painting.—AFP

Lifestyle | Features

'We've been expecting you': 007 back after virus delay

The latest James Bond movie gets its world premiere next week, nearly six years after the last film in the storied franchise and an 18-month delay caused by the coronavirus pandemic. British royalty and pandemic heroes have been invited to London's Royal Albert Hall on Tuesday to watch "No Time To Die", the 25th instalment of the popular spy saga.

The film is expected to be Daniel Craig's last appearance as 007. Three previously scheduled premieres - in March and November 2020, and this April - were all cancelled. Craig and co-stars including Rami Malek and Lea Seydoux will join princes Charles and William on the red carpet at the glitzy screening, before the film hits UK cinemas two days later and releases globally October 8.

Healthcare workers and armed forces members will also be present, and have been invited to 10 other premieres across Britain, in recognition of their work combating COVID-19. "We're incredibly excited to be launching the film in a theatrical release," franchise producer Barbara Broccoli said on the "No Time To Die: The Official James Bond Podcast" released this month. "The film is a celebration of Bond - the 25th film and almost 60 years and, most importantly, Daniel Craig's final outing. So we feel it's a big event."

'Cinema experience'

Cinema operators, studios such as MGM - which owns the 007 movies - and distributor Universal Pictures are among those hoping the blockbuster release will help lure movie-goers back to auditoriums worldwide. Cinemas were closed for months during the pandemic in key markets such as Britain and the United States, forcing delays to releases and hitting finances hard.

MGM, bought by online shopping giant Amazon for nearly \$9 billion (£7 billion, 8 billion euros) earlier this year, spent a rumored \$250 million on the action-packed film. The last Bond movie "Spectre"-released in late 2015 - set

box office records for a 2D film in China, and grossed more than \$880 million worldwide, according to movie industry magazines.

"It's very important that people see this film in the cinemas - it was designed and

filmed and produced to be in the cinemas, to be a cinema experience," said fellow Bond producer Michael G Wilson. "We really held out against other alternatives like streaming." Broccoli said the movie, directed by Cary Joji Fukunaga ("Beasts of

No Nation", "True Detective") and filmed in Norway, Italy and Jamaica, was "a cinematic masterpiece".

'Spice it up'

"No Time To Die" sees Bond drawn out

of retirement in Jamaica by his old friend and CIA agent Felix Leiter. He is asked to embark on a treacherous mission to rescue a kidnapped scientist, according to Universal. Malek, who won a best actor Oscar for his depiction of Queen frontman Freddie Mercury in "Bohemian Rhapsody", plays his adversary Safin.

Lashana Lynch plays a new MI6 spy working alongside an ageing Bond, while Seydoux returns as Madeleine Swann, his love interest in "Spectre". British actress and writer Phoebe Waller-Bridge ("Fleabag") was involved in the script to help improve the portrayal of women, after repeated claims of misogyny and sexism.

Craig said her addition to the writing team was to "spice it up" but as she was a Bond fan "she wasn't about to take him in a different direction". Teenage pop star Billie Eilish and her brother Finneas O'Connell wrote the movie's theme song, which topped the British charts when it was released early last year.

'Ungrateful'

Craig, 53, has played the suave secret agent in four previous Bond films, starting with "Casino Royale" in 2006, and even starring alongside Queen Elizabeth II, who made a cameo for the opening of the London 2012 Olympics. On the Bond podcast, he said he landed the part by promising to try to "reinvent" rather than recreate the character. "What Daniel's brought to the character is sort of unearthing the emotions," Broccoli said of Craig's five-film tenure.

However, he made headlines in 2015 by saying he would "rather slash my wrists" than play 007 again. In an interview published this week, Craig insisted he was "joking" when he made the comment but acknowledged that it came across as "ungrateful". "To be completely honest, I was thinking: I don't know if I can do another one of these," he told Britain's Radio Times, noting that he had broken his leg filming "Spectre". — AFP

Daniel Craig:
007 over and out

After 15 years playing the legendary British spy James Bond, Daniel Craig is making way for a new generation of actors after his fifth 007 film, "No Time To Die", which has its world premiere in London on Tuesday. The blond-haired, blue-eyed actor was not well known to the general public when he took over from Pierce Brosnan in 2006, and seemed far removed from the character created by writer Ian Fleming.

Even Sam Mendes, director of 2015 Bond film "Spectre", admitted that he thought at the time that it was a bad fit. "I thought Bond had become the opposite of what Daniel is - a slightly disengaged, urbane, jokey, eyebrow-raising, you know, a pastiche in a way," he told the BBC. But the intensity Craig brought to the part won over doubters and allowed the multi-million dollar franchise to be rebooted with a harder, more serious edge.

He celebrated landing the role by paying a boozy tribute to the iconic spy, previously incarnated by Sean Connery, George Lazenby, Roger Moore, Timothy Dalton and Pierce Brosnan. "I got drunk," Craig told the official 'James Bond' podcast. "I bought a bottle of vodka and a bottle of vermouth, a cocktail shaker and made myself three or four



vodka martinis," Bond's favorite tipple. Producer Barbara Broccoli, however, explained that Craig had resisted her advances for some time before agreeing, saying "the big problem was that he didn't want to do it".

Although a fan of the famous MI6 agent since childhood, the actor feared that his personal life would suffer from the pressure and fame that come with being the franchise figurehead. His private life remains relatively secret, although the tabloids have reported he had affairs with supermodel Kate Moss and actress Sienna Miller before marrying the Oscar-winning actress Rachel Weisz in 2011. The couple had a baby girl in 2018. He already had a daughter, Ella, with his first wife, Scottish actress Fiona Loudon.

'I'm not James Bond'

Born in 1968 in Chester, northwest England, to a pub landlord father and art teacher mother, Craig spent part of his childhood in Liverpool, where he moved with his mother and sister following his parents' divorce. He started acting at an early age, attending drama school in London before landing a string of roles in



An aerial view shows visitors at the southeastern tip of Pamban Island in Tamil Nadu state in Dhanushkodi yesterday. — AFP

South Asia
eyes tourism
revival

Nepal has restarted visas on arrival for vaccinated tourists as South Asian nations attempt to revive tourism businesses devastated after 18 months of the pandemic. A near travel shutdown has been in place in India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka for more than a year as successive waves of coronavirus took a deadly toll.

Nepal reopened to tourists and scrapped quarantine requirements for vaccinated foreigners on Thursday and its neighbors are expected to quickly follow as they seek to bolster linchpin industries in their economies. "The resumption of on-arrival visas is aimed at reopening the tourism sector which is one of the mainstays of Nepal's economy," Tourism Ministry spokesman Tara Nath Adhikari told AFP. All visitors must still take a pan-

dem test on arrival and unvaccinated travellers have to quarantine for 10 days.

The decision came just as monsoon clouds cleared for the autumn trekking season, and many are hopeful it will help drive up the arrivals. "So many have lost jobs and livelihoods. This decision is crucial for all of us and we are hopeful that at least some visitors will return," said Nabin Trital of the Trekking Agencies Association of Nepal. Neighboring India is soon to announce that it will give away 500,000 free tourist visas as it also starts to reopen after more than a year, officials told AFP.

The country had more than 12.5 million tourists in 2019 but lost hundreds of millions of dollars after the shutters came down in March last year. New Delhi is negotiating with international airlines to get scheduled flights resumed from main markets in North America and Europe, the officials said. Bhutan recently let in its first foreign tourist, an American who spent three weeks in quarantine. The country has imposed draconian restrictions to minimise the impact of the pandemic, recording only three coronavirus deaths in the population of 700,000. — AFP

they move from side to side, clapping their hands and chanting the lyrics of a patriotic Afghan song: "Send me a hello from Kabul... I miss you very much." When the Taliban ruled Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001, all entertainment, including singing



In this picture taken on Sept 23, 2021, Taliban members enjoy a traditional dance on the banks of a river in Kandahar. — AFP

Far-out fleet
from Mad Max
up for sale in
Australia

If you need a ride fast enough to outpace the apocalypse, a rare auction in Australia is selling a menacing fleet of vehicles from "Mad Max: Fury Road" for any aspiring desert warrior. Whether you're a would-be marauder or just want to raise eyebrows at the drive-through window, the sale of 13 vehicles from the 2015



The steering wheel and gearshift knob of the Gigahorse's driver's seat.



This picture taken on Friday shows the Gigahorse, one of several outlandish vehicles used in the 2015 dystopian blockbuster film "Mad Max: Fury Road", which is up for bids at Lloyds Auctions in Sydney.

and dancing, was forbidden.

But these younger Taliban do listen to music - even if most of it is religious. Since the group's return to power in mid-August, even its leaders seem to have relaxed slightly on the topic - at least in larger



The Razor Cola.

dystopian blockbuster has the goods. "The first time I saw them, I'm pretty sure I heard one of the cars saying: 'I need to be driven in anger,'" curator Geoff McKew of Lloyds Auctions told AFP in Sydney. Among the vehicles is the gargantuan War Rig - a hulking tanker driven by Charlize Theron's character Furiosa - and the Razor Cola, which went up against Tom Hardy's "Mad" Max Rockatansky.

With offers closing on Sunday, the current owners will only sell all 13 together in an effort to preserve a piece of film history. "They shouldn't be sitting in storage; they should be out there and getting the respect that they deserve," McKew said. Although they certainly wouldn't "go for cheap", it was hard to put a price on the fleet, he added. The vehicles are part of an armada of wild machines that burst onto the screen in the award-winning Fury



The rear view of the Gigahorse.

Road, the fourth film in George Miller's Mad Max franchise.

The movie's success further cemented the cult status of the Australian action series and its title character, first played by Mel Gibson in 1979. The sale has aroused interest worldwide, including from Las Vegas casinos and the Burning Man Festival, McKew said. Sadly, none of the cars are street legal. But McKew doubted that police would be daring enough to pull over a ride like the Gigahorse, molded out of two 1959 Cadillac Coupe de Ville and barely fitting into its temporary home at a Sydney warehouse. "When I saw it start for the first time, I wasn't sure if I was having a heart attack or a bowel movement," he added. — AFP



The Elvis convoy car. — AFP photos

Young Taliban
dancing to a
different tune

As the setting sun turns the Arghandab river violet, seven young Taliban turn in a circle on the bank, singing and dancing in traditional Afghan style. The scene would have been unimaginable 20 years ago, when the hardline Islamist group were first in power and banned music outright.

And just months ago the riverbed was the site of bloody clashes between the Taliban and government forces - the concrete bridge the men are dancing under is cleft in two, destroyed in fighting. But now a chorus rises from the rocky bank, as

cities, where people are not being punished for listening to music. The young Taliban under the bridge have come here to relax before they head back to Kandahar, the group's spiritual birthplace, just 10 kilometers away. Although the origin of their song is unclear, it celebrates national unity in a country riven with ethnic and tribal divisions. "This song belongs to us, it belongs to our country," says Hafiz Mudasar, a dancer in his twenties.

'We had a plan'

Like his companions, he is tall, thin and bearded - and still full of excitement at his group's victory after two decades of fighting the US-led occupation and the former government. "Twenty years ago, American troops arrived, but we had a plan," he says. Taliban fighters took Kabul on August 15 following a lightning offensive launched in May as the United States and NATO began their final withdrawal. They have promised a more moderate brand of

rule this time - though they have made clear that they will run Afghanistan within the restrictive limits of their interpretation of sharia law. "We're not doing anything bad. It's our enemies who are spreading rumors, saying we're killing people," says Hafiz. But many in Afghanistan are distrustful and fear a return to the harsh rule of the 1990s.

As the sun vanishes below the horizon, the dancers are joined by 20 or so other Taliban members. They spread out rugs on the pebbles of the riverbank and begin to pray in the fading light. Bread and melons await them when they are finished. As evening falls, a line of vehicles passes by the foot of the bridge, splashing across the riverbed to get to the other bank. They used to be able to use the bridge, until last December, when the Taliban, looking to isolate Kandahar, detonated a vehicle stuffed full of explosives on it. —AFP

Lifestyle | Features



A picture taken on Sept 21, 2021 shows artists in their transparent plastic inflated plastic balls performing "Tears" by Monster Chetwynd during a preview day of Art Basel, the world's premier modern and contemporary art fair in Basel. — AFP photos



A visitor takes a photo with his mobile phone of "Repeating the Obvious, 2019", an artwork by US artist Carrie Mae Weems, exhibited in the Unlimited sector of Art Basel.



Visitors look at "Destruction" 2019, an artwork by Japanese artist Tadashi Kawamata.

Dystopia, BLM themes emerge at Art Basel fair

Dystopia and Black Lives Matter feature prominently at Art Basel, the world's top contemporary art fair, which throws open its doors to the public this weekend. The giant annual fair in the Swiss city of Basel is above all a commercial event, where artists and galleries come to meet wealthy collectors. But the fair is also very popular with art lovers who come for the simple pleasure of browsing the works on show. Some 93,000 visitors



A visitor takes a photo of "Die Doppelgängerin, 2010", an artwork by Austrian avant-garde artist Valie Export depicting two intertwined scissors.

came through the doors during the 2019 edition, with last year's event having been cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Art Basel exhibits major works every year in a section where paintings, sculptures and installations are grouped together for sale to museums and large collections.

Among the 2021 highlights are a canvas by the Guyanese-British artist Frank Bowling, a large painting by Britain's David Hockney or Swiss artist Urs Fischer's house made out of bread. But after several editions dominated by political works focused on Donald Trump's US presidency, then feminist works during the "Me Too" movement, the 62 major works presented this year reflect on the upheavals that shook the world during the pandemic.

'Cabinet of curiosities'

The US artist Lari Pittman is presenting a vast set of closely-juxtaposed paintings intended as a kind of snapshot of a fallen Western civilization. "It's a cabinet of curiosities," the Californian told AFP, but with objects amassed by a collector "in the distant future", finding needles and antidepressants, a motorway sign warning drivers to speed up due to the risk of cannibalism, and stained glass windows for an underground bunker. The work should have been exhibited before the pandemic, but Pittman nonetheless believes it has its



Visitors walk past "Untitled" an artwork by Italian painter and key member of the Italian Transavanguardia movement Enzo Cucchi.

place in this edition.

"It's a bit dark, but the issues I point out are constant in human history," he said. "We are coming out of an incredibly dystopic period globally, and certainly in America with a dystopic political situation in the last four years."

On the theme of juxtaposition, the US artist Carrie Mae Weems is presenting a series of canvases of varying sizes entitled "Repeating The Obvious". They all contain the same image: the blurred face of a young African-American, illustrating those who died at the hands of the police and, by dint of repetition, end up becoming

faceless victims.

Outside the exhibition hall, the Danish-Norwegian artist duo Elmgreen & Dragset placed "The Outsiders" - a work featuring an old Mercedes car with Russian registration plates, with two men sleeping inside, curled up against each other. The two wax mannequins, with lifelike features, represent two workers who have come to set up the fair and do "all the hard, heavy work that we don't see", Michael Elmgreen told AFP.

Having driven from Moscow, they sleep in their car because they cannot afford a hotel room. "It's also a work about an inti-

macy between these two young men. It has Russian number plates. It's very difficult to show that intimacy openly in Moscow today. So they are happy to be here in Basel where they can lie in the way they want." Given the pandemic-related travel constraints, Art Basel has planned several online events, including virtual walks through the fair. Art Basel was open for private viewings from Monday to Thursday, aimed at wealthy buyers, before opening to the public from Friday to Sunday. — AFP

Denmark's 'freetown' Christiania hangs onto soul, 50 years on

A refuge for anarchists, hippies and artists, Denmark's 'freetown' Christiania turns 50 on Sunday, and though it hasn't completely avoided the encroachment of modernity and capitalism, its free-wheeling soul remains intact. Nestled in the heart of Copenhagen, Christiania is seen by some as a progressive social experiment, while others simply see it as a den of drugs.

On September 26, 1971, a band of guitar-laden hippies transformed an abandoned army barracks in central Copenhagen into their home. They raised their "freedom flag" and named their new home "Christiania, Freetown" after the part of the city where it is located. They wanted to establish an alternative society, guided by the principles of peace and love, where decisions were made collectively and laws were not enforced.

Soft drugs were freely available, and repurposing, salvaging and sharing was favored over buying new. It was a community "that belonged to everybody and to no one", says Ole Lykke, who moved into the 34-hectare enclave in the 1970s. These principles remain well-rooted today, but the area has changed in many ways: tourists weave through its cobblestone roads, and the once-reviled market economy is in full swing. Perhaps most importantly, it is no longer a squat. Residents became legal landowners when they bought some of the land from the Danish state in 2012.

Now it is home to some 900 people, many artists and activists, along with restaurants, cafes and shops, popular among the half a million tourists that visit annually. "The site is more 'normal'," says a smiling Lykke, a slender 75-year-old with ruffled silver hair, who passionately pro-

notes Christiania, its independence and thriving cultural scene. Legislation has been enforced since 2013 - though a tongue-in-cheek sign above the exit points out that those leaving the area will be entering the European Union.

'Embrace change'

It is Christiania's ability to adapt with the times that has allowed it to survive, says Helen Jarvis, a University of Newcastle professor of social geography engagement. "Christiania is unique," says Jarvis, who lived in Christiania in 2010. "(It) endures because it continues to evolve and embrace change". Some of those changes would have been unthinkable at the start. Residents secured a bank loan for several million euros to be able to buy the land, and now Christiania is run independently through a foundation.

They also now pay wages to the around 40 people employed by Christiania, including trash collectors and daycare workers. "Money is now very important," admits Lykke, who is an archivist and is currently exhibiting 100 posters chronicling Christiania's history at a Copenhagen museum. But it hasn't forgotten its roots. "Socially and culturally, Christiania hasn't changed very much," he says, noting that the community's needs still come first.

'Judged a little'

Christiania has remained a cultural hub - before the pandemic almost two dozen concerts were held every week and its theatres were packed. But it is still beset by its reputations as a drugs hub. Though parts of Christiania are tranquil, lush and green with few buildings, others are bustling, with a post office, minimarket, healthcare centre, and Pusher Street, the notorious drug market. Lykke says it's a side of Christiania most could do without. "Most of us would like to get rid of it. But as long as (marijuana use) is prohibited, as long as Denmark doesn't want to decriminalize or legalize, we will have this problem," says Lykke. —AFP



Juana Perez Gomez, 49, of the indigenous Tzotzil Maya, uses a backstrap loom to make a fabric, in Zinacantan, Chiapas state, Mexico, on Sept 8, 2021. — AFP photos



Maria Lopez, 50, uses a backstrap loom to make a fabric.

Mexico's indigenous weavers seek international recognition

Indigenous weavers in Mexico's southern highlands are striving for rightful recognition from an international fashion industry that they say plunders their creations and tradition. The struggle has taken on added symbolism as Mexico this month celebrates the bicentenary of its independence with plaudits for indigenous peoples' resistance against Spanish colonization.

Sitting on blankets on the ground in the courtyard of Julia Perez's house in the town of Zinacantan, weavers use traditional looms to produce fabric blending a multitude of bright colors. "There is a fusion of our ideas so that our tradition, our culture, our fabrics are not lost," the 39-year-old Tzotzil craftswoman said. "That's why we always use it in our designs," she said of the inspiration for the colors and patterns.

The weavers' enthusiasm belies the laborious and complex nature of their work, which requires great dexterity, Perez said. The value of their time and creativity is something they have come to appreciate after meeting Dulce Martinez de la Rosa and Daniela Gremion, the women behind the Fabrica Social (Social Factory) project devoted to traditional Mexican art. Gremion met Perez more than 10 years ago, recognized the quality of her work and asked her to collaborate. Since then they have followed a path of mutual learning, trust and friendship.

'Cultural misappropriation'

Under the Fabrica Social brand, the women of Zinacantan and other artisans in six Mexican states seek to improve working conditions and oppose business inequalities, through training that is more educational than commercial. The weavers set up chairs and a table in the yard and Gremion begins to review the basics of costs, expenses and other

aspects to reach a crucial but complex goal: fair trade. The artisans listen with enthusiasm and discuss their time and needs and the correct way to put a price on them. "It's a tool that helps us a lot to arrive at a price for a product that is often almost invaluable," Gremion, 40, said after completing the workshop.

Beyond the financial value, indigenous textiles represent a cultural and historical heritage systematically used without per-

of this country and their work, their techniques and their processes should be as well-known as Carolina Herrera, Isabel Marant, Zara or Mango - that's the real struggle," the 42-year-old said in her workshop in Mexico City. "We live in an economic system that is still absolutely colonial," she added.

Fabrica Social is one of several projects invited by the Mexican culture ministry to join the "Original" platform, which



Dulce Martinez de la Rosa shows garments made with indigenous fabrics at "Fabrica Social".



A woman works on making garments made with fabrics created in Mexican indigenous communities at "Fabrica Social" (Social Factory) in Mexico City on Sept 7, 2021.

mission by international fashion brands. The Mexican government has demanded explanations from designers such as Venezuela's Carolina Herrera and France's Isabel Marant, as well as brands like Zara, Rapsodia and Anthropologie, for cultural misappropriation" of indigenous culture. "It's not fair that they do this to us as indigenous people," said Perez.

All our heart'

Major brands' exploitation of indigenous heritage shows the asymmetry of power between transnational companies and local creators, a legacy of old "colonial regimes," De la Rosa said. "The artisans

seeks to draw on their experiences to promote "ethical collaborations" between large companies and artisans. The weavers of Zinacantan hope it will bring more respect from international brands for their talent and identity. "We would like them to recognize our work because it is done well," said Julia's cousin Sara Perez, who has been part of the project from the start. "It's made with all our heart and we're also working with materials made in Mexico," she said. — AFP



Sports

‘Greatest’ Serena, the pioneer of ‘tennis intimidation’, turns 40

A 23-time Grand Slam winner; 73 career titles overall

BIOT: Serena Williams turns 40 today with her long-time coach hailing her as the “greatest of all time” and a pioneer of tennis “intimidation”. The American superstar is frustratingly marooned on 23 Grand Slam titles, one short of the all-time record held by Margaret Court. However, her French coach Patrick Mouratoglou told AFP that her legacy is secure.

“Margaret Court was playing at a time when three-quarters didn’t even go to Australia (for the Australian Open), where tennis was an amateur sport, when the draws were 16 players,” said Mouratoglou.

Court, an Australian, won 11 of her Grand Slam titles at her home event. “I don’t mean to disrespect Margaret Court, but it’s another era. Yes, it would be better if Serena broke her record but, if she doesn’t, she will still be the greatest player of all time.”

Williams, whose sister Venus, a seven-time major winner, is still playing on tour at 41, won the last of her 23 Slams at the 2017 Australian Open. It was achieved while she was pregnant with daughter Olympia who was born in September that year. With former world number one Serena now down at 40 in the rankings, questions have been asked over her future in the sport.

‘How much does she want it?’

“She still has it. The question is how much she wants it and what is she willing to do to get there?,” added her coach. “Since she had her daughter, it’s harder. She has a lot of trouble not putting her life as a mother before her life as a player which is completely understandable. I think that’s the main reason she didn’t win a Grand Slam. Her family comes first and in order to be able to do

great things in one area, that area can’t come second. She is reflecting and we will see what comes out of it.”

Williams has been beaten in her four Grand Slam final appearances since her 2017 Melbourne triumph. She has not made the championship match at a major since Wimbledon in 2019. She missed this year’s US Open in New York, where she won her first Slam in 1999, with a hamstring injury.

The last of her 73 career titles came in Auckland in January 2020. If Williams fails to match Court’s record, Mouratoglou says she should be appreciated for the weapons she has brought to the sport — both on and off the court over her 26-year career.

She still has it

“She changed tennis,” he insisted. “She brought an athletic dimension that there was not there at all, she opened the doors, with her sister Venus, to a whole generation of players because it was a white sport. She invented tennis intimidation because she has a presence that makes others

fear her. For a very long time, it was impressive.

“She also brought the business to women’s tennis. Before her, the business was very small and with her it became huge because she has such an aura, she has become such a marketing object, too, that huge contracts are possible for the players.”

Mouratoglou teamed up with Williams in 2012 and has seen her development as a player, physically and mentally. He believes her only equal on the men’s side when it comes to sheer will to win is Novak Djokovic, who has three fewer Slams.

“At the very beginning, she was very lacking in confidence. She was not herself. But I knew who she was,” Mouratoglou explained. “When she qualified for the semi-finals at Wimbledon in 2012,



PARIS: In this file photo taken on June 4, 2021, Serena Williams of the US returns the ball to Danielle Collins of the US during their women’s singles third round tennis match on Day 6 of The Roland Garros 2021 French Open tennis tournament in Paris. —AFP

when she was seventh in the world, I’m at the restaurant, she runs towards me with a smile, telling me ‘it’s great, whatever happens now I’m third in the world on Monday!’

‘It sucks’

“I told her ‘so what? I’m surprised you find that great, explain it to me.’ She felt really bad and didn’t answer me. But in the evening, she texted me: ‘Sorry for what I said earlier. Number three, it sucks, number two also.’ At that point, I reconnected her with herself.”

It was that same summer that Mouratoglou believes Williams played the best tennis of her life.

“The Olympics in London were exceptional. She won Wimbledon and the confidence that this victory gave her made her walk on water. She pulverized everyone at the Games. In the final, it’s 6-0, 6-1 against Sharapova! This is where she played the best tennis of her life, she was untouchable.

“At the end of 2014 and the beginning of 2015, she won four consecutive Grand Slams, playing really well. In 2013, she told me that she hadn’t won Roland Garros for 11 years and would like to make it her goal. She didn’t lose a match on clay that year ... She won Charleston, Madrid, Rome, Roland Garros, Bastad. Even Rafael Nadal never did that.” —AFP

Chennai inflict new defeat on Kohli’s Bangalore

SHARJAH: MS Dhoni’s Chennai Super Kings inflicted new pain on Virat Kohli on Friday, beating his Royal Challengers Bangalore by six wickets in the Indian Premier League. Chennai, bolstered by 38 from opener Ruturaj Gaikwad, overcame Bangalore’s 156 for six with 11 balls to spare as Dhoni won the latest battle with his successor as India’s captain.

Kohli has been under the spotlight since announcing this month that he would step down as India’s T20 captain after the World Cup and the Bangalore captaincy after this IPL tournament. But after Bangalore lost by nine wickets in their first match of the resumed tournament, Kohli has now seen his side suffer three defeats in total in their last five games.

After Friday’s start was delayed by a sandstorm in Sharjah, Kohli, who has vowed to concentrate more on his batting, hit 53 in an 111-run opening partnership with Devdutt Padikkal. He hit a six and six fours while Padikkal went on to make 70 off 50 balls with three sixes and five fours.

The openers raced to 46 in five overs with Kohli smashing his six over mid-wicket in Shardul Thakur’s first over. He was eventually caught by Ravindra Jadeja off Dwayne Bravo going for another boundary in the 14th over.

Seeking to step up the tempo, AB de Villiers made 12 off 11 balls before he was caught by Suresh Raina off Thakur in the 17th over. With the next ball, Thakur had Padikkal caught by Ambati Rayudu going for a scoop shot.

Singapore batsman Tim David lasted just three balls on his IPL debut before he was caught by Raina off Deepak Chahar for just one run. Glenn Maxwell went for 11 in the last over, caught by Jadeja off Bravo, who added Harshal Patel with the final ball, again caught by Raina. The West Indies all-rounder finished on three for 24. The target was never a serious challenge for Chennai.

Gaikwad’s 38 came off just 21 balls with a six and four fours. Kohli made a brilliant diving catch off Yuzvendra Chahal to dismiss Gaikwad. But Faf du Plessis made 31, Moen Ali rattled off 23, including two sixes, and Ambati Rayudu hit 32 to put Chennai in a winning position.

Raina and Dhoni saw Chennai to 157 for four and took them back to the top of the eight team table, level with Delhi Capitals on 14 points. Bangalore remain third but Kohli admitted that they need to get back to winning ways again to escape the chasing Kolkata Knight Riders, Rajasthan Royals and Mumbai Indians.

“We have to start doing that and quickly because this tournament goes by very quickly,” said Kohli who bemoaned his side’s lack of consistency and the number of boundaries offered by his bowlers. “We did not show that much courage with the ball,” he said. —AFP

Raducanu drops coach who led her to US Open triumph

LONDON: US Open winner Emma Raducanu has decided to replace coach Andrew Richardson with someone who has the experience to keep her at the top level on the WTA Tour. Richardson, who coached British youth players, worked with Raducanu at Bromley Tennis Centre near her Kent home and then went with the 18-year-old to New York, where she entered her second major in the qualifying rounds. He replaced Nigel Sears, Andy Murray’s father-in-law, who Raducanu dropped after reaching the round of 16 at Wimbledon in July.

“After Wimbledon, I was ranked around 200 in the world and at the time I thought Andrew would be a great coach to trial so we went to the States but never did I even dream of winning the US Open,” Raducanu said at an event staged by the British Lawn Tennis Association at the National Tennis Centre.

“At this stage in my career, and playing the top players in the world, I realized I really need some-

one right now that has had that WTA Tour experience at the high levels,” she said. “I’m so new to it, I really need someone to guide me who’s already been through that.”

She said it had been tough to axe Richardson after they had shared the euphoria of her US triumph. “Obviously having such an experience with your team, it’s tough to have that conversation with anyone, but I think for me it’s just really what I need,” she said.

Raducanu’s seeming ruthlessness was backed up by one of the most experienced coaches on the women’s tour, Patrick Mouratoglou, who has guided Serena Williams since 2012. Speaking to AFP on Friday the Frenchman said: “young Emma Raducanu...really impressed me.”

Raducanu, who only played her first WTA tournament at Nottingham in June and then played two more tour events in the run up to the US Open, said she is weighing when to return to action. The prestigious Indian Wells tournament is due to begin on October 6.

“Wherever I play next, I’m going to make sure I’m ready. I don’t want to jump into things too early,” she said. Raducanu’s New York success means she is ranked 22 in the world and could still qualify for the end-of-season WTA Finals. “I would never even have dreamed of before because it was just so



LONDON: Britain’s Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge plays tennis with US Open Champion Emma Raducanu as she visits the National Tennis center in Roehampton, southwest London on Friday. —AFP

far out of reach,” she said. “My priority is putting in the best possible pre-season that I can so I can start strong next year.”

Raducanu was feted in New York following her triumph. She attended the glitzy Met Gala and became an ambassador for New York-based luxury jewelry brand Tiffany. “All the opportunities I’m getting have been very fun, but where I really want to be is on a tennis court.” —AFP

US jumps to quick start over Europe on day two of Ryder Cup

KOHLER: The United States carried momentum into yesterday’s second day of the Ryder Cup after seizing a 6-2 edge over Europe, its largest first-day advantage in 46 years. After dominating Friday’s foursomes and four-ball matches, the Americans jumped ahead early again at Whistling Straits in morning foursomes play. “We want to continue that momentum,” US captain Steve Stricker said yesterday. “Our guys are fired up still.”

American Daniel Berger sank a 10-foot birdie putt to win the first hole and a five-footer to birdie the par-5 second, then won the third with a par as he and four-time major winner Brooks Koepka seized a 3-up lead over Europe’s Jon Rahm and Sergio Garcia.

Top-ranked Rahm and Garcia, the all-time Ryder Cup points record holder, had been the only European duo to win a match on day one with their foursomes triumph, the other points for the visitors coming on tied four-ball matches.

World number two Dustin Johnson, who won

both his matches Friday, dropped his approach two feet from the cup at the opening hole and partner Collin Morikawa holed the birdie putt, then holed a seven-footer to birdie the second and give that US duo a 2-up edge over England’s Paul Casey and Tyrrell Hatton. Johnson stretched the advantage 47-foot chip-in to win the third hole. With Johnson and Olympic champion Xander Sachuffele winning twice, the Americans dominated day one like they hadn’t since 1975.

“It’s a great start. We’re very happy,” Stricker said. “My message to the guys (was) let’s keep our foot down and continue to play the golf we know we can play. That’s what we’re trying to do and not try to get complacent with anything. We’ve had some things that came up and bit us in the rear in other Ryder Cups, so these guys know that and they are focused on coming out strong again.”

Holders Europe, winners in four of the past five Ryder Cups and nine of the past 12, were looking for a fightback despite the early struggles. “Obviously we need a big day,” said Europe captain Padraig Harrington.

Harrington benched Rory McIlroy for yesterday’s opening foursomes matches after the four-time major winner lost twice in one day for the first time in his Ryder Cup career. “The golf didn’t go as well as he would have liked, but I’m not second-guessing



KOHLER: Dustin Johnson of team United States plays his shot on the first hole during Saturday Morning Foursome Matches of the 43rd Ryder Cup at Whistling Straits yesterday in Kohler, Wisconsin. —AFP

him for a second in terms of his leadership and what he does for my team,” Harrington said.

Other foursomes matches had US stars Jordan Spieth and Justin Thomas against Norway’s Viktor Hovland and Austrian Bernd Wiesberger as well as Schauffele and Patrick Cantlay, a winning Friday duo, against Englishmen Lee Westwood and Matthew Fitzpatrick. “Hopefully we can keep the pedal down and keep doing more of the same,” said Cantlay, the US PGA playoff champion. —AFP

to play in Warriors home games until he fulfills the city’s vaccination requirements.”

Wiggins is one of the highest profile NBA players to publicly confirm he will not take the vaccine. “To each his own, really. Whoever wants to get it, can get it; whoever doesn’t want to get it, don’t get it,” Wiggins said in March. “Right now, I’m not getting it, but it’s no knock on anyone else that’s getting it. I make my own decisions. But right now, I decided not to get it.” The Warriors first home game of the regular season takes place against the Los Angeles Clippers on October 21. —AFP

Wiggins out of home games over vaccine stance

SAN FRANCISCO: The NBA on Friday made a request from Andrew Wiggins for religious exemption from the COVID-19 vaccine, meaning the Golden State Warriors swingman will be unable to play home games for the club.

A statement said Wiggins’ refusal to take the vaccine meant he would be in violation of San Francisco city health department rules which require all people attending large indoor events to be vaccinated. Wiggins, 26, had requested an exemption from the rule on religious grounds. However, that plea was rejected by the NBA.

“The NBA has reviewed and denied Andrew Wiggins’ request for religious exemption from the San Francisco Department of Public Health’s order requiring COVID-19 vaccination for all participants age 12 and older at large indoor events,” the NBA said in a statement. “Wiggins will not be able

Klopp wants 'solution' as World Cup quarantine row returns

Premier League's Brazilian players called up to national duty

LONDON: Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp on Friday demanded "some kind of solution" to prevent another club-v-country row over COVID quarantine rules for World Cup qualifiers. Eight Brazilian Premier League players — including Liverpool goalkeeper Alisson Becker and midfielder Fabinho — were called-up by Brazil coach Tite for the next round of 2022 qualifiers in October.

Premier League clubs refused to release players earlier this month for matches in countries on the British government's 'red' list because of the 10-day quarantine rule facing returning travelers. In response, the Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) and three other national associations asked FIFA to bar the players from club duty for five days before withdrawing their request a day before the next round of Premier League fixtures.

"There must be a solution because we cannot just leave it like this and say it's not a problem. Yes, it is a problem," said Klopp. "I know the relevant people are working on this, but there's nothing decided yet, at least as far as I'm concerned. We have a problem when the Brazilians are allowed, or when they go, to the next internationals."

"We have a 12:30 kick-off at Watford (October 16). The game in Brazil is on Friday night (October 15), so obviously nobody has thought about that yet. I just don't know how you can do these kind of things where nobody reacts on the schedule. We have two problems. One is the schedule, it was

always a problem.

"TV and other guys, the Premier League, say, 'OK, that's how it is, they have to play, let's have a look how they can sort that'. Another thing, it's not good for the players or the clubs as well and I hope the government comes up with some kind of solution."

FIFA president Gianni Infantino and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson discussed the possibility of quarantine exemptions for Premier League players last week. Manchester City's Ederson and Gabriel



FIFA, UK discuss quarantine exemptions

Jesus, Fred of Manchester United, Chelsea defender Thiago Silva and Leeds striker Raphinha were also recalled by Brazil on Friday.

Emerson Royal, who joined Tottenham from Barcelona on the last day of the summer transfer window, is also in the squad. Brazil have won all eight of their qualifiers and play Venezuela on



LIVERPOOL: Liverpool's German manager Jurgen Klopp looks on during the English Premier League football match between Liverpool and Crystal Palace at Anfield in Liverpool, north west England on September 18, 2021. — AFP

October 7 in Caracas, Colombia in Barranquilla three days later and Uruguay on the October 14 at Manaus.

The three September World Cup games included

Brazil's meeting with Argentina in Sao Paulo which was aborted minutes after kick-off over alleged COVID-19 quarantine breaches by Argentina's English-based players. — AFP

All Blacks clinch Rugby Championship as Wallabies shine

TOWNSVILLE: A relieved New Zealand clinched the Rugby Championship crown yesterday by downing South Africa in a bruising and intense clash between the world's top two teams, as a resurgent Australia stretched their win streak to three.

All Blacks coach Ian Foster recalled big guns Beauden Barrett and Brodie Retallick for the historic 100th Test against the Springboks after an experimental side easily beat Argentina last week. And they led from the front in the 19-17 victory, rubbing salt into South African wounds after snatching their number one world ranking last week.

But it was a messy affair which ultimately came down to Jordie Barrett's boot, with the fullback landing a difficult penalty with two minutes left in the first of a double header at Townsville, in northern Queensland. In the later match, the Wallabies ground down Argentina 27-8, consigning the struggling Pumas to a fifth straight defeat as Dave Rennie's men won three on the

trot for the first time since 2017.

"We knew this game was going to come down to the wire and it was tit for tat there, we just stuck at it," said All Blacks skipper Ardie Savea after their 10th straight victory. "We backed ourselves and just glad to come away with the win, relieved actually."

"They put us under a lot of pressure with the box kicks and their chase line and we had to adapt," he added. "It was a bit messy, but that's Test match footy."

New Zealand's win ensured they once again won the southern hemisphere title, with world champions South Africa having needed a bonus-point victory to keep their slim championship hopes alive. After five games, the All Blacks have an uncatchable 24 points with a game to play.

Australia, who beat South Africa twice before dismantling Argentina, move up to second on 13 points, two clear of the Springboks, with the Pumas flailing at the bottom. New Zealand and



TOWNSVILLE: New Zealand's captain Ardie Savea celebrates winning Freedom Cup with teammates after the rugby Championship match against South Africa in Townsville yesterday. —AFP

South Africa scored a try apiece within the opening five minutes when Will Jordan then Sbu Nkosi crossed to set the game alight. But while the All Blacks went to the break 13-11 in front, they lacked their usual composure as the Springboks successfully shut down their fluent style.

Mixed emotions

Both sides traded penalties through the second half until Barrett kept his cool and landed the decisive blow in the dying stages from 40 meters out.

"We never like to lose because we come from a very proud country that expects results from us as a team," said

South Africa captain Siya Kolisi, whose side have now lost three in a row. "But I'm glad of the way the boys stood up today. I can't fault my teammates or coaches and thought we were right in there. Not much went wrong tonight."

A revitalized Australia came into their clash against Argentina with their confidence high after consecutive wins over the Springboks, and they kept the momentum going. Reece Hodge opened their account with a try after just four minutes and Samu Kerevi added another in a bone-crunching first half where Argentina were forced to make a grueling 62 tackles.

The Wallabies wobbled early in the second stanza and Argentina skipper Julian Montoya powered over for a try, before the home team regained focus and finished strongly with Andrew Kellaway getting their third five-pointer.

"We're obviously happy to win. We worked hard in the first half to put ourselves in a strong position, then there was probably a bit of frustration," said Wallabies coach Dave Rennie. "But we worked hard and sustained a lot of pressure for 20 minutes after half-time, so I guess mixed emotions. Happy to win, but we need to be better." — AFP

Ten-man Bayern win at Fuerth

BERLIN: Bayern Munich opened a three-point lead at the top of the Bundesliga on Friday with a 3-1 win at bottom side Greuther Fuerth despite being a man down for most of the second-half after Benjamin Pavard was sent off.

First-half goals by Thomas Mueller and Joshua Kimmich put Bayern 2-0 up before Pavard was shown a straight red card just three minutes into the second-half.

Fuerth midfielder Sebastian Griesbeck scored an own goal when he got his boot to the ball just ahead of Robert Lewandowski, who fell one match short of equaling Gerd Mueller's record of scoring in 16 consecutive league games from 1969/70.

The loudest cheer of the night came when the hosts grabbed a late consolation goal as replacement striker Cedric Itten scored to delight the sell-out 11,730-strong home crowd. "It was not a brilliant performance, but we had the game under control even when we were a man down," Bayern goalscorer Kimmich told DAZN.

Fuerth count former US secretary of state Henry

Kissinger as one of their most famous fans and head coach Stefan Leitl had called for "courage" against Bayern, who thrashed strugglers Bochum 7-0 last weekend.

The home defense was breached after just ten minutes at Fuerth's Sportpark Ronhof when Bayern counter-attacked at speed down the left flank.

Alphonso Davies, who started on the left wing while Kingsley Coman recovers from heart surgery, whipped in a cross and Mueller hit the back of the net when his shot went in off the post from the edge of the area.

Kimmich netted the second goal with half an hour played when the central midfielder was allowed plenty of time to curl his shot inside the post and just around the outstretched arm of Fuerth goalkeeper Sascha Burchert.

Bayern spent most of the opening period camped in the Fuerth half as Leon Goretzka, Dayot Upamecano and Lewandowski, who clipped the crossbar, all went close. The hosts rallied and Fuerth came within a whisker of pulling a goal back just before the break when midfielder Paul Seguin was agonisingly short of beating Manuel Neuer. Pavard was sent off after he scythed down Fuerth's US midfielder Julian Green, a former Bayern player.

Griesbeck's own goal midway through the sec-



FUERTH: (From left) Bayern Munich's Marcel Sabitzer, Robert Lewandowski, Leon Goretzka and Alphonso Davies celebrate after the third goal for their team during their German first division Bundesliga football match against Greuther Fuerth on Friday. —AFP

ond half sealed Bayern's away win when he lunged in to stop Lewandowski getting to the ball, but only succeeded in poking the ball over his own goal-line. Fuerth's consolation goal came when Itten headed in a cross three minutes from the final whistle.

Lewandowski just missed out on equaling another Gerd Mueller record having broken the Bayern legend's milestone of 40 goals in a single season when the Poland striker finished with one more in 2020/21. —AFP

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Sabah Hospital	24812000	Clinics	Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Amiri Hospital	22450005		Qadsiya	22515088
Maternity Hospital	24843100	Kaizen center	25716707	Dasmah
Mubarak Al-Kabir		Rawda	22517733	
Hospital	25312700	Adaliya	22517144	
Chest Hospital	24849400	Khalidiya	24848075	
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010	Kaifan	24849807	
Adan Hospital	23940620	Shamiya	24848913	
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300	Shuwaikh	24814507	
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000	Abdullah Salem	22549134	
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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

EMERGENCY ☎ 112

Sport Times

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2021

Man City end Chelsea hex

Man Utd pay penalty • Everton beat Norwich • West Ham overcome Leeds



LONDON: Manchester City's Brazilian striker Gabriel Jesus (left) celebrates scoring his team's first goal during the English Premier League football match between Chelsea and Manchester City at Stamford Bridge in London yesterday. — AFP

LONDON: Manchester City ended their Chelsea hoodoo yesterday, beating the European champions 1-0 while Bruno Fernandes missed a last-gasp penalty in Manchester United's shock 1-0 defeat by Aston Villa. Gabriel Jesus' second-half strike proved decisive for Pep Guardiola's men, who gained a measure of revenge for three consecutive defeats by Chelsea, including a painful loss in the Champions League final in Porto.

The win lifted the defending champions to 13 points alongside Liverpool, Chelsea and United, who conceded a late goal to Villa defender Kortney Hause before suffering the agony of the missed spot-kick. Elsewhere, Jamie Vardy netted twice at the right end against Burnley after scoring an early own goal in a 2-2 draw for stuttering Leicester while Norwich slumped to their sixth consecutive league defeat.

Guardiola said this week that his side lacked a "weapon" to match Chelsea's record signing Romelu Lukaku or United's Cristiano Ronaldo to decide games inside the box. But Jesus ultimately made the difference for City, who could have won more con-

vincingly but for a combination of wasteful finishing and some impressive last-ditch defending.

The Brazilian forward got the break City deserved in the 53rd minute as his effort deflected off Jorginho to leave goalkeeper Edouard Mendy flat-footed. The visitors had chances to double their lead, with Jack Grealish drawing a sharp save before Jesus was denied a second by Thiago Silva's goal-line clearance while Thomas Tuchel's team failed to muster a single shot on target.

"Sometimes we believe we need a proper striker to finish, but the important thing is the way we play," Guardiola told the BBC. "The most important thing is doing it as a team and as a unit. It's like last season. Sergio (Aguero, who has left the club) was injured all year and we won the Premier League."



Vardy saves Leicester against Burnley

Fernandes miss

Villa arrived at Old Trafford with a woeful record of one win in their previous 45 Premier League games against Manchester United, including 33 defeats. The home side, boasting a star-studded attack including Cristiano Ronaldo, Fernandes, Paul Pogba and Mason Greenwood had 28 shots in all but Villa missed some gilt-edged chances of their own.

Just when it appeared the game was drifting towards a draw, Villa's Hause flicked a near-post header beyond David de Gea from a Douglas Luiz corner in the 88th minute. Minutes later he went from hero to villain when he handled Fernandes' cross but the United playmaker sent his spot-kick high over the bar — just the second time he has failed to score from a penalty in 23 attempts for the club.

It was a second home defeat of the week for United and a first in the Premier League this season, while they also lost Harry Maguire and Luke Shaw to injuries in front of watching England boss Gareth Southgate. United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer, whose side have lost three of their past four matches in all competitions criticized the way Fernandes was surrounded before his penalty.

"First of all the way they get round the penalty spot, get round Bruno and that, that's not to my liking," he said. "Bruno is usually very good in those positions and unfortunately he missed this one. It doesn't get in Bruno's head. He's strong mentally and he'll step forward again. The decision (on who takes penalties) is made before the game." Everton beat Norwich 2-0 while West Ham overcame struggling Leeds 2-1 with a late Michail Antonio goal. Watford had to settle for a 1-1 draw against Newcastle after having a late goal ruled out for offside. Jurgen Klopp's Liverpool are in action at Brentford in the late kick-off on Saturday, with a chance to go three points clear at the top of the table. — AFP

Maldini scores fairytale first goal for Milan

LA SPEZIA: AC Milan went top of Serie A yesterday with a 2-1 win at Spezia in which Daniel Maldini followed in his father's and grandfather's footsteps by scoring his first goal for the club on his full Serie A debut. Stefano Pioli's side are a point ahead of Napoli and three ahead of city rivals Inter Milan thanks to the victory over battling Spezia which came thanks to Ibrahim Diaz's close-range strike with four minutes remaining.

Over 12 years since his father and club legend Paolo last played for the seven-time European champions, Maldini junior headed Milan into the lead at Spezia two minutes after half-time. Former Italy defender Paolo, who won almost every honor in the game during his 25 years as a Milan player and is now the club's technical director, celebrated in the stands as his son was surrounded by teammates following the powerful header from Pierre Kalulu's cross.

"The most important thing about Daniel is that he's talented. He's got technical ability, he can see the play, he's calm," said Pioli to DAZN. "We wanted him to attack the area and he did that, scoring a good goal. I think he can only grow and that he's got the quality to be a player that gives us some joy in the future."

Diaz decisive again

Maldini's fairytale debut looked to have



LA SPEZIA: AC Milan's Italian forward Daniel Maldini celebrates after opening the scoring during the Italian Serie A football match between Spezia and AC Milan yesterday at the Alberto-Picco stadium in La Spezia. — AFP

been spoiled in the 80th minute when Daniele Verde's shot took a wicked deflection off Sandro Tonali and left Milan goalkeeper Mike Maignan with no chance. However Spaniard Diaz was decisive again after scoring the crucial first goal against Venezia midweek, collecting Alexis Saelemaekers' pull back and pushing home his fourth goal in all competitions this season.

Defeat was harsh on Spezia, who could also have scored on the hour mark when Giulio Maggiore somehow shot over from inches out and pushed Milan all the way. Thiago Motta's side deserved more than zero points from positive performances in their last two matches against Juventus and Milan.

"It's always a difficult match here, they play good football. They played well but we fought together... I'm happy for everyone because it's difficult to win here," said Diaz to DAZN. The 19-year-old Maldini's grandfather Cesare Maldini, also a defender, won four league titles and the 1963 European Cup for the Rossoneri, scoring three times for the club.

Paolo Maldini played more than 900 times for Milan, scoring 33 times and winning seven league titles and five European Cups/Champions Leagues. Daniel made his senior Milan debut as a late substitute during a 1-1 draw with Verona in February last year, and has played in a clutch of matches from the bench since. — AFP

McLaren's Norris takes maiden pole at Russian Grand Prix

SOCHI: McLaren's Lando Norris took his maiden Formula One pole in a shock outcome to yesterday's qualifying for the Russian Grand Prix. Norris is joined on the front row by the Ferrari of Carlos Sainz with Lewis Hamilton starting on the second row in his latest attempt at reaching 100 wins. Hamilton was looking good for pole after topping the timesheets in Q1 and Q2, but he then suffered late drama with three minutes left of Q3 when he hit the pit wall requiring a hastily fitted new front wing to his damaged Mercedes. A spin on his re-emergence out onto the circuit on slick tyres left the door open for 21-year-old Norris to steal the show at Sochi with a flying last lap of 1min 41.993sec. "Oh boy. It feels amazing. Manic session," Norris beamed.

"We made the decision to go slicks, you never think you will get pole until you get it," he added. The refreshingly different complexion of the top of the grid was completed by George Russell of Williams. He posted the third quickest time to start alongside seven-time world champion Hamilton, his teammate when he relaces Valtteri Bottas at Mercedes next season. "It is crazy. Second time in the top three in three or four events, the team have done an

amazing job," said the 22-year-old referring to a brilliant qualifying session at Spa to gain his first podium in the rain-ruined Belgian Grand Prix.

Max Verstappen, who leads Hamilton by five points ahead of this 15th round of the season, starts from the back of the grid due to an engine change penalty on his Red Bull. "As I will be starting from the back of the grid anyway, we decided to take no risks and to skip quali," the Dutch driver tweeted. "Quite an interesting quali result! It's full focus on the race, in which I'll try to fight my way forward and hopefully have some fun."

Hamilton meanwhile will be counting on exploiting Verstappen's penalty to the fullest at the circuit on the shores of the Black Sea where he has already won four times with Mercedes undefeated since it first appeared on the calendar in 2014. Stuck on 99 since Silverstone on July 18 the Mercedes world champion will hope his car's race pace will see him finally become F1's first century man. Qualifying got underway as scheduled after a dramatic improvement in conditions following torrential rain which washed out the morning's third and final practice. The deluge left the circuit in the Olympic Park under water. — AFP