



7 Thailand to cut quarantine for vaccinated tourists



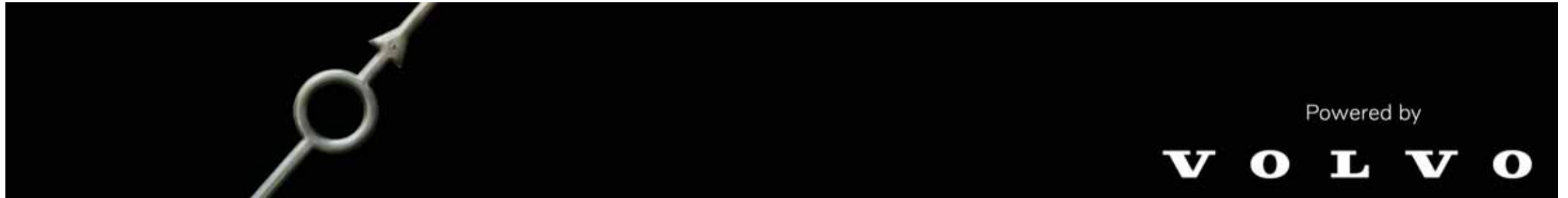
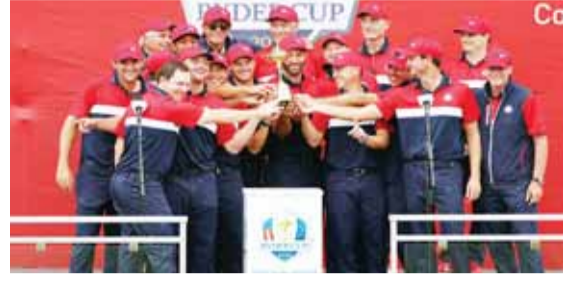
8 Afghan saffron boss says Taliban will not silence her



13 'Ancestor' of Mediterranean mosaics discovered in Turkey



16 US young guns overwhelm Europe in Ryder Cup rout



Democratic Forum launches reconciliation initiative

Lawmaker, ex-MP jailed over primaries • MoH ex-officials flee before final verdict

Ban on workplace sexual harassment, discrimination

KUWAIT: Minister of Commerce and Industry and Chairman of the Public Authority of Manpower Abdullah Al-Salman issued a decision banning sexual harassment and discrimination in the workplace in the private sector. The decision warned employers against discriminating based on gender, age, pregnancy and social



Abdullah Al-Salman

status. The decision also banned sexual harassment at work in all its forms, including on social media, without affecting the right to recourse to items 198 and 199 of the penal code. The decision said PAM will refer cases that fall under the two above-mentioned categories to concerned authorities.

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Kuwait Democratic Forum said yesterday it has launched a national reconciliation initiative aimed at resolving ongoing political crises in the country and to allow the National Assembly to resume normal work. Secretary general of the liberal political group Abdullah Al-Sanafi said yesterday the initiative was formulated after meetings with the prime minister, Assembly speaker, MPs, political activists and others.

Copies of the initiative have been delivered to the Assembly speaker, prime minister, MPs and various political activists. The initiative calls to cancel a decision by the Assembly to delay grillings of the prime minister and proceed with needed legislation. It also calls to pardon all political activists and remove all barriers on freedom of speech,

in addition to a number of other recommendations.

There has been no comment on the initiative. Reports have surfaced in recent days that political foes, who have been locked in ongoing disputes since the December election, have agreed to a national dialogue under the auspices of

SEE PAGE 3

HH the Amir. Opposition MPs have insisted that any such move must be preceded with a pardon of a dozen former MPs and political activists who have been living in exile for the past three years.

Meanwhile, the criminal court yesterday sentenced MP Marzouq Al-Khalifa and former MP Sultan Al-Shemmari to two years in prison for taking part in outlawed tribal primary elections to select a candidate to represent their tribe in

December's general polls. The court asked the two to pay KD 5,000 each in bail to suspend the implementation of the jail term until the courts of appeals and cassation look into the verdict.

Also yesterday, the court of cassation, whose rulings are final, upheld a seven-year jail term against two former senior health ministry officials for accepting bribes for awarding contracts. Since the verdict is final, the two former officials, health ministry undersecretary Khaled Al-Sahlawi and health ministry assistant undersecretary Mahmoud Abdulhadi, must go to jail.

But MP Muhannad Al-Sayer said yesterday that the two had reportedly fled the country, and sent a series of questions to the justice and interior ministers. He asked the ministers if the report of their escape was true and if the ministry had lifted a travel ban on them.

News in brief

67 killed in Yemen clashes

DUBAI: Sixty-seven Yemeni rebels and pro-government troops have been killed as fighting intensifies for the key city of Marib, military and medical sources said yesterday. A volley of air strikes from the Saudi-led coalition targeted the Iran-backed Houthi rebels, who have stepped up their assault on the government's last northern stronghold. — AFP

Instagram pauses kids' version

NEW YORK: Facebook said yesterday that it is suspending development of a version of its Instagram photo-sharing app for children aged under 13, after widespread criticism of the plan. Instagram chief Adam Mosseri complained that the project, which would have created a parentally-supervised version of the app for youngsters, had been widely misunderstood. — AFP (See Page 8)

2 Iran Guards killed in fire

TEHRAN: Two members of Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards have died of their injuries after a fire at a research facility west of Tehran, the Corps said on its website yesterday. Its Sepahnews website said two of three casualties in Sunday's blaze died in hospital "due to the seriousness of their injuries", naming them as "martyrs" Seyed Morteza Karimi and Hossein Abedi. — AFP

Macron hit with egg

LYON: A man pelted French President Emmanuel Macron with an egg while he was visiting a restaurant and hotel trade fair in the southeastern city of Lyon yesterday. The egg hit his shoulder but bounced off without breaking. The assailant was quickly subdued and removed from the room, with Macron saying he would try to speak with him later. — AFP

Signal hit by brief outage

SAN FRANCISCO: Encrypted instant messaging app Signal was hit by a brief outage early yesterday that interrupted services on the platform at the same time as localized interruptions on other social media services. Signal blamed hosting issues for the disruption, which Internet outage monitor DownDetector said began at 11:05 pm Eastern Standard Time (0305 GMT), citing user reports. — AFP

Germany in limbo after narrow SPD win

BERLIN: Germany is headed for weeks, if not months, of protracted coalition haggling as Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservatives insisted yesterday on trying to form a government even after losing to the Social Democrats in a tight race. Finance Minister Olaf Scholz, who led the Social Democrats' (SPD) campaign, said Europe's biggest power would not be thrown off by the power struggle, stressing that Germany would remain "stable" even as parties

UK fuel pumps run dry amid panic buying

LONDON: Desperate motorists queued up at fuel pumps across Britain yesterday, draining tanks, fraying tempers and prompting calls for the government to use emergency powers to give priority access to healthcare and other essential workers. The government maintains a lack of tanker drivers to deliver fuel and unprecedented demand is behind the crisis, not a shortage of fuel, and has made a U-turn to ease post-Brexit immigration rules to try to entice foreign

truckers back.

But long queues were again seen outside filling stations, even overnight, frustrating drivers and stoking concern about the effects on the wider economy. "People are desperate. If I don't get petrol now, I can't get work anymore today," one driver, David Hart, told AFP as he queued at an Esso garage in London after a fruitless search at the weekend.

Britain's biggest public sector union, Unison, said key workers, including doctors, nurses, teaching and police staff should be given priority access rather than having to wait in queues. "The government could solve this problem now by using emergency powers to designate fuel stations for the sole use of key

scramble for coalition partners.

But the country pivotal in shaping Europe's responses on issues from the coronavirus pandemic to relations with Russia and China, risks being put out of play on the international scene for some time, just as the upcoming COP26 climate summit will be demanding action from the world's biggest powers. Europe's largest economy will also hold the presidency of the G7 club of rich nations next year, and will need a government capable of setting the international agenda.

Preliminary official results showed that the center-left Social Democrats - junior partners in Merkel's coalition - narrowly won the vote at 25.7 percent, while her center-right CDU-CSU bloc sunk to a historic low of 24.1 percent. The Green party placed third at 14.8 percent, its best result yet but still short of expectations.

Continued on Page 2



BERLIN: Vice-Chancellor and SPD candidate for chancellor Olaf Scholz arrives at the party's headquarters yesterday. — AFP



TONBRIDGE, United Kingdom: A sign informs motorists that there is no fuel at a petrol station in southeast England yesterday. — AFP

India exam cheats caught with Bluetooth flip-flops

NEW DELHI: Ten people have been arrested in India for planning to cheat in fiercely competitive teaching exams using Bluetooth devices concealed in their flip-flops, police said. Cribbing has long been a problem in India and, for Sunday's government exams involving 1.6 million students in Rajasthan state, police had permission to snap mobile Internet access while the tests lasted.

But one group planned to get around this with devices hidden in the soles of their flip-flops that

could receive ordinary calls which would be transmitted wirelessly to tiny receivers hidden in their ears. The plan was for accomplices outside to call the hidden contraptions and dictate the correct answers to the exams, said Priti Chandra, a police official in the western city of Bikaner.

But the group of would-be teachers were arrested acting suspiciously outside the examination hall on the evening before the exams and the devices in their footwear were discovered. "We were aware of the possibility of cheating but we thought it would be a question paper leak or someone would use the internet, which is why it was restricted in many cities," Chandra told AFP. "But this was a totally new modus operandi. (They) are getting so tech savvy."

Investigations revealed that at least 25 students had bought these flip-flops from a gang for

Continued on Page 2



AJMER: A man shows a flip-flop with a concealed Bluetooth device on Sunday. — AFP

Kuwait Amir, Crown Prince receive KNG deputy chief



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday at Seif Palace Deputy Chief of Kuwait National Guard (KNG) Lieutenant General (retired) Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah also received Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad at Seif Palace. — KUNA photos

GCC speakers approve Mideast green initiative

KUWAIT: Speakers of parliaments and Shura councils in the Gulf Cooperation Council approved during a virtual meeting yesterday, the Middle East Green Initiative to confront climate change, to be the common Gulf dogma for 2022. Kuwait's National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem underlined the importance of the initiative which was linked to Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman's green initiative for Saudi Arabia and the Middle East. "There will be a harmony between our proposal and what is happening in the region with regard to this file," he said. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwait's National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem attends a virtual meeting for speakers of parliaments and Shura councils in the Gulf Cooperation Council yesterday. — KUNA

Kuwait FM meets UK Middle East Affairs Minister

LONDON: Kuwait's Foreign Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammed Al-Sabah met yesterday with Minister of State for Middle East Affairs at the British Foreign Office James Cleverly, during his official visit to the United Kingdom. The foreign minister expressed his aspiration to enhance the joint work between the two friendly countries in all fields, praising during the meeting the outcome of the Kuwaiti-British Joint Steering Committee, which was held in London last Wednesday. Meanwhile, Minister Cleverly praised the meeting with Kuwait's foreign minister and stressed the deep-rooted Kuwaiti-British ties, adding that his country looks forward to more



Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammed Al-Sabah.

cooperation between the two countries.

In the meantime, Sheikh Dr Ahmad affirmed the importance of coordination between Kuwait's Embassy in Britain and its technical offices to achieve Kuwait's greater good. During his meeting with members of Kuwait's embassy and its offices' managers in London, the Foreign Minister stressed the relations between Kuwait and the UK, which is considered "a main destination for the Kuwaiti people." He noted that he had received directions from His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to ease and facilitate all arrangements for Kuwaiti citizens. Earlier, the Kuwaiti Foreign Minister held a meeting as well with his British counterpart Elizabeth Truss during his official one-day visit to the UK. — KUNA

Burgan Bank hosts interns from Kuwait's Scientific Center

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank hosted a group of interns from The Scientific Center of Kuwait (TSCK) at its headquarters, with the aim to further develop their knowledge and understanding of the banking and financial sector. This initiative falls under Burgan's efforts towards spreading financial awareness among local youth and is part of the ongoing strategic partnership program with TSCK.

The 13 TSCK interns were given a guided tour of Burgan's headquarters by a team from the bank. During the tour, the interns were introduced to the bank's various departments, functions and services. The young interns also had the opportunity to learn about the bank's approach to delivering quality customer service, as well as the importance of protecting customers rights and spreading knowledge on the protection of personal and financial data, particularly in relation to using digital banking services.

This initiative is part of Burgan's efforts to support the financial awareness campaign Diraya, launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) and the Kuwait Banking Association (KBA) to shed light on customer rights and spread banking awareness. The campaign aims at educating the public more about various key financial and banking matters, including loans, financing, bank cards, customer rights, as well as the rights of people with disabilities in the banking sector. It also seeks to disseminate information and advice on cybersecurity and banking safety, as well as the complaints filing procedures.

Hessa Al-Najadah, Public Relations Manager at Burgan Bank, commented about this event saying: "Burgan Bank continues to support Diraya, as part of its social responsibility program. By organizing this visit for the students participating in TSCK's summer internship program, we confirm the special attention we pay towards investing in young Kuwaiti talents and the strategic interest of the bank in increasing financial awareness among its customers and the public in general. This is particularly important with the increasing



use of the digital banking channels and the fast development of digitization with the acceleration of the bank's digital transformation. Digitization demands that we deliver community-wide awareness campaigns, targeting the youth in particular as they are the segment currently living at the apex of digital developments. Therefore, we focus on helping young people maximize the value they get from all banking services available to them, without compromising their security or financial rights."

"We are also very happy with our ongoing partnership with TSCK, which has allowed us to share our expertise and banking experience with young interns. This experience has helped the interns learn about the inner workings of a financial institution in a dynamic and rapidly evolving sector that can offer them many promising future career prospects," added Najadah.

Khaled Al-Ramly, Marketing and Communications Department Manager at TSCK, also commented regarding the interns' visit to Burgan's headquarters saying: "Since the launch of the "Be a Science Communicator" program, both TSCK and Burgan Bank focused on leveraging their respective fields of leadership and expertise to design and deliver

training courses in various fields, with the aim of providing interns with a comprehensive view of the latest developments across different sectors."

"We are determined to play our part in developing the skills of Kuwaiti youth, as Kuwait's sustainable development and the establishment of a knowledge-based economy depends on the younger generation. We are fully prepared to provide opportunities to prepare these future leaders of change and help them overcome any potential obstacles in their way to build a better future for our beloved country," concluded Ramly.

Burgan Bank's partnership with TSCK underpins the bank's commitment to its holistic and inclusive sustainability strategy that reflects its dedication to supporting all the major matters affecting the community's welfare. It also stresses Burgan's keenness to continue developing its various social responsibility programs by sustaining impactful collaborations with organizations acting for the same goal of promoting continuous learning opportunities as well as awareness, knowledge and capacity building among the younger generations in particular to prepare the future leaders of change and the driving force of prosperity and sustainable development.

An event worthy of the UAE and its people

By Mohammad Bassam Al-Husseini

If there is a city that deserves the title of the "metropolis of the world" from the east to the west today, it would undisputedly be Dubai, the city that shimmers with its diverse architecture, facilities and culture; the city which has turned into a model city for the standards of success; the city that everyone falls in love with.

Dubai is a few days away from the launch of Expo 2020, to make up for what it missed in the difficult "corona year", and it is most capable of such an event. For which city can amaze and dazzle hearts and minds and draw the world's attention to it, like Dubai?!

It is basically a city that resembles the prestigious event that it will host over a period of six months, during which it will be the headquarters of competing nations scientifically, culturally, civilizational, historically and humanly in general.

As much as Dubai exalts business, tourism and culture, it has never neglected science, but culminated in its scientific endeavors by head-

ing towards Mars on the basis of "the possible can sweep away the impossible".

The Dubai renaissance in general, led by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid and a group of competent officials carefully selected from their fields of specialty, is part of a complete success story drawn by the UAE in all its aspects, culminating in dedicating the concept of tolerance and interfaith dialogue as a new banner that the state raises. This enhances its distinguished position among all countries, to confirm once again that it is an ideal choice in word and deed to host a huge event of the size, importance and plurality of the Expo.

Expo Dubai, in every sense of the word, is a date for our tired world emerging from one of the worst pandemics in its history to turn the page to one whose title is joy, hope, gathering and looking forward to a prosperous and bright future. Titles like these truly resemble the UAE, its people, leadership and ambitions, and the city of Dubai whose unending surprises the whole world awaits!

India exam cheats...

Continued from Page 1

600,000 rupees (\$8,100) per pair. The information was shared with several other districts in time for the exams and many centres asked the students to remove their footwear outside the examination hall. "In one case we caught a student after the

exam and had to take him to a doctor to identify and remove the Bluetooth device from his ear," Chandra said.

Cheating is rife in India's highly competitive government, university and even school examinations and authorities have struggled with ever-more sophisticated methods to help people pass. These include professionals who earn a living impersonating others and taking exams in their place, to gangs stealing or illegally procuring exam papers and then selling them. — AFP

Germany in limbo after...

Continued from Page 1

Laschet, 60, took responsibility for his side's poor showing and vowed "renewal in all areas". But he insisted that "no party" - not even the SPD - could claim a mandate to govern from Sunday's outcome, as said he was ready to head a coalition. Scholz, 63, rejected Laschet's bid, saying voters had made it clear that the conservatives "should go into the opposition".

The finance minister also sought to play down the impact of drawn-out negotiations for a governing majority. "You should know that Germany always has coalitions, and it was

always stable," he said. From Paris, French minister for European affairs Clement Beaune stressed that France "has an interest to have a strong German government in place", urging "swift" action from German parties. The Kremlin said it hoped for "continuity" in Moscow's ties with Berlin.

While Germany will keep plodding along with a caretaker government still led by Merkel, analysts warned of a paralyzed Berlin on the global stage. "Although it keeps managing all dossiers, it loses the legitimacy to shape international initiatives or domestic legal acts," said Christian Moelling of the German Council on Foreign Relations. "Until political leadership again becomes available, bureaucracy will get relatively stronger as it aims to conserve the status quo. — AFP

UK fuel pumps run dry amid...

Continued from Page 1

workers," said general secretary Christina McAnea.

Medical bodies have already said some health-care staff have struggled to get to work, while schools have warned that online teaching could resume if teachers are unable to reach their classrooms. At petrol stations across London, southeast England and beyond, motorists hoping to fill up their tanks were met with taped off pumps, and signs stating "Sorry, no fuel". The Petrol Retailers Association said almost half of the UK's 8,000 fuel pumps had run out of petrol on Sunday, blaming "panic-buying, pure and simple" for the issue.

Critics blame government inaction on tackling historic shortages of lorry drivers, including after Britain's departure from the European Union in January, and the pandemic, which saw many foreign truckers leave the country. As well as fuel deliveries, the shortage has led to empty supermarket shelves and raised fears about deliveries of food and toys for Christmas.

Germany's weekend election winner, Finance Minister Olaf Scholz, linked the problems directly to Brexit and said low wages in the sector could make the job less appealing. "We worked hard to convince the British not to leave the Union," Scholz said. The situation has evoked the dark days of the 1970s, when energy supply problems led to a three-day working week and fuel rationing in Britain. — AFP

Local

Kuwait Democratic Forum hopes for efforts to end political stalemate

Group meets heads of executive, legislative branches to push for reconciliation



KUWAIT: Members of the Kuwait Democratic Forum meet with National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem.



Members of the Kuwait Democratic Forum meet with His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah.

KUWAIT: Members of the liberal Kuwait Democratic Forum met with heads of the government and parliament yesterday to present an initiative that they hope would resolve a political stalemate that has gripped the country's political scene for years.

The initiative includes several items that the group says the government and parliament need to address in order to reach a successful resolution. The initiative calls for the government to withdraw its request for parliament to postpone future interpellations to the head of government, while ministers should comply with answering parliamentary questions to enable members of parliament to exercise their supervisory role within a constitutional framework. Moreover, it calls on the government to bring forward a suite of agreed upon legislative proposals to be approved by parliament which support social justice within its national and democratic context.

Meanwhile, the initiative calls upon the legislative authority to return to operating parliamentary sessions, ensuring positive government participation and parliament's supervision, in addition to cooperation with the government to adopt important and necessary legislation. In addition, the initiative calls for consensus between both branches to put forward a legislative agenda that tackles main issues with a defined timeline.

Also, the initiative outlines a series of issues that require cooperation between both branches, such as amnesty for all political activists and opinion leaders, abolition of all freedom repressing laws and legislation, amending Kuwait's one-man-one-vote electoral law, ensuring political and parliamentary equity, and tackling the economic situation without compromising the middle and lower class's income and wealth.

"Furthermore, there are other issues such as education, health, employment, housing, amending the population structure and issues related to youth such as culture and sports, that require expansive attention," KFD said in a statement yesterday. "This initiative, we hope will create an environment of cooperation to achieve with the help of society's backing whether from political organizations, public figures or civil society."

Crippling stalemate

"Since the last election held on December 5, 2020 and what preceded and followed it, the Kuwaiti Democratic Forum observed the recent political developments in the public sphere, and what it ensued of intentional and unintentional crippling of parliamentary performance built on oversight and legislation, in addition to the executive branch's ability to apply its programs and plans, what called for the national movement to return to political life in its constitutional framework," the KFD statement reads.

"The KFD's moves come from the feeling of the importance of getting in between warring parties to find a unique initiative which all stakeholders can back, starting from holding a series of talks with public figures and political organizations, in addition to members of parliament and ministers, and most importantly both the heads of the legislative and executive branches," KFD said. "These talks had a positive response from their respective parties that stress the importance of providing a positive political climate to work for the public good."

According to KFD, the initiative, entitled "A Democratic and Safe Homeland," emphasizes the paramount importance of operating within the constitution that organizes the relationship between the National Assembly and the Government to achieve the society's hopes of progress and prosperity and fix issues that are stalled for years.

"To comply with our national and democratic role as a political organization, and away from any arrangements that could be viewed as lopsided, a Democratic Forum delegation met on Monday with both Marzouq Al-Ghanem, Speaker of Kuwait's National Assembly, and His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, the Prime Minister, to deliver a copy of this initiative that holds the results of our talks, hoping that each party shoulders their national and political responsibility to ensure the application of this initiative for parliamentary and government life gets back to normality," the statement notes.

Kuwait, UN discuss investment in climate change

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment Khalifa Hamada discussed yesterday with the 26th session representative of the UN Conference on Climate Change Janet Rogan investment opportunities in climate change, clean and environmentally friendly industries and technology. In a statement, the Ministry of State for

Economic Affairs said that the meeting was also attended by British Ambassador to Kuwait Belinda Lewis. During the meeting, they touched light on the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP26) conference, which will take place in Glasgow in November 2021, the statement added.

In other news, Kuwaiti Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Majdi Al-Dhafeeri received UK Ambassador Lewis yesterday, as they discussed the outcome of the 17th session of the Kuwaiti-British Joint Steering Committee meetings held recently in London, in addition to the latest regional and international developments. Ambassador Ayham Abdullatif Al-Omar, Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for the Deputy Minister's Office, attended the meeting. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment Khalifa Hamada meets the 26th session representative of the UN Conference on Climate Change Janet Rogan. —KUNA



Terminal 2 of Kuwait International Airport.

Limited tender to operate Terminal 2

KUWAIT: An informed source at the Directorate General of Civil Aviation spoke about taking steps towards operating Terminal 2 (T2) of Kuwait International Airport by an international operator, through preparing a limited tender. DGCA prepared the required specifications in the tender book, which include previous experience by the operator, most important of which is having operated similar airports, which made the tender be limited to around 10 operators, said the source in comments published by Al-Rai Arabic newspaper yesterday.

The source said among the most notable conditions is that the winning operator be available two years before operating the airport to train a large number of aviation employees on operating airports with the most modern means. He said the operator will be asked to review all service presenters and contracts at the airport - ground services, passenger terminals and aviation operators - and have a plan so that all terminals operate as one system and one airport with connected facilities.

For instance, a passenger can arrive at the Jazeera Airways terminal and continue their travel to the Kuwait Airways terminal by train or bus.

The source said what was applied in selecting Incheon as an operator of Terminal 4 (T4) - according to the lowest bid for the required specifications - will be applied in the new tender, but "this time our experiences in civil aviation are now different as well as our conditions, as the operation of T4 and the obstacles it faced are now overcome and gave us a different vision".

With regards to whether Incheon could also be handed with the duty of operating the new terminal, the source said the operator of T4 expressed the desire to be part of the new tender, but was informed they will be treated the same as other companies without discrimination and can enter the bidding if they meet the conditions.

The source said those who were trained in T4 will be sought to help in operating the new airport, as 125 employees were trained each year as part of the Incheon contract. There are Kuwaitis working in the international operator who have reached the level of being candidates for managerial positions in operational specialties, and not administration. There are now around 70 Kuwaiti employees - an increase of 21 workers - as the contract with Incheon stipulates having 10 percent Kuwaiti employees, which is 49 out of 490.

ment projects in Egypt, the premiership said in a statement. He noted that KFAED financed some \$3.6 billion-worth of 54 projects in the health, transportation, agriculture, electricity, oil and water sectors. Madbouli said he was looking forward to "deepening partnership" with KFAED to finance "new development projects" including in Sinai peninsula, which would help improve the living conditions in the region.

Ghanem meanwhile said he was happy to be in Egypt to participate in the launch of development projects, and added that KFAED was keen on contributing to development in Egypt. Ghanem is set to attend inauguration of Bahr Al-Baqar water treatment station. The station, in Port Said Governorate, will be inaugurated by President Abdelafatah Al-Sisi. The station will treat 5.6 million cubic feet of water per day and the water will be used to irrigate farm lands in northern Sinai. —KUNA

Kuwait Fund 'major partner' for Egypt

CAIRO: Egyptian Prime Minister Mustafa Madbouli commended yesterday the "deep-rooted" relations with State of Kuwait, and said his government sought to further develop cooperation with the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development which he considered "one of Egypt's major partners in development."

Madbouli, in remarks while meeting KFAED Director General Marwan Al-Ghanem and his delegation, thanked the Kuwaiti fund for supporting develop-

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Please send your CV to: hrcscc@gmail.com

My beloved father

By Prof Suzanne A Al-Bustan

Professor Ahmad Al-Bustan (1938-2020), may Allah bless his soul as he rests in peace, was born in 1938 and sadly died on Sept 24, 2020, leaving behind his devoted wife, six children and 17 grandchildren who were all blessed by his unconditional love and support.

Prof Ahmad, a humble and proud man, strongly believed in education and was always upholding the saying "pursue education even if as far as in China", affirming that education is the best weapon that anyone can possess. His dedication is also the reason and motivation behind all of his children to have successfully completed their higher education.

Our father (may Allah Almighty have mercy on him and forgive him) not only encouraged his children and grandchildren to have a university and higher degree (PhD), but also encouraged hundreds of young people to complete their education, most of whom succeeded and to this day testify to his guidance and mentorship. He would constantly remind us that we should take responsibility and serve our community, quoting "Ask not what your country can do for you - ask what you can do for your country".

He was a kind, giving and generous man who respected people regardless of their background and status, and was always ready to lend a helping hand. He would always quote "Treat people equally with respect and how you would want others to treat you". Having raised us with that, we were all blessed that he had earned a lot of people's love and respect.

He was very optimistic always, quoting "think pink", affirming the importance of thinking positive and not allowing obstacles to defeat one's goals and ambitions. Even during his struggle with different diseases and lastly with the cancer that claimed his life, he would smile and tell happy stories. He continued to give advice and teach morals and to this day, his voice can still be heard in our minds, guiding us into making informed decisions. After giving his opinion and advice to us, he would end by quoting "what parents can't teach you, time will", allowing us to be independent and responsible. He would never force us into anything, quoting "You can drag a horse to the water but you can never make him drink it". Most of the time we would go by his advice and thankfully prevail.

Though he has departed our world (may he rest in the Heavens above) his loving, kind, and generous spirit will live on through us and through his grandchildren who, we pray, continue on with his legacy while keeping his spirit alive in our hearts and minds. He left us with great memories, wisdom, and lessons which we will always cherish as they made us who we are today.

A year has passed since his heartbreaking departure, a day that left us fatherless, a day that broke our back. BUT his zest for life, optimism, inspiration, and wisdom has given us the strength to move on and live by his valuable lessons. Our strong faith in Allah Almighty and belief in that he is in a better place eases our pain and heals us day by day.

Our memories of him, the quotations he recited and the stories he would tell brings a smile to our faces. I pray that he is as much proud of us as we are proud to have had a wonderful father whom we miss enormously. We were truly blessed with a great man in our lives, and in our hearts he will always be.



Prof Ahmad Al-Bustan

Kuwait concerned over fate of missing people in Syria

GENEVA: The State of Kuwait yesterday expressed grave concern over the fate of people missing in the conflict in Syria, including those who were kidnapped. Parties to the conflict are responsible for determining fate of people who were missing due to hostile operations and to establish channels of communication with their families during the search missions, Jamal Al-Ghunaim, Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UN and International Organizations in Geneva, said.

Ghunaim, addressing UN Human Rights Council's session, supported a call on all parties to the conflict to take measures to prevent people from being missing, immediately release hundreds of individuals as well as urgently disclose fate of missing, including children. Kuwait believes there is no military solution for the 10-year-old conflict in Syria, he asserted, and a peaceful solution should meet aspirations of the Syrian people in line with the 2012 Geneva Communique and UN Security Council resolution 2254.

Kuwait "strongly condemns human rights viola-

tions against the Syrian people and calls for ending this conflict and finding a just and comprehensive solution meeting aspirations of all the Syrian people," he said. "The State of Kuwait is worried about continuous blatant violations of international humanitarian law and the international law on human rights by all parties of the Syrian conflict," he added.

Ghunaim also condemned "random and deliberate" assaults against innocent civilians. He recalled UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres' call last year on all parties to conflicts around world to cease hostilities in order to provide humanitarian aid for people in need. He said military operations were posing a threat to lives of civilians and expressed worries about collapse of the health system in Syria due to declining number of hospitals and escape of health care workers.

Ghunaim urged all parties to allow aid to reach the internally displaced people (IDPs) "because millions of Syrians are suffering from shortage in basic needs in addition to their suffering from



RAQQA: A Syrian student walks to school past damaged buildings in the northern city of Raqqa, on September 23, 2021. —AFP

spread of COVID-19." The State of Kuwait, said Ghunaim, hosted, and participated in, international conferences for the Syrian people and pledged \$1.7 billion. He thanked neighboring countries for hosting Syrian refugees. —KUNA

NBK organizes seminar on COVID vaccine's importance

KUWAIT: As part of its social responsibility efforts to combat the coronavirus, the National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) organized a seminar for its employees to raise awareness about the importance of the COVID-19 vaccination.

The seminar was attended by a selection of Kuwaiti physicians including Dr Maytham Hussein, Consultant of Clinical Immunology, Dr Mohammad Al-Ghounaim, Pediatric Infectious Diseases Specialist and Medical Microbiologist, and member of the Vaccination Committee at the Ministry of Health, as well as Dr Hamad Al-Yaseen, Associate Professor of Genomic Medicine at Kuwait University.

In the seminar that witnessed a remarkable attendance from the bank's employees, the lecturers stressed that the fast pace of vaccination increases the number of people immunized against COVID-19 infection, which slows the spread of the disease, and contributes to herd immunity and returning safely to normalcy.

The lecturers emphasized that the WHO-approved vaccines are safe, having undergone rigorous testing in clinical trials to ensure that they meet internationally accepted safety and efficacy standards, as well as provide protection against new mutated versions of the virus.

Participants cautioned against inaccurate information about the COVID-19 and vaccines, stressing at the same time that misinformation can cause doubts and fear during any health crisis, thus leading to leaving people unprotected or more vulnerable to the virus. They always called for continuing to adhere with precautionary measures to protect the public, including wearing face masks, social distancing, and washing hands frequently. They also added that vaccines provided protection for the more vulnerable segments of society, such as the seniors, immunocompromised and chronic diseases patients.

Kuwait Heart Foundation marks World Heart Day

By Abdellatif Sharara

KUWAIT: Secretary General of Kuwait Heart Foundation Dr Rashid Abdelaziz Al-Owayesh said the coronavirus pandemic prevented people from marking World Heart Day last year, "but it gifted us the idea of communicating through social media to reach the largest possible number of people and make them aware of heart diseases and their risks". World Heart Day is marked on Sept 29 every year.

"We will participate in the celebration this year. The World Heart Federation was keen for



KUWAIT: A view of the seminar in progress.

On this occasion, Lulwa Mishari Al-Fozan, Head of Employee Relations at National Bank of Kuwait said: "Organizing a seminar for the bank's employees to raise awareness about the importance of COVID-19 vaccination is a continuation of the many initiatives and campaigns held by Group Human Resources to contribute effectively to supporting the national vaccination drive in Kuwait, which is moving towards achieving herd immunity soon."

Fozan noted that NBK's employees have shown a high sense of responsibility towards their colleagues, families and society, as reflected in their great interest in getting vaccinated over the past months. Fozan stressed that, since the beginning of the pandemic, NBK has been making unwavering efforts to ensure the safety of its employees through many initiatives and campaigns aimed at creating a safe work environment that also contributes to contain the spread of the virus.

As the largest private sector institution, NBK has a national responsibility to provide a role model to follow. In this context, the bank was one of the first private sector institutions to launch a program to motivate its employees to get vaccinated and actively contribute to supporting the country's national vaccination drive, she elaborated.

It is worth mentioning that over the past months, NBK intensified direct communication with its

employees providing them with reliable and credible information about the safety, efficacy and side effects of available vaccines, including information about approved vaccines and how to register for the vaccine, in cooperation with the concerned authorities in Kuwait.

In addition, through its social media platforms, the bank held several discussion sessions with physicians and leading public health figures to share scientific information and answer employees' inquiries about the efficacy of the vaccine, and how it contributes to returning to normalcy.

NBK recognizes the importance of improving the health and safety of its key stakeholders, including employees and customers, as an integral part of its sustainable development approach. To this end, it continuously updates its health and safety policy developed based on regional and international best practices in relation to health and safety matters.

The bank also raises the motto of "employees' health and safety first" in all measures and decisions that have been taken since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic. This is manifested in launching many programs and activities that focus on promoting a healthy lifestyle and raising awareness on the importance of conducting medical examinations for the bank's employees to avoid physical and psychological exhaustion during the pandemic.

Rapid antigen test kits for students: Report

KUWAIT: Health authorities in Kuwait are planning to ease entry of students and teachers who do not wish to receive COVID-19 vaccines to schools before the start of the school year on Oct 3 by providing PCR testing at six health centers. The health ministry also plans to import rapid antigen test kits and making them available in hospitals, laboratories and pharmacies in the private sector, Al-Qabas Arabic daily reported yesterday.

Health officials quoted in the report said the rapid antigen tests will be imported within two days and will be distributed as soon as the regular procedures are complete, adding that it is a simple test that gives results within five to 15 minutes only. About the charges of the test, official said it will not exceed KD 3 in pharmacies and laboratories in the private sector. Officials said the test is officially registered at the health ministry and is approved by WHO.

Kuwait Friendship Society honors donor

KUWAIT: Director General of Kuwait Humanitarian Friendship Society Khaled Mohammad bin Sabt said the Board of Directors is keen on continued contacts with donors, including individuals as well as public and private establishments. He said Chairman Ahmad Al-Sarraf and himself visited Aqeel Yousuf Behbehani, a supporter of the society, in order to recognize him for his generous donation, and presented him with a plaque. Behbehani thanked them for their gesture and wished them all success.



Heart Day logo containing a heart to be publicized to remind them that caring for the heart is very important. They should be aware on how to reduce the risks of heart disease, including lifestyle changes, eating healthy food, exercising and refraining from smoking," Owayesh said.

"Everybody knows that we in Kuwait, like all developed countries, suffer from heart diseases. The latest statistics for 2019 showed that 43.5 percent of deaths in Kuwait are due to heart problems, in addition to other diseases such as tumors (13 percent) and traffic accidents (6.5 percent). This calls upon us to care for the heart and make people aware of its diseases, as the more we spread awareness and correct information, the more people will be aware of how to maintain their health," he added.

Dr Owayesh said Kuwait Heart Foundation is a voluntary nonprofit organization that was founded in 1982 by Kuwaiti businessmen in cooperation with cardiologists to spread aware-

ness among citizens and residents. The foundation has carried out many activities and covered all societal sectors, including the elderly, youth, the ill and doctors. He added the foundation has had contacts with various communities in Kuwait and provided them with awareness about heart diseases, including a mobile unit in which tests are conducted.

Owayesh said 80,000 individuals have been tested from 1996 until now, adding the tests included those for blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar. They were given advice and instructions by specialized doctors, in addition to leaflets with valuable information.



Rashid Al-Owayesh



Sydney gets 'blueprint for freedom' as virus cases fall

Thailand to cut quarantine for vaccinated tourists

Page 7

Page 6



LOS LLANOS DE ARIDANE: The Cumbre Vieja volcano resumes its activity after a short period of inactivity in Los Llanos de Aridane on the Canary island of La Palma yesterday. — AFP

Canaries volcano spews ash

Residents confined to their homes over fears of toxic gases

LOS LLANOS DE ARIDANE: A volcano yesterday began again spewing out ash after a brief lull in the Canary Islands, where coastal residents are confined to their homes over fears of toxic gases when the lava hits the sea. La Cumbre Vieja, which straddles a southern ridge in La Palma in the Atlantic archipelago, erupted on September 19, spewing out rivers of lava which have slowly crept towards the sea. But yesterday morning, the lava and ash flow had stopped, and the week-long rumble of the eruption faded to silence, before resuming its activity several hours later, an AFP correspondent at the scene said.

Smoke had continued to emerge from the top during the lull. "In the last hours, the volcanic tremor has almost disappeared, as well as the explosive strombolian activity," tweeted Involcan volcanology institute, using the scientific term for a mix of explosions and lava flow. "Volcanic activity in La Palma has reduced significantly in the last few hours," Madrid's Institute of Geosciences tweeted. "We must be very vigilant about how it evolves because the scenario can change quickly."

Several hours later, the volcano started pumping out ash again.

Fits and starts

Speaking to AFP after the resumption, Involcan spokesman David Calvo said it was "just ash, for



Spain reopens airport shut by volcano

the time being". La Cumbre Vieja had been switching between "explosive episodes and lulls for quite a while," he added. Even so, its activity had "decreased with respect to previous days".

Overnight, the inhabitants of several coastal areas were ordered to stay at home to avoid harm from the release of toxic gases when the lava finally reaches the sea, a process which has been much slower than expected.

Experts say the entry of lava into the seawater will send clouds of toxic gas into the air, causing explosions and a fragmentation of the molten rock like gunshots. "When the lava, with a temperature of over 1,000 degrees Celsius (1,832 degrees Fahrenheit) meets the sea... a thermal shock is produced that generates plumes of water vapor charged with hydrochloric acid," Involcan said.

These plumes "also contain tiny particles of volcanic glass," it said. "Inhalation or contact with acid gases and liquids can irritate the skin, eyes and respiratory tract, and may cause breathing difficulties, especially in people with pre-existing respiratory diseases." But Involcan said the vapors were only dangerous to those in the immediate area, with the authorities setting up a two-kilometer exclusion zone to head off curious onlookers.

Spain reopens airport

Meanwhile, the airport on the Canary island of La Palma reopened on Sunday after a 24-hour closure because of ash emanating from the Cumbre Vieja volcano, operators said. A clean-up operation was carried out overnight, the airport management company AENA tweeted, adding that flights have resumed with the "prior agreement" of air traffic control authorities. The Cumbre Vieja volcano came to life a week ago and has intermittently spewed out lava and ash.

On Friday, a large cloud of thick, black ash forced several airlines to cancel flights. Then on Saturday AENA announced the full closure of the airport. New evacuations were also ordered as large explosions and new openings were reported at the volcano on Friday. So far, more than 6,200 people have been evacuated. According to the European Union's Copernicus Earth Observation Program, lava has so far destroyed 461 buildings - 41 more in the past 24 hours - and covered more than 212 hectares (523 acres) of land. — AFP

Policewoman's serial murder trial grips South Africa

JOHANNESBURG: The trial of a policewoman accused of murdering five relatives and a boyfriend to cash in on insurance claims has captivated South Africa, struck by her brass in the face of blood-curdling allegations. Eyebrows raised in defiance, Nomia Rosemary Ndlovu, 46, sat nonchalantly in the dock of a Johannesburg court yesterday, hair pinned into two lopsided buns.

A formerly respected cop, she has puzzled South Africans with her frivolous court behavior, pulling faces and throwing peace signs at cameras. Prosecutors have compiled a chilling litany of evidence against her. Between 2012 and 2017, they say, her cousin, sister, boyfriend, niece, nephew and another relative were found dead - bludgeoned, strangled or shot. Ndlovu is the main suspect behind their murders, accused of taking out life and funeral insurance in the victims' names and claiming the money after their death.

Her trial has kept South Africans glued to their television screens since it kicked off in mid-September. Ndlovu walked confidently into the courtroom yesterday in shiny black heels and a green dress, grey shawl wrapped around her shoulders. She denies any wrongdoing. "I am not the person who took out my (murdered) sister's insurance policies," she said in Tsonga through a translator, crunching up her nose as the prosecutor pushed on with the cross-examination.



JOHANNESBURG: Nomia Rosemary Ndlovu reacts at the South Gauteng high Court in Johannesburg yesterday. —AFP

'Caught red-handed'

Twitter has been abuzz with screenshots of Ndlovu's blasé expressions and thickly painted eyebrows twisted into odd shapes. Initially relishing the media attention, she turned aggressive last week and hurled potato chips at photographers, prompting police to leg-shackle her. She has teared up several times in court, particularly at the mention of her late boyfriend. The trial has been adjourned on two occasions after she complained of dizziness and chest pains. "It's not your typical South African raping and killing serial murderer," forensic psychologist Gerard Labuschagne told AFP via telephone. "It's a woman, she's a cop, and (almost) all her victims were family members."

Investigators allege Ndlovu made around 1.4 million rand (\$93,000) from her bloody deeds. She has been charged with several counts of murder, conspira-

cy and fraud. The affidavit contains hair-raising details of her alleged modus operandi. While hitmen are suspected to have carried out most of the dirty work, Ndlovu is said to have personally taken care of her sister Audrey: poisoning her tea before strangling her.

She was caught red-handed in 2018, when one of her hitmen tipped off the police after she hatched a plan to burn down the house of another sister, prosecutors said.

The fire would have torched the woman and her five children, including a five-month-old baby, knocked out by sleeping pills, their mouths stuffed with socks to avoid screaming. It proved too horrific even for a professional killer. Days earlier, a different hitman faltered at the sight of Ndlovu's elderly mother. He renounced the job, asked the frail lady for a cup of water, and left the house. —AFP

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International

Sydney gets 'blueprint for freedom' as virus cases fall

Australia grappling with winter spike

SYDNEY: Vaccinated Sydney residents will finally emerge from a lengthy COVID lockdown by mid-October, Australian officials said yesterday, outlining a three-stage "blueprint for freedom" as case numbers fell in the city. Stay-at-home orders are set to be lifted in Sydney and surrounding New South Wales when the double-dose vaccination rate hits 70 percent, with state premier Gladys Berejiklian saying "quite confidently" that was now expected to occur on October 11.

Shuttered pubs, restaurants and shops will be allowed to reopen to the vaccinated while friends and families living across Australia's biggest city will be able to reunite for the first time in more than three months. "It is just this week and next week that we have to hang in there for," Berejiklian said. "We are nearly, nearly there, and let's not give up at the last minute." Deputy Premier John Barilaro said the "blueprint for freedom" would allow travel across New South Wales under its second stage - once 80 percent of over-16s are fully vaccinated - which is likely by the end of October.

Restrictions on guest numbers at funerals and weddings would be lifted at the same time, while sporting fixtures would also be permitted to resume. However, unvaccinated adults will need to wait until at least December 1 to enjoy the same eased restrictions under the road map's third stage, when it is predicted that around 90 percent of the eligible population will be vaccinated, officials said. "I think today is a very disappointing

day for those who aren't vaccinated. They will have to wait five or six weeks after others (for freedoms)," Berejiklian said.

'Through the roof'

The announcement came as new daily cases dipped below 800 in New South Wales yesterday - down from peaks of around 1,500 earlier in September - and the number of adults with at least one vaccine dose reached 85 percent.

Berejiklian warned that hospitals still faced



Case numbers falls in the city

being overwhelmed by a surge in COVID-19 patients in the coming weeks. "We know that once we start reopening at 70 percent (fully vaccinated) that the case numbers will go through the roof," she said. "But what will protect us is the fact that so many people have received at least the first dose of the vaccine and those people will have that



SYDNEY: Mounted police patrol near the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) headquarters in Sydney amid a demonstration call by construction workers against COVID-19 restrictions. —AFP

extra layer of protection against ending up in hospital or worse."

Australia has been grappling with a winter spike in the highly contagious Delta coronavirus variant that forced its two biggest cities, Sydney and Melbourne, into months-long lockdowns. But a once-sluggish vaccine rollout has picked up pace

across the country, prompting leaders to outline cautious reopening plans including the mooted resumption of international travel by the end of this year. Authorities also announced yesterday that stay-at-home orders will be lifted in Canberra on October 15 with bars, beauty salons and gyms among the businesses set to reopen. —AFP

News in brief

Ex-PMs get new jail terms

ALGIERS: Two detained former prime ministers under Algeria's longtime ex-president Abdelaziz Bouteflika were handed additional prison sentences yesterday for corruption, local media reported. Ahmed Ouyahia and Abdelmalek Sellal were sentenced to six and five years respectively for money laundering, wasting public money, abuse of office and "awarding contracts in violation of public procurement regulations", according to the newspapers Ennahar, Echorouk and El Hayat. The charges related to Hamid Melzi, the former boss of a state firm that runs a luxury residence for government officials as well as a publicly owned hotel company. Melzi was sentenced to five years in prison, and also faces trial for industrial espionage and "harming the national economy". —AFP

Socialists win in Portugal

LISBON: The ruling Socialists won municipal elections in Portugal, but suffered a surprise defeat by a right-wing coalition in the capital Lisbon, according to official results yesterday. Prime Minister Antonio Costa's Socialist party had hoped to ride the success of a vaccine campaign that has seen the country clock some of the highest inoculation rates in the world. Last week, his government said almost all Covid restrictions would be lifted from October 1 after infections dropped in recent months. Costa's camp garnered 34.4 percent of Sunday's vote and won in at least 147 municipalities, out of a total of 308 up for grabs. His centre-right rivals led by former Porto mayor Rui Rio took 30.8 percent of the vote and 108 municipalities. The Socialists, who won 2013 and 2017 municipal elections, did not expect to fare as well as they did four years ago when they secured a record high number of votes. —AFP

Strong quake hits Crete

ATHENS: A strong earthquake struck the Greek island of Crete yesterday, killing a man who was working in a church that collapsed and injuring 11 others, officials said. The quake, measuring magnitude 5.8 according to Greece's seismological observatory, sent panicked residents rushing into the streets and damaged buildings on Greece's largest island. It struck at 9:17 am, 23 kilometers from the Crete capital of Heraklion. "So far, one man is dead and 11 people are in hospital suffering mostly from fractures, according to a spokesman from the National Centre for Emergency Care. Spiros Georgiou, spokesman for the civil protection agency, had earlier said nine people were slightly injured in the farming town of Arkalochori which was particularly badly hit. —AFP

Kidnapped students freed

KANO: Gunmen who kidnapped more than 100 students from a school in northwest Nigeria more than two months ago released 10 more of the hostages after ransom payment, the head of a parents association said Sunday. Assaults stormed Bethel Baptist High School on July 5 on the outskirts of Kaduna city, abducting 121 students who were sleeping in their dorms. The Bethel abduction was one of a string of kidnappings by armed gangs known locally as bandits who terrorize northwest and central Nigeria, looting, stealing cattle and kidnapping. The gangs have recently been targeting schools and colleges, seizing students to extract ransoms out of parents and authorities. —AFP

After brief arrest, Catalan separatist leader in Brussels

MADRID: Exiled former Catalan leader Carles Puigdemont was back in Belgium yesterday after his arrest in Italy but will return at the weekend for a hearing over a Spanish extradition request, his lawyer said. "He is in Brussels and will return to Sardinia on Sunday," Gonzalo Boye said. A member of the European Parliament, Puigdemont was arrested in Sardinia on Thursday evening and spent the night in prison before a brief court hearing a day later.

The 58-year-old is wanted by Madrid on charges of sedition for leading a failed Catalan bid to declare independence from Spain in October 2017, fleeing to Belgium to avoid prosecution. Italian judges must now decide whether he should be extradited, with the court in the northern town of Sassari saying he was free to leave but must return for the hearing on October 4. Following his release late on Friday,

Puigdemont said he would return to Brussels, where he has been based since late 2017. His lawyer in Sardinia has insisted there was no basis for his arrest, nor for his extradition.

Immunity lifted in March

Despite a ban by Madrid, Catalonia's separatist regional government tried to stage an independence referendum in 2017, which was marred by police violence. Several weeks later, he issued a short-lived declaration of independence, triggering a huge political crisis in Spain, and prompting Puigdemont and several others to flee abroad.

Those who stayed behind were arrested and put on trial, with nine of them jailed for between nine and 13 years. Although they were pardoned earlier this year, Madrid still wants Puigdemont and the others to face justice over the secession bid.



ALGERO: Exiled former Catalan president Carles Puigdemont arrives for a convention in Alghero, on the island of Sardinia. —AFP

This is the third time Puigdemont has been arrested since he fled Spain, the first was when he arrived in Brussels, and the second was in Germany in March 2018, when it took the courts nearly four months to return him to full freedom.

Although he enjoyed immunity for a time after being elected a MEP in 2019, it was lifted by the European

Parliament in March in a decision upheld in July by the EU's General Court. The decision also affects former Catalan regional ministers Toni Comin and Clara Ponsati, both of whom are wanted by Spain. However, they are appealing against the European Parliament's decision and a final ruling by the EU court has yet to be made. —AFP

Mali learner drivers undeterred by noisy and chaotic roads

BAMAKO: Oumou Toure is behind the wheel in Mali's bustling capital Bamako, her eyes flitting left and right as motorbikes swarm up from behind like hornets to overtake her. "The one thing which scares me is that no-one around here respects the highway code," she says, her face concentrated. Toure, who is in her twenties, has passed the "theory" - a test of road safety knowledge.

After a handful of driving lessons, she can apply to do the "practical," in which the driver's skills are tested by an examiner and is the final step to getting a licence. Roads in the Sahel state are notoriously noisy and chaotic: They are often unsealed, plagued by daredevil drivers and prone to wandering cows and sheep. Hundreds of people perish in accidents every year. The problem is particularly acute in Bamako, a sprawling city of about 3.5 million people, where only the main arteries are tarmacked and road signs are negligible.

Drivers have to watch out for the ubiquitous motorbikes, which zigzag in and out of traffic, as well as clapped-out minibuses spewing noxious black smoke and careering at breakneck speed around the potholes. Abdramane Dama, who heads a driving school in Bamako, says that driving-theory instruction is "just like in Europe". "The learning to drive part is



BAMAKO: Cars belonging to the Kanaga driving school are pictured in the Badalabougou neighborhood of Bamako. —AFP

another matter," he adds. Bogus instructors are legion, and learner drivers often only have to parallel-park successfully in order to pass the "practical."

Over 600 people died on Mali's roads last year, according to the country's road-safety agency, with thousands of more injured in accidents. The nation of 19 million people had a road-fatality rate of 23 deaths per 100,000 in 2019, according to the World Bank. The world average is 16 per 100,000 - while the lowest is in Switzerland, with just two. The bloodbath attracts little serious attention in a poor country that has been battling a jihadist insurgency

since 2012 that has killed thousands.

Once a rarity, driving schools are now booming in Mali, catering for the millions of young people - the minimum age for driving is 18 - who crave a licence, often to find work. Djigui Camara, the head of the national driving schools' association, told AFP that there are now about 300 schools nationwide compared to about a dozen in 2000. But the sector is poorly regulated and most of the schools are illegal, often hiring instructors without qualifications, he says. "Everyone on the road should go through a certified driving school," Camara says. —AFP

3 dead, dozens injured as US train derails

WASHINGTON: Amtrak on Sunday expressed condolences to the families of those killed when a train derailed the day before in northern Montana, saying it was "fully cooperating" with an investigation into the deadly incident. "We have no words that can adequately express our sorrow for those who lost a loved one or who were hurt in this horrible event," the US rail operator's CEO, Bill Flynn, said in a statement.

Around 141 passengers and 16 crew members were traveling from Chicago towards the Pacific coast on Saturday afternoon when eight of the 10 cars came off the tracks at around 4:00 pm, killing

three people and injuring dozens more. "We are fully cooperating with the investigation, working closely with National Transportation Safety Board, the Federal Railroad Administration, local law enforcement and response agencies," Flynn said.

"We share the sense of urgency to understand why the accident happened; however, until the investigation is complete, we will not comment further on the accident itself." Rescuers rushed to evacuate everyone on board after the derailment, with Amtrak later saying local authorities had confirmed "that three people have lost their lives as a result of this accident," adding there were also "reported injuries."

Footage posted on social media showed people waiting by the tracks, luggage strewn next to them, with train carriages seen listing off the rails and at least one toppled onto its side. Flynn said the company was working to support passengers and crew and had set up an incident response team to help those who had been on board the train. It was not

immediately clear what caused the derailment. The National Transportation and Safety Board said it was launching a "go-team" to investigate the derailment.

'Over 50 people' injured

Montana's Disaster and Emergency Services coordinator Amanda Frickel on Saturday told The New York Times that "well over 50 people had been injured." She said teams of rescuers were at the scene and multiple hospitals - as well as medical helicopters - were on standby. Authorities were not releasing further details for the time being, she said, adding: "Everybody who is alive has been extricated from the wreck."

The Empire Builder train derailed in a remote area near Joplin, Montana, a town of around 200 people near the border with Canada. Montana Senator Jon Tester said he was monitoring the derailment. "My thoughts are with all the passengers, crew, and first responders on the scene," he added. —AFP

International

UN summit to close without
Taleban, Myanmar speeches

100 leaders defy coronavirus fears to meet in person

UNITED NATIONS: The UN General Assembly in New York ended yesterday but without speeches by those in power in Afghanistan and Myanmar, one of many quirks at this year's diplomatic marathon that saw 100 leaders defy coronavirus fears to meet in person. The UN representative of Afghanistan's former regime was expected to defy the Taleban with an address after the group requested its new foreign minister be allowed to speak instead.

Taleban send
letter to UN's
Guterres

The Taleban wrote a letter to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres last Monday requesting that Amir Khan Muttaqi be allowed to "participate." The letter noted that Ghulam Isacqai, Afghanistan's UN envoy under Ashraf Ghani, who was ousted last month, "no longer represents" Afghanistan at the United Nations.

The plea was due to be considered by a committee that included the United States, Russia and China, but a UN official told AFP the meeting didn't take place. A diplomat said the Taleban sent their request "too late," paving the way for Isacqai, whom the UN still recognizes as Afghanistan's representative, to speak. If he does take the opportunity, he could demand a strengthening of sanctions against the Taleban, as he did during a Security Council meeting on September 9.

ICC prosecutor
targets Taleban,
IS-K in probe

THE HAGUE: The International Criminal Court's new chief prosecutor said yesterday he wants to focus his investigation in Afghanistan on the Taleban and Islamic State-Khorasan, and to "deprioritise" alleged war crimes by US forces. Karim Khan said he had asked judges to allow him to relaunch the probe-put on hold last year at the request of Kabul's then-government while it said it would investigate war crimes itself-following the Taleban takeover in August.

"Recent developments in Afghanistan and the change in the national authorities, represent a significant change of circumstances," Khan, who took over as prosecutor in June at the Hague-based court, said in a statement. "After reviewing matters carefully, I have reached the conclusion that, at this time, there is no longer the prospect of genuine and effective domestic investigations." Khan asked judges for "expedited" permission to resume the probe. The Afghanistan probe's inclusion of alleged US crimes had infuriated Washington.

The administration of former US president Donald



NEW YORK: Delegates wait the start of the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly at UN headquarters in New York. — AFP

The week of speeches was originally due to end with Afghanistan, Myanmar and Guinea, but the situation of the latter two countries also stirred up further intrigue going into the last day. A high-level UN diplomat told AFP that "an agreement" had been reached between the United States, Russia and China preventing Myanmar's UN ambassador-an outspoken supporter of the democracy movement who has refused junta orders to quit-from speaking.

'Low profile'

Kyaw Moe Tun, chosen by former leader Aung San Suu Kyi, is supported by the international community and has retained his seat at the United Nations following the February 1 military coup. In May, the junta

appointed a former general to replace him, but the United Nations has not yet approved the appointment. Kyaw Moe Tun was the victim of a recent alleged conspiracy foiled by US investigators that plotted to either force him to resign or kill him if he refused. He told AFP his plans for the General Assembly were "low profile." Diplomats are, however, expecting to hear from Guinea's representative to the UN, Aly Diane, even though he is an appointee of the former president who was deposed in a military coup earlier this month.

It is another curiosity at this year's high-level meet, which saw some 100 leaders descend on the UN headquarters after last year's event was mostly virtual. "How encouraging to see the General

Trump imposed sanctions on Khan's predecessor Fatou Bensouda over the issue. Khan said that he would now narrow his focus in Afghanistan due to the "limited resources" of the ICC as it investigates various situations around the world. "I have therefore decided to focus my office's investigations in Afghanistan on crimes allegedly committed by the Taleban and the Islamic State-Khorasan Province ("IS-K") and to deprioritise other aspects of this investigation," he said.

This was because of the "gravity, scale and continuing nature of alleged crimes by the Taleban and the Islamic State" and the need to "construct credible cases capable of being proved beyond reasonable doubt in the courtroom," Khan said. The ICC prosecutor specifically mentioned the deadly August 26 attack on Kabul airport claimed by IS-K in which 13 US service members and more than 100 Afghan civilians were killed.

"In relation to those aspects of the investigation that have not been prioritized, my office will remain alive to its evidence preservation responsibilities, to the extent they arise," he said. The ICC was set up in 2002 to investigate the world's worst crimes in cases where member states were either unable or unwilling to investigate them themselves. Former prosecutor Bensouda asked ICC judges to approve a formal investigation into Afghanistan in 2017. Appeals judges ruled in March 2020 that it could go ahead.— AFP

appointed a former general to replace him, but the United Nations has not yet approved the appointment. Kyaw Moe Tun was the victim of a recent alleged conspiracy foiled by US investigators that plotted to either force him to resign or kill him if he refused. He told AFP his plans for the General Assembly were "low profile." Diplomats are, however, expecting to hear from Guinea's representative to the UN, Aly Diane, even though he is an appointee of the former president who was deposed in a military coup earlier this month.

It is another curiosity at this year's high-level meet, which saw some 100 leaders descend on the UN headquarters after last year's event was mostly virtual. "How encouraging to see the General



BANGKOK: Anti-government protesters confront the police during a demonstration in Bangkok yesterday as activists call for the resignation of Thailand's Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha over the government's handling of the COVID-19 crisis. — AFP

Thailand to cut
quarantine for
tourists

BANGKOK: Thailand is to cut the quarantine for vaccinated travelers to seven days starting in October, officials said yesterday, as it seeks to revive its battered tourism industry. Pre-pandemic Thailand attracted nearly 40 million visitors a year, but COVID-related travel restrictions have hammered the sector, contributing to the economy's worst performance in more than 20 years. The kingdom is pushing to reopen despite still being in the grips of a deadly third wave of infections, driven by the Delta variant.

Authorities said that starting on Friday, the quarantine period for fully jabbed visitors will be seven days, halved from the current 14-day period - provided they have a vaccination certificate. Visitors without certification will have to quarantine for 10 days if they enter by plane and 14 days if they come over land. All will require at least two negative COVID tests. Government deputy spokeswoman Rachada Dhanadirek waved off concerns about unvaccinated travelers entering the kingdom. "I think these measures are effective enough to screen whether if they are infected," she told AFP.

The relaxation also applies to Thailand's so-called "sandbox" scheme in Phuket, its most popular beach island, which was launched in July as a first step towards restarting tourism. The scheme allowed vaccinated tourists to enter without having to undergo a strict hotel quarantine, and after 14 days spent on the island - as well as three negative COVID tests - to travel elsewhere in Thailand. From Friday, this 14-day restriction will also be cut to seven days. Authorities plan to reopen five other tourist destinations, including Bangkok, using the sandbox model on November 1, followed by 20 more in December. One cloud hanging over Thailand's plans is the travel advice of other countries discouraging would-be tourists from visiting. Britain and the US have issued travel advisories against Thailand due to its rising case numbers and low vaccination rates.—AFP

But a growing number of US allies have transited the route as Beijing intensifies its military threats towards Taiwan and solidifies its control over the disputed South China Sea. Canadian, French and Australian warships have all made voyages through the Taiwan Strait in recent years, sparking protests from China. Taiwan's defense minister Chiu Kuo-cheng confirmed to reporters that a foreign vessel had sailed through the waterway but did not state which country it was from.

Taiwan's 23 million people live under constant threat of invasion by authoritarian China, which has vowed to seize the island one day-by force if necessary. Beijing has stepped up military, diplomatic and economic pressure on Taiwan since the election of President Tsai Ing-wen in 2016, who views the island as "already independent". Last year, Chinese military jets made a record 380 incursions into Taiwan's defence zone, and the number of incursions for the first eight months of this year has already exceeded 400.—AFP



KABUL: A Taleban fighter stands guard as a Pakistan International Airlines plane takes off with passengers onboard at the airport in Kabul. — AFP

UK's warship makes
rare transit through
Taiwan Strait

TAIPEI: The Royal Navy said a British warship was sailing through the Taiwan Strait yesterday, a move that challenges Beijing's claim to the sensitive waterway and marks a rare voyage by a non-US military vessel. "After a busy period working with partners and allies in the East China Sea, we are now en route through the Taiwan Strait to visit Vietnam and the Vietnam People's Navy," read a tweet from the official account for HMS Richmond, a frigate deployed with Britain's aircraft carrier strike group.

Local media said it was the first time a British warship had transited through the narrow waterway separating Taiwan and mainland China. The British navy survey ship HMS Enterprise transited through the strait in 2019. The UK's defense ministry did not respond to a request for comment. US warships regularly conduct "freedom of navigation" exercises in the strait and trigger angry responses from Beijing, which claims Taiwan and surrounding waters-and almost all of the South China Sea.

The US and most other countries view those areas as international waters that should be open to all vessels. China's initial response to the British warship's passage was muted yesterday. "We hope the relevant countries can do more to build mutual trust between countries and uphold peace and security in the region," foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying told reporters. Until recently, Washington was the main global power willing to sail through the Taiwan Strait.

Assembly meet again in person," Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo said Friday. "Don't we all aspire to 'get back to normal?'" he asked. General Assembly President Abdulla Shahid agreed in an interview with AFP. "It is clear that diplomacy greatly benefits from the creativity, exchange of ideas, discussions and flexibility that comes with in person meetings," he said.

Submarine spat

Many leaders chose to send video messages instead, however. French President Emmanuel Macron initially said he would attend, before opting to send a video message that was to be played the day after US President Joe Biden spoke. But now, Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian will speak for France, whose presence all week was overshadowed by a spat with the United States over a mega submarine deal with Australia. The address will be delivered via a pre-recorded video message, despite Le Drian being at the UN for five days this week. "It is rare for one of the five permanent members of the Security Council to intervene on the last day. I've never seen it," said a European diplomat, on condition of anonymity. But despite the tensions and concern over growing lack of mutual trust among the international community, Shahid said this year's General Assembly led him "to the conclusion that we all share the same concerns and wish the same outcome."

Washington, fearing the event would be a hotbed for the coronavirus, had tried to dissuade leaders from traveling to New York, where a vaccine mandate is in place. Strict rules over masks and social distancing were imposed, with only seven people per delegation allowed. However, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken was flanked by 20 people when he walked the corridors of the UN.—AFP

News in brief

Moon raises dog meat ban

SEOUL: South Korea's President Moon Jae-in raised banning the eating of dogs in the country yesterday, his office said, a traditional practice that is becoming an international embarrassment. The meat has long been a part of South Korean cuisine with about one million dogs believed to be eaten annually, but consumption has declined as more people embrace dogs as companions rather than livestock. The practice is now something of a taboo among younger generations and pressure from animal rights activists has also been mounting. "Hasn't the time come to prudently consider prohibiting dog meat consumption?" Moon told Prime Minister Kim Bo-kyum during a weekly meeting, according to the presidential spokeswoman.—AFP

Earthquake shakes Philippines

MANILA: A strong earthquake hit off the Philippines' main island yesterday, but there were no immediate reports of damage, the US Geological Survey and local officials said. The deep 5.7-magnitude quake struck off Batangas province on Luzon island at 1:12 am, with residents in the nearby capital of Manila woken by their buildings shaking. The quake was recorded at a depth of 98 kilometers, the USGS said. The local seismological agency warned of damage and aftershocks. Deep quakes tend to do less damage than shallow tremors. But authorities near the epicenter said they had not received any reports of damage. "It was really strong," Jose Clyde Yayong, a disaster officer in Tagaytay city in the neighboring province of Cavite. "So far there are no untoward incidents relating to the earthquake.—AFP

Five killed in Colombia

BOGOTA: Five people were killed in an attack by suspected dissident members of Colombia's FARC rebels, officials said Sunday. The deadly incident took place at a "public establishment" in a rural area of Tumaco, in the southern department of Narino, the army said. Colombia is experiencing some of the worst attacks by armed groups since a peace deal was signed with the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC) in 2016. Suspected FARC dissidents belonging to the Urias Rendon column "arrived at the establishment in a vehicle, firing several shots indiscriminately," an army statement said. Two people were killed at the scene and another three died of gunshot wounds after being transported to hospital. Six other people were injured.—AFP

Lebanon blast probe suspended

BEIRUT: The lead investigator into the deadly 2020 Beirut port blast suspended his probe yesterday after an ex-minister he has called in for questioning requested his removal, a Lebanese court official said. In a second such suspension, Tarek Bitar will pause blast investigations until a court votes on whether to replace him in response to a complaint filed last week by ex-interior minister Nohad Machnouk, the official said. Machnouk is one of a raft of top officials suspected of negligence ahead of the port explosion that killed more than 200 people on August 4 last year. If removed, Bitar would be the second investigator to be sacked since the explosion amid widespread accusations of obstruction by Lebanon's political barons, who have largely dodged interrogation. "Bitar has paused his investigation and all procedures linked to the case pending a ruling by the court of appeals," the official said.—AFP

Business

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2021

Afghan saffron boss vows Taleban will not silence her

Hardline rulers increasingly exclude women from public life

KABUL: An Afghan business leader who employs hundreds of women on her saffron fields has vowed to speak up for the rights of her workers, and “not remain silent” under Taleban rule. The hardliners have increasingly excluded women from public life since sweeping to power in mid-August, pushing many female entrepreneurs to flee the country or go into hiding.

Many fear a return to their brutally oppressive rule from 1996 to 2001 when women were effectively banned from going to school or work, and only allowed to leave the house with a male relative. “We will raise our voice so that it reaches their ears,” said Shafiqeh Attai, who started her saffron company in the western city of Herat in 2007.

“No matter what happens, we won’t just sit at home, because we have worked very hard.” Attai’s business, the Pashton Zarghon Saffron Women’s Company, produces, processes, packages and exports the world’s most expensive spice with an almost exclusively female workforce. More than 1,000 women pick the brightly colored crocuses across the company’s 25 hectares (60 acres) of land in the Pashton Zarghon district of Herat Province, which borders Iran.

Another 55 hectares are independently owned and operate under the collective that Attai set up for women saffron pickers, who are represented by union leaders. Employing women allows them to be breadwinners for their families, Attai said, enabling them to send their children to school, and to buy them clothing and other essentials. “I worked hard to establish my business,” the 40-year-old said. “We don’t want to sit quietly and be ignored. Even if they ignore us, we will not remain silent.”

Alternative to opium

The ousted, Western-backed government encouraged farmers to grow the spice-used in dishes from biryani to paella—in a bid to wean them away from Afghanistan’s huge and problematic poppy industry. Still, the country remains by far the world’s biggest producer of opium and heroin, supplying between 80 and 90 percent of global output.

During their previous stint in power, the Taleban—who used the sale of opium to fund their insurgency—destroyed much of the crop ostensibly to eradicate it, though critics said it was to drive up the value of their huge stockpiles.

The cultivation of poppies has again surged in recent years, as poverty and instability increased. Afghanistan’s production area is now roughly four times larger now than in 2002, according to the United Nations.

‘Red gold’

Herat Province produces the vast majority of Afghanistan’s saffron. At more than \$5,000 per kilogram (2.2 pounds), saffron is the world’s most expensive spice, and Attai’s company produces between 200 and 500 kilos each year.

The pistil of the flower has for centuries been used around the world in cooking, perfumes, medicines, tea and even as an aphrodisiac—and because of its high price has been dubbed “red gold” by those who rely on its cultivation. Best grown in the baking hot sun, the bright purple saffron flowers are harvested in October and November

by armies of workers, many of them women in their fifties and sixties, who start picking at dawn before the plants will later in the day.

Labourers then prise apart the delicate lilac leaves, vivid red stigmas and pale yellow stamens—painstaking work that demands concentration and skill.

‘Hard work’

Attai is concerned not just about the future of her business, but also for women across Afghanistan who are living in limbo, uncertain about jobs, education and representation in government. “Now that the government of the Islamic Emirate is here we are very worried that they will block our work,” she said. “They haven’t given girls the permission to go back to school and university, and they haven’t given any women posts in the government—I am worried about what will happen,” she added.

“I’m not just thinking about myself, I’m thinking about

bearded 28-year-old told AFP. “They’re extending it again, but what’s going to happen when that runs out?”

Deadline day

France has asked the UK to issue 169 fishing licenses to its vessels but they must prove they fished in Channel Island waters before Brexit—and many are struggling to do so. An initial deadline for applications ended on June 30, triggering stormy protests by French fishermen that threatened to turn into a full-blown naval incident. As French trawlers steamed towards the capital Saint Helier, London sent two naval patrol boats to monitor the situation, prompting Paris to respond in kind.

In a bid to calm tempers, a three-month extension was agreed and is set to expire on Thursday.

Jersey’s government said last Friday that some French vessels had provided enough evidence they had previously fished off the island. Others still needed to submit more information and will only be granted a temporary permit until January 31 next year.

A third grouping will be refused licenses altogether and must stop fishing in UK waters. How many French boats are in which category will be unveiled in the coming days, prompting fresh fears on Jersey it could spark renewed protests. “We are running out of patience, the fishermen too, legitimately,” France’s Europe Minister Clement Beaune said last week.

In the small port of Gorey, dominated by green hills and a 13th-century castle, Corson said Brexit had made things “more difficult” as fishermen feared French reprisals over market access. “If we lose our market, it’s going to be a tough few years for us until we sort



HERAT, Afghanistan: In this file photo, an Afghan worker sorts harvested saffron flowers in a field on the outskirts of Herat. —AFP

all those that this business supports to run their homes,” she said, noting that some of her employees are the sole breadwinners in their families. “I am worried that 20 years of hard work by these women will go to waste.”

‘Cannot be ignored’

In the 20 years between the US-led ouster of the Taleban in 2001 and the Islamists’ return, many women became business leaders, particularly in cities like Herat. Long a key commercial hub near Iran and Turkmenistan’s borders, the city has in recent months suffered from the flight of many businesswomen.

Younes Qazizadeh, head of the city’s chamber of commerce, told AFP that he hoped the Taleban would make an official announcement to indicate that “women could come back and do business under this

government as well”.

For now, the fate of businesses like Attai’s hangs on a thread. “It is our hope to start women’s businesses again in our country,” Qazizadeh added.

Attai said that for now, she is staying in her homeland because she has “some hope” that her business can survive. Ahead of the US pullout, a mammoth airlift saw 124,000 people evacuated from Kabul airport.—AFP “I could have left as well. But I didn’t leave because all the hard work and effort that we put in should not be ignored,” Attai said. “I don’t think they will block our work,” she added, referring to the Taleban. “We are a company which is completely run by women and employs women—not a single man is brave enough to stop that. A woman who has shoveled her fields day and night cannot be ignored.” —AFP

Jersey fishermen caught in post-Brexit row

SAINT HELIER, Jersey: Fishermen on Jersey are voicing concerns at repeated delays to post-Brexit arrangements for fishing rights, as the latest deadline looms for EU access to waters around the British Crown dependency.

Jersey, home to more than 100,000 people, is the largest of the Channel Islands, and on a clear day, lies within sight of the French coast. Like Guernsey to its northwest, the self-governing territory is not part of the United Kingdom and its people did not vote in the 2016 Brexit referendum.

But both still depend on the UK for defense and international relations, drawing them into the country’s tortuous full departure from the European Union in January. Prime Minister Boris Johnson has vowed that London will “take back control” of fisheries policy, among other things, but nine months on, Jersey’s fishermen are still waiting to see the promised reduced EU access to their waters, as promised in the Brexit deal. Tim Corson, a small boat fisherman who sells his lobster catch in France, is unhappy at shifting deadlines for his European competitors to get licenses to fish off Jersey.

“It’s just getting delayed, delayed, delayed,” the red-

bearded 28-year-old told AFP. “They’re extending it again, but what’s going to happen when that runs out?”



SAINT HELIER, Jersey: In this file photo, French fishermen gather in a net on their vessel near the port of Saint Helier off the British island of Jersey. —AFP

something out,” he added, shifting big bags of bait bought in France after selling his catch there. The Jersey fleet, some 100 small boats that fish mostly during the day, exports lobsters, crabs and scallops to Europe via French ports.

But France has said it is ready to activate “restrictive measures” if it disagrees with the allocation of licenses, which Jersey’s fishermen say puts their future at risk. “The problem with the big fishing boats, they can fish in any weather and the small boats can’t, so they are continuously fishing when we have to stop because we are generally all day boats,” said Chris Casey in Saint Helier. —AFP

Sales of US manufactured goods take flight

WASHINGTON: A surge in civilian aircraft purchases sparked a surprise jump in sales of big-ticket manufactured US goods in August, according to government data released yesterday.

Durable goods orders rose 1.8 percent compared to July, to \$263.5 billion, taking flight on a nearly 78 percent increase in non-defense aircraft orders, the Commerce Department reported, a jump largely due to Boeing. But excluding transportation equipment, total orders edged up just 0.2 percent, slowing from recent months but still reflecting rising investment.

Total orders have increased in 15 of the past 16 months, and the originally reported dip in July was revised up to show a 0.5 percent increase, according to the report. In other sectors, orders of motor vehicles and parts fell 3.1 percent while computers and electronics rose 1.4 percent.

The consensus among economists centered around a 0.8 percent rise in total durable goods orders, but Ian Shepherdson of Macroeconomics had predicted an “upside risk” due to the aircraft



ARLINGTON, US: In this file photo, the nose of a Boeing 737-A is seen during a Boeing ecoDemonstrator program at Washington Reagan National Airport (DCA) in Arlington

component given the seasonal adjustment factors applied to the raw data by government statisticians.

“Data from Boeing suggest that unadjusted orders rose modestly, but a favorable swing in the seasonally adjusted ought to generate a rather bigger seasonally adjusted increase,” he said in a preview of the report. While he said the post-pandemic surge in investment looks unsustainable, “the case for expecting continued increases, at a less frenetic pace, is strong” as firms have the resources and are restrained from expanding by adding personnel due to the shortage of workers. —AFP

Instagram hits pause on kids’ version after criticism

NEW YORK: Facebook said yesterday that it is suspending development of a version of its Instagram photo-sharing app for children aged under 13, after widespread criticism of the plan. The decision to pause the kids’ app comes as Facebook grapples with the fallout of a series of withering Wall Street Journal reports revealing that the company’s own research showed it was aware of the damage Instagram can do to teenage girls’ mental health.

Facebook’s announcement comes just days ahead of a hearing before US senators that was set up in response to outrage that followed the Journal series. Instagram chief Adam Mosseri complained that the project aimed at children, which would have created a parentally-supervised version of the app for youngsters, had been widely misunderstood. “We started this project to address an important problem seen across our industry: kids are getting phones younger and younger, misrepresenting their age, and downloading apps that are meant for those 13 or older,” he said in a statement. “We firmly believe that it’s better for parents to have the option to give their children access to a version of Instagram that is designed for them — where parents can supervise and control their experience — than relying on an app’s ability to verify the age of kids who are too young to have an ID,” he added. —AFP

Google hits back at EU over record Android fine

LUXEMBOURG: Google hit back in court against the EU yesterday as it appealed against a record fine levied by the bloc for monopolistic practices with its Android operating system on mobile devices. The 4.3 billion euro (\$5 billion) penalty, imposed by the European Commission in 2018, was the biggest-ever slapped on the American search engine juggernaut.

The case being heard in the EU’s general court is a major test for EU competition supremo Margerthe Vestager, who already lost an appeal by Apple and Ireland over taxes. Google argues that the EU’s accusations over its highly popular operating system are unfounded and falsely blame it for blocking rivals on its search and maps apps on Android phones.

“Android is in truth an exceptional success story of the power of competition in action,” Google lawyer Meredith Pickford told a five-judge panel. Moreover, the company contends that the EU case is unfairly blind to the presence of Apple, which imposes or gives clear preference to its own services such as Safari on iPhones.

‘Critical time’

“We will explain that... the commission shut its eyes to the real competitive dynamic in this industry, that between Apple and Android,” Pickford argued. He also said that downloading rival apps was only a click away and that customers were in no way tied to Google products on Android.

The EU and its backers contend that Google used contracts with phone makers in the early days of Android to snuff out rivals. This was done “at a critical time in the development of mobile computing, when the market was still contestable,” said Thomas Vinje, a lawyer representing FairSearch, whose original complaint launched the case in 2015. The Android case was the third of three major cases brought against Google by Vestager, whose legal challenges were the first worldwide to directly take on the Silicon Valley giants. Since then, global regulators have followed suit with Google facing a barrage of cases in the US and Asia based on similar accusations.

A victory in court for Google could prove a Pyrrhic one, however. Brussels is in the process of shaping new legislation to regulate Big Tech more closely, with the EU frustrated at the length of time it takes to pursue competition cases. Known as the Digital Markets Act, the new law would set up a rulebook of Do’s and Don’ts for Big Tech companies such as Google and Facebook. This could include specific bans or limits on such companies promoting their own services on platforms. —AFP

Business

NBK holds seminar for its employees on importance of COVID vaccination

Seminar held with the participation of Kuwaiti physicians

KUWAIT: As part of its social responsibility efforts to combat the coronavirus, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) organized a seminar for its employees to raise awareness about the importance of COVID-19 vaccination. The seminar was attended by a select of Kuwaiti



Lulwa Mishari Al-Fozan

physicians including Dr Maytham Hussein, Consultant of Clinical Immunology, Dr Muhammad Al-Ghounaim, Pediatric Infectious Diseases Specialist & Medical Microbiologist, and member of the Vaccination Committee at the Ministry of Health, as well as Dr Hamad Al-Yaseen, Associate Professor of Genomic Medicine at Kuwait University.

In the seminar that witnessed a remarkable attendance from the bank's employees, the lecturers stressed that the fast pace of vaccination increases the number of people immunized against COVID-19 infection, which slows the spread of the disease, and contributes to herd immunity and returning safely to normalcy.

The lecturers emphasized that the WHO-approved vaccines are safe, having undergone rigorous testing in clinical trials to ensure that they meet internationally accepted safety and efficacy standards, as well as provide protection against new mutated versions of the virus. Participants cautioned against inaccurate information about the COVID-19 and vaccines, stressing, at the same time, that misinformation can cause doubts and fear during any health crisis, thus leading to leaving

people unprotected or more vulnerable to the virus. They always called for continuing to adhere with precautionary measures to protect ourselves and others, including wearing face masks, social distancing, and washing hands frequently. They also added that vaccines provided protection for the more vulnerable segments of society, such as the seniors, immune-compromised and chronic diseases patients.

On this occasion, Lulwa Mishari Al-Fozan, Head of Employee Relations at National Bank of Kuwait said: "Organizing a seminar for the bank's employees to raise awareness about the importance of COVID-19 vaccination is a continuation of the many initiatives and campaigns held by Group Human Resources to contribute effectively to supporting the national vaccination drive in Kuwait, which is moving towards achieving herd immunity soon."

Al-Fozan noted that NBK's employees have shown a high sense of responsibility towards their colleagues, families and society, as reflected in their great interest in getting vaccinated over the past months. Al-Fozan stressed that, since the beginning of the pandemic, NBK has been making unwavering efforts to ensure the safety of its employees through many initiatives and campaigns aimed at creating a safe work environment that also contributes to contain the spread of the virus.

As the largest private sector institution, NBK has a national responsibility to provide a role model to follow. In this context, the bank was one of the first private sector institutions to launch a program to motivate its employees to get vaccinated and actively contribute to supporting the country's national vaccination drive, she elaborated.

It is worth mentioning that over the past months,



NBK intensified direct communication with its employees providing them with reliable and credible information about the safety, efficacy and side effects of available vaccines, including information about approved vaccines and how to register for the vaccine, in cooperation with the concerned authorities in Kuwait.

In addition, through its social media platforms, the bank held several discussion sessions with physicians and leading public health figures to share scientific information and answer employees' inquiries about the efficacy of the vaccine, and how it contributes to returning to normalcy.

NBK recognizes the importance of improving the health and safety of its key stakeholders, including

employees and customers, as an integral part of its sustainable development approach. To this end, it continuously updates its health and safety policy developed based on regional and international best practices in relation to health and safety matters.

The bank also raises the motto of "employees' health and safety first" in all measures and decisions that have been taken since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic. This is manifested in launching many programs and activities that focus on promoting a healthy lifestyle and raising awareness on the importance of conducting medical examinations for the bank's employees to avoid physical and psychological exhaustion during the pandemic.

Networking Across Borders

September 8, 2021



Networking across borders

KUWAIT: The American Business Council (ABCK) - AmCham Kuwait, AmCham Abu Dhabi, AmCham Bahrain, AmCham Dubai, AmCham Oman, and AmCham Qatar held their quarterly virtual speed networking event, to foster new relationships throughout the network of American Chambers of Commerce in the GCC region.

The GCC networking event facilitated fast-moving networking sessions for business owners and executives. Attendees were placed into rooms with a few other individuals, and each attendee got to interact with several professionals in the State of Kuwait as well as all throughout the GCC, and they shared

their business profiles with other attendees. At the end of the event, AmCham Kuwait held a raffle for its members, and they thanked the following member companies who sponsored the raffle gifts, for their generous contributions to making this event a great success: The Sultan Center, SADITA Holding, and Choices Food Co.

The American Chambers of Commerce in the GCC represent more than 10,000 member companies and millions of dollars of foreign investment in the State of Kuwait and throughout the GCC. They are the go-to organizations in the country for anything US trade-related.

As AmCham Kuwait, we are devoted to supporting the development of commercial relations between Kuwait and the United States, but also focus heavily on networking Kuwait's business community through unique events and programs year-round.

Swedish electric carmaker Polestar plans \$20bn IPO

OSLO: Electric carmaker Polestar, controlled by Sweden's Volvo Cars and its Chinese owner Geely, said yesterday it plans to list on the Nasdaq stock exchange in New York, with an expected valuation of \$20 billion (17 billion euros). Polestar, a European competitor to Tesla, said in a statement that the funds from the initial public offering (IPO) would be used to "help fund significant investment in the expansion of its products, operations and markets to create a leading company in the rapidly growing global premium electric vehicle market."

While Polestar has only produced two models since being set up in 2017, the valuation would place the Swedish brand just behind giant Nissan, and ahead of carmakers Renault and Subaru. Tesla, in turn, is the highest-valued carmaker in the world, with a market capitalization of over \$750 billion.

The listing will be carried out by combining Polestar with a special purpose acquisition company (SPAC),

Gores Guggenheim, set up by US investment firms The Gores Group and Guggenheim Capital.

The deal is expected to close in the first half of 2022. The newly formed company would be named Polestar Automotive Holding UK Limited.

Founded by Volvo and Geely four years ago, Polestar sold only 10,000 vehicles in 2020, but is aiming to expand rapidly and is targeting annual unit sales of around 290,000 by 2025. Currently, the carmaker sells the Polestar 2 model and plans to launch the Polestar 3 next year and expects to be present in 30 countries by 2023.

The \$20-billion valuation is equivalent to three times the targeted revenue in 2023 and 1.5 times the expected sales in 2024, the company said. Together with battery maker Northvolt, the company is the Swedish flagship in the electric car sector. In addition to Volvo and Geely, the company's shareholders include US film star Leonardo DiCaprio. —AFP



OSLO: Electric carmaker Polestar, controlled by Sweden's Volvo Cars and its Chinese owner Geely, said yesterday it plans to list on the Nasdaq stock exchange in New York. —AFP

Shares in Evergrande EV unit plunge as cash dries up

BEIJING: Shares in debt-laden Evergrande's e-vehicle unit slumped by more than 10 per cent yesterday after the firm scrapped a proposed Shanghai listing, and with the property developer mired in a liquidity crisis. Evergrande is struggling with more than \$300 billion of debt from a years-long acquisition binge, including into electric vehicles once billed as a rival to Elon Musk's dominant Tesla brand.

There are fears any defaults on tens of millions of dollars of interest payments could spark a chaotic implosion of the firm, China's second-largest developer, with major repercussions for the domestic economy and the rest of the world. Shares in Evergrande New Energy Vehicle, also known as Evergrande Auto, fell to HK\$1.95 in early trading in Hong Kong yesterday, after it scrapped the planned Shanghai listing via a Sunday stock exchange filing. In a separate exchange filing late Friday, Evergrande NEV said its parent company's cash crisis would have a "material adverse impact" on production.

The firm warned of a "serious shortage of funds" which forced it to suspend "paying some of its operating expenses and some suppliers".

It admitted "there is no guarantee that the Group will be able to meet its financial obligations under the relevant contracts", as it looks for strategic investors. The car unit's share price has lost 80 per cent of its

value since February this year. Evergrande's travails have spooked global markets and raised fears of a tightening of Chinese consumer confidence, which could quickly seep into everything from home buying to demand for steel as well as the appetite for luxury goods.

As the debt crisis threatened to overwhelm the company last week, Evergrande agreed a last-minute deal with domestic bondholders that would avoid default on one bond payment.

But it remained silent on a separate \$83.5 million bond interest payment due one day later.

A \$47.5 million interest payment on a US dollar bond is due tomorrow—another key milestone likely to

be closely watched by markets. The group—which claims to employ 200,000 people and indirectly generate 3.8 million jobs in China—has said it is trying to avoid a bankruptcy that could reverberate around the world. While the government has not yet decided to bail out the struggling firm, analysts say Evergrande could be forced to undergo a state-led restructuring similar to previous moves to save stricken corporate behemoths such as Anbang and HNA Group.

The Financial Times reported yesterday that at least two local governments in China had taken control of sales revenue from Evergrande properties, as fears also rise of the social ramifications of large numbers of Chinese home buyers being left out of pocket. — AFP



GUANGZHOU, China: In this file photo, a man walks past a housing complex by Chinese property developer Evergrande in Guangzhou, China's southern Guangdong province. — AFP

European stocks climb on German vote, high oil prices

LONDON: European stock markets rose yesterday after Germany's tight election result, but the prospect of coalition talks weighed on the euro. Brent oil prices jumped close to a three-year high just short of \$80 a barrel on concerns about tightening supplies, boosting shares in energy companies.

Frankfurt's blue-chip DAX index climbed 0.5 percent after Finance Minister Olaf Scholz's centre-left Social Democrats won a tight election over the conservatives of outgoing Chancellor Angela Merkel.

The European single currency briefly ducked under \$1.17. The London and Paris stock markets rose by 0.1 percent and 0.3 percent respectively. Investors also kept a nervous eye on developments in the crisis at troubled Chinese property giant Evergrande as it teeters on the brink and threatens contagion.

'Most likely outcome'

"While last week started with stock markets being shaken by the Evergrande situation, this week is starting with some upward moves after the SPD party secured a win in the German federal elections," said XTB analyst Walid Koudmani. "Despite positive sentiment in markets, this was the most likely outcome and did not come as much of a shock to investors."

Holger Schmieding, chief economist at Berenberg Bank, said that businesses breathed "a big sigh of relief" that the far-left Die Linke party is unlikely to enter government after a poor performance.

London stocks were dampened by an ongoing shortage of petrol or gasoline that has been sparked by panic-buying at fuel stops across Britain. In commodity markets, Brent North Sea oil spiked in Asian trade to \$79.52 per barrel on supply woes. That was the highest level since October 23, 2018.

'Oil demand not met'

"The world's demand is not being met with enough supplies and this has pushed Brent towards \$80," said Exinity analyst Hussein Sayed. "Inventories across all continents are dropping as we head into the (northern hemisphere) winter season."

Asian equity markets mostly rose after a broadly positive lead from Wall Street, while investors eyed ongoing Evergrande worries. Hong Kong was among the best performers on bargain-buying after suffering a blow-out last week, though traders were still none the wiser about whether Evergrande paid interest on an offshore bond that was due last Thursday.

Hong Kong edged up but Evergrande's electric-vehicle unit slumped by more than nine percent after it scrapped a proposed listing on the Shanghai Stock Exchange and warned it was running out of cash.

Tokyo was flat, days ahead of a leadership election in Japan's ruling party to replace Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, with optimism that the winner will push for a huge new stimulus for the stuttering economy. Bitcoin held around \$44,000, having largely recovered over the weekend from a plunge below \$40,000 that came in reaction to news that China deemed all financial transactions involving cryptocurrencies illegal. — AFP

Business

stc launches 'Weyak' initiative

Launch in line with company's CSR framework

KUWAIT: Kuwait Telecommunications Company - stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announced the launch of its new initiative "Weyak", which focuses on enabling the digital transformation journey and supporting SMEs and local start-ups.

The concept behind the initiative stems from the commitment stc upholds to the local economy in backing and supporting companies in their gradual return to normalcy. Through the Company's effort to stand by ventures and businesses owned by nationals, hence the title "Weyak", stc aims to provide SMEs exposure to their services to help in lifting them up after falling during the challenges faced in the market due to the pandemic. stc indicated in a statement that through the "Weyak" initiative, the Company will grant participating SMEs and start-ups with the opportunity to promote and showcase their products and services. This includes showcasing their offerings through a series of organized activities in coordination with stc.

stc mentioned that SMEs participating in the initiative will also have the opportunity to be exposed to customized offers and promotions provided by stc's business arm, solutions by stc, that are tailored to suit the needs of business owners. Additionally, stc will be promoting the participants' projects through the Company's social media platforms, assisting the business owners in presenting their solutions to a wider potential customer base.

Commenting on this initiative, Danah Al-Jasem, General Manager of Corporate Communications at stc, said, "Through this initiative, we aim to provide SMEs with supporting services that will grant them the exposure they need online as well as exposing



Danah Al-Jasem

them to tailored packages and solutions with the sole objective of streamlining and enhancing their operations. We will also be providing them with around the clock support to assist them in utilizing the full breadth of our offerings. Having said that, our focus is to assist our customers by providing them with the

proper means to digitally transform their businesses and operations."

Al-Jasem added, "Our initiative builds on the values that stc holds in implementing its strategy to support SMEs. We were keen to connect with com-



Private sector plays key role in community

panies while simultaneously implementing our CSR agenda, believing in the important role the private sector plays in the community. Through our various initiatives we believe that we can contribute in positively impacting the local business, as well as the Kuwaiti society, in line with the Kuwaiti 2035 vision."



Al-Jasem concluded, "We will spare no effort in implementing the framework and initiatives under our CSR strategy in a way that enhances and empowers our society. We believe that this will ultimately build a balanced and sustainable work environment fit to empower the younger generation."

stc has launched numerous initiatives specifically

directed towards supporting SMEs, start-ups, and entrepreneurs. In this regard, the Company affirmed its position to continue providing pioneering and innovative solutions that aim to support and solve some of the challenges faced by the sector due to the unforeseen market challenges. This affirmation also runs parallel to stc's strategy to enable digital transformation in Kuwait.

Organizations must educate employees on new cyber risks: Trend Micro exec

By Islam Al-Sharara

KUWAIT: Organizations need to focus on training and educating employees on the cyber risk front so that they are well equipped to spot malicious attempts and safeguard themselves. This will lead to better awareness amongst them on the cybersecurity front, said Assad Arabi, managing director, Trend Micro, Gulf Cluster, in an interview. Excerpts from the interview.

Question: How has the threat cyber security landscape changed in Kuwait in the post-pandemic world?

Arabi: In the last few years, there has been a surge in cybercrimes targeting Kuwait. It has been observed that the number and sophistication of cyber-attacks are growing at an alarming rate. Today organizations in Kuwait are being targeted with modern-day threats, and attackers are trying new ways to gain access and exploit systems.

The COVID pandemic has acted as a launchpad for a series of phishing and ransomware attacks. It encouraged threat actors to target organizations that adopted remote work culture, by exploiting their vulnerabilities. As per the figures from this past year's Trend Micro's Round-Up Report 2020 - The Constant State Of Flux, globally about 62.6 billion threats were blocked. While in Kuwait alone our security solutions detected and blocked over 11



Assad Arabi

million email threats, prevented over 878,000 malicious URL victim attacks, and blocked over 5,000 URL hosts. These figures are staggering and highlight the fact that the threat landscape has and will keep evolving as the modern actors get stealthier with time in the digital era.

Question: What are the challenges that organizations are facing in securing their digital assets as they undergo digital transformation?

Arabi: Today, organizations in the country are in a state of transition, they are migrating to digital means of operations and have had to re-structure their growth strategies to match the new normal and accommodate accelerated digital transformation to be able to be a part of the game.

Whilst they are undergoing this phase it is required that they re-evaluate their security stance and strengthen it further. The new digital economy requires a robust cybersecurity framework for enterprises looking to create a lasting impact on the country's digital infrastructure. The migration to the cloud needs to be safeguarded through every phase of the process, as organizations continue their digital journeys.

Changes in the work landscape have also created new security led challenges for enterprises as remote and hybrid working models have become the norm. As per the Trend Micro report, the Smart Home Network (SHN) solutions blocked over 190,000 inbound and outbound attacks, preventing over 1.2 million SHN events. Hence, it is imperative to safeguard infrastructures and maintain normalcy whilst undergoing transformation.

Question: What are the types of trending cyber-attacks that organizations should be aware of?

Answer: For the enterprise fraternity, the wave of digital transformation has been more like a double-edged sword. The transition to digital means of operations has been complemented with a barrage of malicious threat attempts that aim to exploit assets within the enterprise.

Our Midyear Cybersecurity Report 2021- Attacks from All Angles, reveals organizations will have to stay vigilant across their environments - cloud, network, email, mobile, and endpoints. The trending types of threats include ransomware, advanced persistent threats, phishing, COVID-19 related scams, vulnerabilities in the cloud and the Internet of Things.

Question: What are new security solutions that organizations should adopt to be able to counter the evolving threat landscape?

Answer: The threat landscape is continuously evolving and hence there is a need for a holistic approach to be able to prevent it. Organizations need to focus on training and educating employees on the cyber risk front so that they are well equipped to spot malicious attempts and safeguard themselves. This will lead to better awareness amongst them on the cybersecurity front.

Also, a constant change in the threat landscape requires an equal countermeasure through a sturdier and multi-layered cybersecurity strategy incorporated by security teams. Technologies like XDR will provide an enhanced scope of visibility, heightened threat intelligence, and extended detection and response capabilities through each layer of an organization's IT environment.

Continuous risk assessment using Zero Trust solution need as well to be adopted to make sure hybrid workforces are secure and able to perform their function properly.

CBK bonds and related Tawarruq

KUWAIT: The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) announced the most recent issues of CBK bonds and related Tawarruq at a total value of KD 240 million for six months with a rate of return at 1.25%.

KFH stresses need to raise awareness of 'Diraya' campaign

KUWAIT: Senior Manager Employee Support at Kuwait Finance House (KFH), Meshaal AbdulAziz Al-Muhaini stressed the importance of the role of employees in contributing to "Diraya" campaign launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait in collaboration with the Kuwait Banking Association aiming at spreading financial awareness of the best ways of benefiting from the banks' financial services and shedding light on customers' rights as well as their responsibilities and obligations.

Al-Muhaini added in a press release, that KFH is intensifying its campaign messages to the employees with the aim of benefiting from their direct interaction with customers in achieving maximum effective awareness while meeting the campaign goals. Al-Muhaini pointed out that KFH intensifies its messages related to the campaign to employees through internal communication platforms, with the aim of benefiting and transferring messages during their direct communication with customers, whether in banking branches or over the phone, or through various communication platforms such as social media channels, and video calls through KFH Go, and other different communication channels, indicating that this contributes to achieving maximum banking awareness for customers and the public.

Al-Muhaini explained that this approach reflects the extent of the importance that KFH attaches to its employees, and the confidence in their abilities and giving as they are among the most important assets of KFH, stressing that KFH spares no effort in supporting its employees, which will reflect positively on their performance and interaction with customers. He pointed out that KFH launched several internal initiatives to enhance work engagement, and the results of this were positive and were embodied in KFH's work environment. The "Diraya" campaign aims to enhance and support the goals of the Central Bank of Kuwait and its social program which aims to spread banking knowledge among society members, increase public awareness on the most important financial issues and on the way to protect assets from fraudulence. Also, it aims to highlight the banking sector role in general, and the banking products provided by the private sector, by introducing a set of instructions and information on regular basis through social media in cooperation with Kuwait banking association and local banks. The campaign shall continue till the end of this year.



Meshaal Al-Muhaini

Infrastructure delay likely, says Pelosi

WASHINGTON: US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi expressed confidence a massive infrastructure bill will pass this week but acknowledged it might not get a vote today as planned, with fellow Democrats warning critical work remains to meet the party's deadlines. Democrats have been scrambling to hammer out a landmark plan to upgrade the nation's roads and bridges, but are also under immense pressure to finalize a \$3.5 trillion public investment package and fund the government to avert a looming shutdown-all by September 30.

The week is among the most critical of President Joe Biden's tenure, with opposition Republicans digging in against his Build Back Better program that would invest in climate change policy, lower childcare and education costs for working families and create millions of jobs.

But Pelosi, despite her confidence that the \$1.2 trillion infrastructure bill that has already cleared the Senate with bipartisan support will pass the House of Representatives "this week," hinted at potential quicksand ahead. "I'm never bringing a bill to the floor that doesn't have the votes," the top Democrat in Congress told ABC Sunday talk show "This Week," asked about whether she will bring the infrastructure bill to the floor Monday as previously agreed. "It may be tomorrow-if we have the votes," she said.

"You cannot choose the date," she added. "You have to go when you have the votes, in a reasonable time. And we will." Biden told reporters yesterday he was "optimistic" Pelosi would get the agenda through the house this week, adding "it's going to take the better part of the week."

Pelosi told her Democratic colleagues in a letter Saturday that they "must" pass both of Biden's huge spending bills, along with legislation that keeps the federal government operating into the next fiscal year beginning October 1. "The next



WASHINGTON, US: A family buys ice cream at a food truck on the National Mall with the US Capitol building in the distance in Washington, DC. — AFP

few days will be a time of intensity," she wrote.

'Irresponsible beyond words'

Pelosi is running into not only a buzzsaw of opposition from Republicans; Democratic progressives and moderates have made clear they need to see quickly exactly what goes in the \$3.5 trillion bill. "The votes aren't there, so I don't think she's going to bring it" to the floor Monday, congresswoman Pramila Jayapal, who chairs the House progressives, told CNN's "State of the Union," regarding the infrastructure bill.

House progressives have repeatedly warned that they won't green-light infrastructure without Build Back Better. In order to get the historic spending bill to Biden's desk, Democrats are using a process called "reconciliation," which allows certain budget-related legislation to pass the Senate with a simple majority rather than 60 votes.

But moderate Senate Democrats Joe Manchin and Kyrsten Sinema have expressed deep reservations about the huge price tag. With the Senate evenly split 50-50, their votes would be critical to passing the bill-something that Pelosi, herself a master vote-counter, is keenly aware of.

While all Democrats "overwhelmingly" support Biden's grand vision, it was "self-evident" that the final price tag for Build Back Better will be lowered, Pelosi said. She also stressed the importance of funding the government to avoid a looming shutdown, and suspending the debt ceiling to allow federal agencies to make loan repayments.

The House passed a bill Tuesday that would accomplish both goals. But Senate Republicans have balked over extending the Treasury Department's borrowing authority this time around, a position Pelosi described as "irresponsible beyond words." —AFP

Lifestyle | Features

JOLIE AND THE WEEKND SPOTTED ON SECOND DINNER DATE IN 3 MONTHS



Angelina Jolie and The Weeknd

Angelina Jolie and The Weeknd have been spotted on their second dinner date in three months. The 46-year-old actress and 'Blinding Lights' hitmaker were first seen at Italian restaurant Giorgio Baldi in Santa Monica, California, in June. According to the US Sun newspaper, the pair "spent hours" there, before "leaving separately to avoid raising suspicion". And on Saturday evening, the pair dined at the same Italian eatery. According to the DailyMail.com, the 'Eternals' star and the 31-year-old singer once again spent hours in a private area of the restaurant. In photographs obtained the site, Angelina and The Weeknd - whose real name is Abel Tesfaye - could be seen leaving Giorgio Baldi together, with both stars wearing

black face coverings, and they were seen getting into the same truck. Angelina - who has Maddox, 20, Pax, 17, Zahara, 16, Shiloh, 15, and twins Knox and Vivienne, 13, with ex-husband Brad Pitt - recently joked she's been single "for a long time" because she's so picky about her partners. Asked if she has a list of 'nos' when it comes to finding a new guy to date, she quipped: "I probably have a very long list [of 'nos']. I've been alone for a long time now." Last month, it appeared she'd got back in touch with her ex-husband Jonny Lee Miller, whom she was married to between 1996 and 1999. An insider said: "On her first evening with Jonny, Angelina only took Knox along, and they got on like a house on fire. Knox is a sweet kid, and I

imagine she decided he was the easiest one to begin introductions with." The source also claimed she returned to Jonny's apartment with Pax the following day so that he could get to know the 'Elementary' actor better. They added: "They only hung out for a short while at Jonny's apartment, but they seemed to get along well." Angelina was said to have been keen to introduce Pax to the 'Trainspotting' actor because the teenager is thinking about attending college in New York, where Jonny lives." As for The Weeknd, the 'Take My Breath' hitmaker has previously dated the likes of Bella Hadid and Selena Gomez.

Teigen is celebrating 10 weeks of sobriety

The 35-year-old model has taken to social media to reveal she's achieved a new record for her "sober streak". Chrissy - who is married to award-winning musician John Legend - shared a screenshot of a tracking app on her Instagram account and captioned the



post: "10 weeks woopwoop!!!! (sic)" Chrissy has kept her social media followers up-to-date with her sobriety journey, previously revealing her "longest streak yet" when she passed the 50-day mark. Taking to the photo-sharing platform earlier this month, she wrote: "today is my 50 day sobriety streak! it should be nearly a year but I had a few (wine) hiccups in the road. this is my longest streak yet! I still dunno if I'll never drink again but I do know it no longer serves me in ANY way. I don't get more fun, I don't dance, I don't get relaxed. I get sick, fall asleep and wake up sick, having missed what was probably a fun night. I had my fun with it and appreciate anyone that can enjoy it responsibly!!!! (sic)" Chrissy - who has Luna, five, and Miles, three, with John - previously revealed that she's been trying to stay sober ever since reading Holly Whitaker's 'Quit Like a Woman'. In one of her Instagram Stories, Chrissy explained: "I was done making an a fool of myself in front of people (I'm still embarrassed), tired of day drinking and feeling like s*** by 6, not being able to sleep.

Chelsea Handler is dating comedian Jo Koy

The 46-year-old TV star and Jo, 50, have been good pals for many years, and they've recently turned their long-time friendship into a romance, according to 'Entertainment Tonight'. Speculation about their relationship status intensified earlier this month, when Chelsea took to social media to post about being in love. The former 'Chelsea Lately' star - who briefly dated 50 Cent in 2011 - revealed she was "finally in love" and that she wants to give "hope" to people who are still searching for their perfect partner. However, at the time, she didn't reveal the identity of her new boyfriend. The comedian wrote on Instagram: "Just sitting here in Mallorca thinking about how grateful I am to have so many people that I love in my life, to live the life I do and to be going on tour doing what I love. "And that I'm finally



Chelsea Handler and Jo Koy

in love, with the best kind of guy there is. There is hope for everyone! That kind of stuff." Chelsea also admitted that the coronavirus pandemic has made her feel more "confident and secure" in her decision not to marry or have children. In an Instagram Q&A, one fan asked: "Do you ever have regrets not getting married/having kids? I put my career/friends first but sometimes I wonder if I'll regret that. (sic)" And Chelsea - who appeared alongside Jo at a Los Angeles Dodgers baseball game in August - replied: "I have never felt more confident

and secure in my life decision-making skills, in remaining childless and alone, than I have during this pandemic. "I don't mean to toot my own horn, but beep beep." Chelsea also wrote in the caption of the video clip that she "remains steadfast" in her life choices. She wrote: "I remain steadfast in my decision. To all the parents out there-make yourself a cocktail or pop an edible. "You're doing the Lord's work, and I'm doing mushrooms with my landscaper."

Affleck 'was eager to support Lopez at Global Citizen Live'

Ben Affleck was determined to see Jennifer Lopez perform at Global Citizen Live on Saturday. The 49-year-old actor flew to New York City to meet up with his girlfriend and to watch her perform at the global event, which is designed to help defeat poverty. An insider explained: "Jennifer and Ben were apart for a few days earlier this week. They met up in NYC yesterday. Ben wanted to be by her side and attended the event. He



watched her perform." Ben had been in Austin, Texas, for production on his latest project, but he was determined to see Jennifer in the Big Apple. The source told People: "They are always supportive of each other's careers. Ben has to be in Texas to film this coming week." Earlier this month, meanwhile, a source revealed that Jennifer and Ben "plan on spending the holidays together". The loved-up duo rekindled their romance earlier in 2021 and although they both have "months of work coming up", they're making plans to spend time together over Christmas. The source said: "They will both get a break. For Jennifer, Christmas is all about the kids. She makes it very special for them. She loves Christmas."

Doja Cat was called Amy Winehouse during her teens

Doja Cat was called Amy Winehouse during her high-school years. The 25-year-old rap star has revealed she was likened to the 'Back to Black' hitmaker - who died of alcohol poisoning in July 2011, aged 27 - during her teenage years because of her make-up style. She explained: "I used to do a giant cat-eye and the kids [in my high school] used to call me Amy Winehouse and other names that they thought were funny but weren't. "I've been learning how to do this cat eyeliner over the years, and I finally perfected it." Doja - who is now known for her distinctive style - eventually purchased an eye shadow palette and just "went crazy" with it. The 'Juicy' hitmaker Elle.com: "I had every color in the rainbow and I went crazy

with that. I definitely didn't know how to prime my eyes, so nothing looked that great, but I kept going." Meanwhile, Doja previously confessed that she's become more restrained on social media since finding fame. The rapper was hugely enthusiastic about social media before she released her debut album 'Amala' in 2018, but Doja admits she's become more cautious with her posts over recent years. She explained: "I used to be on Periscope a lot. I'd be live for 10 or 12 hours at a time. I'd be making beats, and they weren't any good, but it was fun. "I would just be yelling at and roasting people, and they would be like, "Damn, why are you so mad?" But then some people would think it was funny and go along with it. That was me back then, and I love going in on people, but I stopped because with a big platform, you don't want to hurt anybody. "You have power and you're looked at a certain way, and if you go in on people, it doesn't help you or them, and they can tear you down more than you can tear them down." — Bang Showbiz

COS Autumn/Winter 2021 Show

London's iconic Roundhouse sets the stage for COS Autumn Winter 2021 having previously inspired artists, filmmakers, and avant-garde productions, while providing endless possibilities to young creative communities. Projecting colour, light and movement onto a blank canvas within this unique venue, the show unifies the audience in a physical and digital space, emotively drawing the curtains open to an evolved direction for the brand. Specific components can instantly be recognised as COS; fabrications, cuts, colours - fundamental principles. These components emphasise an overarching precedence, of style over fashion.

Looking to reinvigorate a classic wardrobe, the freedom to push the boundaries of traditional design is paralleled by the fluidity of movement through draped, layered styles and oversized fits. Tailored details are elevated, and construction refined - meeting at a point between simplicity and intricacy, elegance and functionality. A retro influence is personified through enlarged collars and rounded sleeves in a mulberry silk dress, while 1990s minimalism inspires slimmer proportions and tailoring in the form of a waist coat and relaxed trousers. Pleats animate skirts, while suiting adds a soft sense of structure. Classic coats are proposed in bright cobalt blue or crafted in leather, transforming everyday pieces.

Laidback and effortless, COS approaches the season with both functionally and style at the forefront of design. Nodding to street wear and utilitarian styling, meticulous construction and intrinsic details take centre stage. Zips and seams are exposed, playing with traditional design, while archetypal garments are re-engineered; tailored suit trousers adopt unexpected utilitarian pockets, allowing for



a relaxed feel. Inspired by 1970s-style graphic jacquard, landscapes, and earthy textures, statement knits are reworked into vests and jumpers using modern techniques and sustainably sourced materials. A canary yellow faux fur clutch injects

a burst of colour into the collection. Binding high fashion with relaxed everyday dressing, structured leather bags feature alongside soft teddy designs while footwear showcases chunky brogues and high shaft boots - an elevat-

ed take on modern classics. A selection of items from the show collection are available exclusively at COS stores and cos.com and limited numbers will continue to drop throughout the season.



Japan awaits wedding news as royal sweetheart returns

Japanese romantics and royal-watchers held their breath for a wedding announcement as Princess Mako's boyfriend returned to Tokyo yesterday, following years of public controversy over their marriage. The lovebirds' reunion has sparked a media frenzy, with reporters chasing 29-year-old Kei Komuro in recent days through the streets of New York, where he moved for law school. Major TV networks carried live footage of his plane landing, with reports saying the long-delayed wedding could go ahead as soon as next month-more than three years after it was dramatically postponed.

Mako, also 29, is the eldest granddaughter of Emperor Akihito, although Japan's imperial succession rules mean she will lose her title after marriage to a commoner. The pair's union was delayed after a scandal erupted around reports that Komuro's family had run into financial difficulties, with his mother failing to repay a four-million-yen (\$36,000) loan from a former fiancée. Local media said it was his first return to Japan since he left for America in 2018 in a move seen as a bid to defuse negative attention following the tabloid reports. As he stepped off the plane at an



Kei Komuro (center), the boyfriend of Japan's Princess Mako, arrives at Narita airport in Chiba Prefecture from the United States. — AFP photos

airport near Tokyo yesterday, Komuro was met by camera flashes, video crews and a gaggle of eager reporters.

Dressed in a dark suit with his long hair tied back, he bowed deeply to the journalists and did not speak. He will quarantine for two weeks, as required by Japan's border restrictions. Public broadcaster NHK

said the Imperial Household Agency was planning a wedding next month and would announce it soon. Mako is also said to be planning to move to the United States after her wedding, drawing inevitable comparisons with another controversial royal couple: Britain's Prince Harry and Meghan Markle.



Japan's Princess Mako enters the Imperial Palace to attend the Korei-sai autumn ceremonies.

Earlier this month, Japanese media said the pair had decided to wed without some traditional ceremonies, rejecting a payout that usually goes to female royals marrying out of the family. The size of the payment is unknown, though reports put it at 137 million yen or more. Mako is sister to Prince Hisahito, 15, currently the

only eligible male heir to the Chrysanthemum Throne other than his father. The throne can pass only to male members of the family, and the children of female royals who marry commoners are not included. — AFP



American actor and singer Aaron Tveit accepts the award for Best Performance by an Actor in a Leading Role in a Musical for "Moulin Rouge!".



Adrienne Warren accepts the award for Best Performance by an Actress in a Leading Role in a Musical for "Tina - The Tina Turner Musical!".



Lois Smith accepts the award for Best Performance by an Actress in a Featured Role in a Play for "The Inheritance!".



(From left) Charlie Rosen, Matt Stine, Katie Kresek, and Justin Levine, winners of the award for Best Orchestrations for "Moulin Rouge! The Musical," pose in the press room during the 74th Annual Tony Awards. — AFP photos

'Moulin Rouge!' wins big as Tony Awards return to Broadway

Broadway on Sunday finally honored its best and brightest at the Tony Awards, more than a year late due to the coronavirus pandemic, with jukebox musical "Moulin Rouge!" sweeping the competition with 10 trophies. The event took on a new look this year: Most of the awards were handed out in a two-hour ceremony livestreamed before the main event—a concert celebrating the return of live theater in New York after an 18-month hiatus.

"Everyone here is vaxxed and tested, and everyone is wearing a mask—every Broadway theater is going to look like this for a while and that's ok," host Leslie Odom Jr said at the start of the concert gala at the Winter Garden Theatre. "Moulin Rouge! The Musical"—a stage adaptation of the popular 2001 Baz Luhrmann film of the same name about the famed Paris nightclub—won best musical, best actor and best actor in a featured role, as well as a host of technical honors. The cast served up a colorful, sassy medley of hits from the show at their home theater, as did the cast of "Jagged Little Pill," a musical inspired by

Alanis Morissette's seminal 1995 album of the same name.

Adrienne Warren, who won the Tony for best actress in a musical for her portrayal of Tina Turner in "Tina," gave a rousing performance with her castmates. The concert also featured classic duets from popular musicals "Rent," "Wicked," "Ragtime" and "Hamilton," featuring a stream of Broadway A-listers. The Tony for best play went to "The Inheritance," a reimagining of the E.M. Forster novel "Howards End" set in modern-day New York. The play won a total of four awards, including best director for Stephen Daldry. "A Soldier's Play," a look at racism in the US military, won the award for best revival of a play—and also scored an acting trophy for David Alan Grier, one of several first-time winners of the night. A revival of "A Christmas Carol" took home five prizes.

'Broadway is back'

This year's honors were a bit different—the number of shows eligible to compete for the 2019-2020 season was pared back considerably when the Great White

Way was forced to shut down as the pandemic took hold, especially in New York. Several shows have recently reopened, with more to come in the next few months. "Broadway is back, and it must and it will be better," actress Audra McDonald, a six-time winner and a nominee again this year, said as she hosted the early ceremony.

In a quirky result, Aaron Tveit took home the prize for best actor in a musical for "Moulin Rouge!"—he was the only nominee but needed to earn 60 percent of votes to win. He choked up as he accepted his award, his first Tony. "We are so privileged to get to do this, to be on Broadway," he said. Among the other first-time winners was Lois Smith, who won for best actress in a featured role in a play for "The Inheritance"—at age 90. She is the oldest performer ever to win a Tony for acting. — AFP

US singer-actress Audra McDonald attends the 74th Annual Tony Awards at the Winter Garden Theater in New York City.



Gere belongs in cinema, not as migrant witness

Plans for actor Richard Gere to testify against former Italian interior minister Matteo Salvini for abuse of migrants threaten to turn the case into a show trial, the far-right leader said on Sunday. Gere—a Hollywood star known as a campaigner on Tibet and other rights issues—will testify against him in the so-called Open Arms case, according to remarks Salvini made at a political meeting that were reported by the Ansa news agency. "If someone wants to turn the trial into a show and wants to see Richard Gere, let him go to the cinema, not to a court," the head of the populist and nationalist League party said according to Ansa.



Richard Gere

"I know him as an actor, but I don't understand what kind of lessons he wants to give me," he added, promising to ask for an autograph for his mother. Salvini is accused of kidnapping and abuse of power in August 2019

by preventing more than 100 migrants from disembarking from a rescue ship—even as conditions on board deteriorated. Gere had boarded the Open Arms ship to support the migrants, a visit mocked by Salvini at the time.

Migrants were only allowed off the Open Arms vessel after six days, following an order by the prosecutor's office. Salvini has said he was protecting the country with his so-called "closed ports" policy, which aimed to stop people attempting the dangerous Mediterranean crossing to Italy. Italy's Senate voted last year to strip Salvini of his parliamentary immunity, paving the way for the trial. A related case in which Salvini was accused of blocking other migrants at sea on an Italian coastguard boat was thrown out by a court in Catania earlier this year.

Salvini's League takes a hard line on migrants, arguing that Italy bears an unfair burden as the first point of entry for migrants from northern Africa. When he blocked the ships, Salvini was part of a coalition government and held the positions of interior minister and deputy prime minister. He has argued that his migrant policy was not his alone, but agreed by the government, including by the former prime minister, Giuseppe Conte. The trial opened on 15 September in Palermo but was immediately adjourned to 23 October. Twenty-three civil parties, including nine migrants who were on board, are represented in the trial.

Salvini joined the League's coalition government with the anti-system 5 Star Movement (M5S) in 2018, but in August 2019 he provoked a government crisis hoping to reshuffle the deck in an early parliamentary vote. The manoeuvre backfired and the M5S formed a new government with the centre-left Democratic Party, which was replaced in early 2021 by a broad coalition government including the League and led by Mario Draghi. — AFP

Lifestyle | Features



An aerial picture shows the remains of the semi-circular theatre and the Chalcidicum (right), beyond which lies the marketplace, and the Severan Forum and Basilica (top right), in the ancient Roman city of Leptis Magna near the coastal Libyan city of Al-Khums, 120Km east of the capital. -AFP photos



An aerial picture shows a view of the theatre in the ancient Roman city of Leptis Magna, near the coastal Libyan city of Al-Khums, 120Km east of the capital.



A picture shows a general view of marble columns looking towards the Nymphaeum in the background, in the ancient Roman city of Leptis Magna.

JEWEL OF ROMAN EMPIRE LIES NEGLECTED IN LIBYA CHAOS



A picture shows a view of a carved frieze at the ancient Roman city of Leptis Magna near the coastal Libyan city of Al-Khums, 120Km east of the capital.



A picture shows a carved Gorgon head on arches surrounding the Severin forum, in the ancient Roman city of Leptis Magna.



A picture shows a carved detail in the ancient Roman city of Leptis Magna.



A picture shows a view of fine marble columns lining the theatre stage of the ancient Roman city of Leptis Magna.

Once among the Roman Empire's most beautiful cities, Leptis Magna lies neglected and shunned by tourists after a decade of war, but some see its potential for rebirth. There is no queue at the gate and only a handful of visitors, almost all Libyans, wander among the imposing ruins at the UNESCO World Heritage site. Visiting the area, a former Roman outpost on the south coast of the Mediterranean, is "a voyage in time, a dive into history", enthuses Abdessalam Oueba, a Libyan visitor in his 60s. Founded by the Phoenicians then conquered by Rome, the city was the birthplace of Septimius Severus, who rose to become emperor from 193 until 211.

The ruler waged military campaigns across Europe and into modern-day Iraq before dying in York, England, far from the hometown on which he had lavished resources. Perched on a hillside with a striking view of the Mediterranean, the well-preserved ruins include a large basilica, a racecourse and a theatre seating up to 15,000 spectators on arched terraces overlooking the sea. Among the few visiting tourists are Ihab, from Tripoli, who made the 120-kilometre (75-mile) trip to show his children a site he had visited during his own childhood. "Leptis Magna is beautiful, the most beautiful Roman site outside Italy," the 34-year-old doctor said under a clear blue sky. "Yet it's barely been discovered."

'Neglect'

The violence that wracked Libya after the 2011 revolt that toppled dictator Muammar Gaddafi stirred fears for the ancient ruins, prompting United Nations cultural agency UNESCO to place them and four other Libyan sites on a list of global heritage in danger. But so far, the areas have been mostly spared from the fighting, which has largely paused since an October 2020 ceasefire. "There haven't been any direct attacks or threats against Leptis Magna, despite the conflict," said Azeddine al-Fakh, head of the site's antiquities department. Yet it faces other threats: a lack of resources and government support.

"In 2020, we were finally able to launch projects that should have been finished 50 years ago," he said, listing toilet facilities,



A man looks at the Arch of Septimius Severus in the ancient Roman city of Leptis Magna.

offices and a perimeter fence. "But archaeological digs have stopped, and maintenance operations are rushed and superficial," Fakh admitted that after 10 years of conflict and state collapse, Libya's current unity government "has bigger problems to deal with". There was almost no tourism in Libya under Gaddafi, whose rule from 1969-2011 depended heavily on the country's vast oil wealth. Tense foreign relations and sanctions also discouraged foreign visitors.

Gaddafi began issuing tourist visas for the first time in 2003 and even created a ministry of tourism as the regime began mending ties with the West. But all that stopped in 2011, when a NATO-backed revolt overthrew and killed Gaddafi, plunging the country into years of chaos.

More valuable than oil

Now, a year-long lull in violence has sparked hopes the country can move on. Omar Hdidan, a civil engineer who volunteers to promote and maintain Leptis Magna, believes in its potential for tourism. "It has always been neglected by the state," the 49-year-old said. "There are no digs, no new discoveries, no campaign to encourage tourism. But Leptis Magna is more valuable than 10 oil wells." Fakh agreed. Leptis Magna "could be a source of income if it was managed properly," he said. "It could create thousands of jobs, welcome millions of tourists and bring in billions of dollars. There will come a day when the oil runs out, but Leptis Magna will remain." —AFP



A picture shows a colonnade with the ancient theatre in the background, in the ancient Roman city of Leptis Magna.

'Ancestor' of Mediterranean mosaics discovered in Turkey

The discovery of a 3,500-year-old paving stone, described as the "ancestor" of Mediterranean mosaics, offers illuminating details into the daily lives of the mysterious Bronze Age Hittites. The assembly of over 3,000 stones in natural shades of beige, red and black, and arranged in triangles and curves was unearthed in the remains of a 15th century BC Hittite temple, 700 years before the oldest known mosaics of ancient Greece. "It is the ancestor of the classical period of mosaics that are obviously more sophisticated. This is a sort of first attempt to do it," says Anacleto D'Agostino, excavation director of Usakli Hoyuk, near Yozgat, in central Turkey.

At the site three hours from Turkey's capital Ankara, first located in 2018, Turkish and Italian archaeologists

painstakingly use shovels and brushes to learn more about the towns of the Hittites, one of the most powerful kingdoms in ancient Anatolia. "For the first time, people felt the necessity to produce some geometric patterns and to do something different from a simple pavement," D'Agostino says. "Maybe we are dealing with a genius? Maybe not. It was maybe a man who said 'build me a floor' and he decided to do something weird?"

The discovery was made opposite Kerkenes mountain and the temple where the mosaic is located was dedicated to Teshub, the storm god worshipped by the Hittites, equivalent to Zeus for the ancient Greeks. "Probably here the priests were looking at the picture of Kerkenes mountain for some rituals and so on," D'Agostino adds.

Lost city's treasures?

The archaeologists this week also discovered ceramics and the remains of a palace, supporting the theory that Usakli Hoyuk could indeed be the lost city of Zippalanda. A significant place of worship of the storm god and frequently mentioned in Hittite tablets, Zippalanda's exact location has remained a mystery. "Researchers agree that Usakli Hoyuk is one of two most likely sites. With the dis-

covery of the palace remains alongside the luxurious ceramics and glassware, the likelihood has increased," D'Agostino says.

"We only need the ultimate proof: a tablet carrying the name of the city." The



Archaeologists work on the remains of a Hittite palace and its luxurious ceramics and glassware, which were discovered at the Usakli Hoyuk excavation site, near Yozgat. — AFP

treasures of Usakli Hoyuk, for which cedar trees were brought from Lebanon to build temples and palaces, were swallowed up like the rest of the Hittite world towards the end of the Bronze Age. The reason is still not known. But some believe a change in

climate accompanied by social unrest is the cause.

'Spiritual connection'

Nearly 3,000 years after their disappearance, the Hittites continue to inhabit Turkish imagination. A Hittite figure representing the sun is Ankara's symbol. And in the 1930s, the founder of the modern Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, presented Turks as the direct descendants of the Hittites. "I don't know if we can find a connection between ancient Hittites and people living here now. Centuries and millennia have passed, and people moved from one place to another," D'Agostino says.

"But I would like to imagine that some sort of spiritual connection exists." In an attempt to honor this connection, the excavation team recreated Hittite culinary traditions, trying ancient recipes on ceramics produced as they would have been at the time using the same technique and clay. "We reproduced the Hittite ceramics with the clay found in the village where the site is located: we baked dates and bread with them as the Hittites used to eat," says Valentina Orsi, co-director of the excavation. "It was very good." — AFP

Sports

Madrid liberated by Ancelotti return but tougher tests await

Offense flourishing under new system despite missing out on Mbappe

MADRID: Carlo Ancelotti called it his "honeymoon period" at Real Madrid and club and coach want to enjoy it while it lasts. Madrid face Sheriff Tiraspol tonight in the Champions League on the back of a 1-0 win away at Inter Milan that already appears to have put Ancelotti's team in charge of Group D.

And Madrid have started fast in Spain too, after five wins and two draws have taken them to the top of La Liga, three points clear of Atletico Madrid and five ahead of Barcelona. Ancelotti was asked on Friday when the honeymoon period would end after Madrid's 6-1 thrashing of Mallorca. "When it's going to end, I'll tell you but so far, I'm fine," he said.

It is not just the results that have lifted the mood, after a summer that began with Atletico winning the title and ended with Real Madrid making around 50 million euros in profit from the transfer window and failing to sign Kylian Mbappe. It is the performances that have excited the fans and given some freshness to a squad that appeared to have grown stale under Zinedine Zidane last season.

Zidane's success at the helm was historic but his style, whenever it was possible to identify one, was cautious, prioritizing defensive solidity, honed from his years at Juventus under Marcello Lippi, over attacking exuberance.

Ancelotti has taken the handbrake off and the result has been younger players flourishing and the goals flying in. Real Madrid have scored 21 in seven

La Liga games this season, a total that has been spread across eight different players including Karim Benzema, Vinić Junior, Marco Asensio, Eduardo Camavinga, Gareth Bale, Dani Carvajal and Nacho Fernandez. Benzema has eight of them, as well as seven assists, the Frenchman enhancing his claim to be Lionel Messi's heir as the best player in La Liga and perhaps even the best all-round striker now in the world.

While Benzema's displays are nothing new, the likes of Vinić and Asensio have exploded into life under Ancelotti, with Asensio scoring a hat-trick against Mallorca in midweek and Vinić discovering a more clinical edge that had been previously so lacking in his career.

The 18-year-old Camavinga is already a fans' favorite. "Camavinga has no pressure, his character is like that, he is very cheerful, he gets along well with his teammates, he tries to learn Spanish quickly," said Ancelotti. "It is the freshness of youth."

When Ancelotti's arrival was confirmed, some were disappointed Madrid had not been bolder, accusing the club of choosing a safe option instead of a more ideological coach in the mold of Thomas Tuchel, Julian Nagelsmann or Pep Guardiola. The success of the attack has even made Ancelotti nervous, with a greater focus on the defence contributing to a goalless draw against Villarreal on Saturday.

"To be honest we have been focusing a lot on the defensive area because it was the aspect that need-



MADRID: Real Madrid's coach Carlo Ancelotti stands on the sideline during the Spanish League football match between Real Madrid and Villarreal CF at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid on Saturday. —AFP

ed the most improvement," said Ancelotti. But while greater challenges lie ahead, the merits of his appointment have so far been clear, with Real Madrid enjoying the freedom that comes with reduced expectations and the emergence of youth.

"My relationship with the club is very good at

the moment, it is a honeymoon period for me," said Ancelotti this week. "We will have less brilliant moments, but my respect for this club will always be there, for what this club represents, the president, the fans. More complicated moments will come but we will have a good time." —AFP



Camavinga already a fans' favorite

ed the most improvement," said Ancelotti. But while greater challenges lie ahead, the merits of his appointment have so far been clear, with Real Madrid enjoying the freedom that comes with reduced expectations and the emergence of youth.

News in brief

Rashford eyes return

LONDON: Marcus Rashford said yesterday he hopes to return imminently to light contact training with Manchester United as he continues his recovery from shoulder surgery. The England forward is yet to play this season after an operation last month. The 23-year-old posted a message on Twitter that read: "Happy Monday. I see the doctor on Friday for a consultation. All being well, I will get the green (light) to join in with contact training again." Having played with a shoulder issue for much of last season, Rashford decided after being part of England's Euro 2020 campaign that he would go under the knife. The operation took place on August 6 and Rashford said afterwards that "everything went well". —AFP

Jimenez feels 'fantastic'

LONDON: Wolves striker Raul Jimenez said it felt "fantastic" to score his first Premier League goal in almost a year after recovering from a career-threatening head injury. The Mexico international scored an impressive solo goal to give Wolves a 1-0 win at Southampton on Sunday — his first Premier League strike in 11 months. The 30-year-old suffered a fractured skull in a challenge with Arsenal's David Luiz in November 2020 and doctors told him it was a "miracle" he survived. Jimenez will have to wear protective headgear for the rest of his career and manager Bruno Lage acknowledged he had to "adapt" after he removed it in frustration during a game against Brentford. —AFP

Napoli reclaim top spot

MILAN: Napoli maintained their perfect start to the Serie A season on Sunday with a 2-0 win over Cagliari which ensured they reclaimed top spot, while Lazio won an eventful derby 3-2 to down Jose Mourinho's Roma. Luciano Spalletti's side cruised to their sixth victory in as many league games against a Cagliari team coached by former Napoli manager Walter Mazzarri thanks to Victor Osimhen's sixth goal in all competitions this month and a second-half penalty from Lorenzo Insigne who pre-match celebrated his 400th Napoli appearance. They are two points ahead of AC Milan after another confident display that ends a week in which they scored 10 goals without reply in three league matches. —AFP

Marseille suffers first defeat

PARIS: Lens deposed Marseille from second place in French Ligue 1 on Sunday with a 3-2 win which condemned the southern giants to a first defeat of the season and first league loss at their Velodrome home since February. Lens have 15 points but are nine behind leaders Paris Saint-Germain who have a perfect eight wins from eight. Marseille slipped back to third, a further point adrift but with a game in hand. Elsewhere, Wissam Ben Yedder and Kevin Volland both scored as Monaco came from behind to beat Clermont 3-1 and claim successive wins for the first time this season. —AFP

In separatist Transnistria, Sheriff calls the shots

TIRASPOL: This year's Champions League features an improbable upstart: FC Sheriff, a club run by an eponymous company built on murky money in a pro-Russian separatist enclave of Europe's poorest country, Moldova. The would-be state, which harkens back to its Soviet past with a towering Lenin statue in the center of its administrative hub, Tiraspol, broke away from Moldova in a short civil war in the early 1990s.

Thirty years later, the little-known Transnistria region with its own border police, army, currency and hammer-and-sickle-embazoned flag has not been recognized internationally but is propped up by free Russian gas and some 1,500 troops.

The territory, however, is effectively run by the Sheriff holding company that sports a five-pointed sheriff's star as its logo. Owned by a former Soviet police officer, Viktor Gushan, the conglomerate controls businesses ranging from a cognac distillery and caviar farm to supermarket and gas station chains — and the football club making waves in Europe.

"Viktor Gushan is the person with the most influence here, both in politics and economics," said Anatoly Dirun, director of the Tiraspol School of Political Studies. Dirun, a former member of the ruling Renewal party financed by Sheriff, said that besides business, Gushan's people also hold all of the main leadership posts in the breakaway region, from parliament to the prime minister's seat to the presidency.

Sumo's greatest of all time Hakuho retiring

TOKYO: Sumo's greatest-ever champion Hakuho retired on yesterday after battling persistent knee trouble, officials said, leaving a gaping hole at the top of the ancient sport. The Mongolian-born 36-year-old has won a record 45 tournaments — 13 more than anyone else in history — but has been sidelined by injury for most of the year.

He made his only appearance of 2021 at July's Nagoya Grand Sumo Tournament, going unbeaten to win the title after missing all or part of the previous six competitions. He and 17 other wrestlers from his stable were forced to miss the following tournament, which ended Sunday, after a coronavirus outbreak.

His departure leaves just one other wrestler, Terunofuji, in the yokozuna class — sumo's highest rank. "I learned from the sumo association chairman that Hakuho's letter of retirement was filed through his stable master today," Hironori Yano, head of the yokozuna deliberation council, which is close to the association, told reporters.

Hakuho's decision, reportedly the result of a right knee injury, brings the curtain down on his illustrious career after 1,187 wins. The Japan

Sumo Association declined to comment, but the news made headlines in the country and grateful fans tweeted their support for the star.

Near the Kokugikan venue where sumo's Tokyo tournament is held, Takashi Sakai was full of praise for the retiring wrestler. "I want to tell him: 'Great work. Well done'. He worked really hard, coming all the way to Japan, becoming a sumo wrestler and a yokozuna champion. It's not very easy to achieve all that," the 76-year-old told AFP.

"He has been the strongest wrestler for a long time and has been very influential," said Miyako Arai. "I think there are many wrestlers whose admiration of Hakuho led them to pursue the sport," the 46-year-old added.

'A tremendous yokozuna'

Born Munkhbat Davaajargal and the son of an Olympic silver-medal freestyle wrestler, Hakuho came to Japan at age 15 to enter the sumo world. He debuted in 2001 and won his first top-division title in May 2006, before reaching the sport's highest rank of yokozuna at age 22 in July 2007.

His battles with fellow Mongolian yokozuna Asashoryu — the pantomime villain to Hakuho's popular good guy — helped breathe new life into the sport, with attendances booming. Asashoryu retired in 2010 but Hakuho went from strength to strength, overtaking the legendary Taiho's record of 33 tournament wins in January 2015.

'Sheriff Republic'

Gushan founded Sheriff in 1993 with fellow police officer Ilya Kazmaly. The two 59-year-olds spent the following years buying up former Soviet factories — and fighting off competitors. Helping lead Transnistria's so-called "privatization" — the selling off of Soviet-era state-owned businesses to private owners — in the 1990s and early 2000s was Valery Litskay, the separatist state's former foreign minister and chief advisor to its first self-styled president.

"Sheriff won the competition," Litskay told AFP, explaining they offered "the best prices and guarantees" that the factories would "continue running".

But the former official said the company has a "very dark criminal history", recalling that they had a "tough fight" with competitors. "If you go to our cemeteries, you will see whole alleys of bandits," he said. Gushan, Sheriff's co-founder and president, declined AFP's interview request. Litskay said the region's leadership "did not track who killed whom," conceding, "yes, it's not very pretty, but that's the reality of economic life."

It's "better to have a corporation of police", he added, than a "corporation of bandits." As they rose to power, the police officers launched new businesses. In 1997, they founded FC Sheriff, who earlier this month shocked Shakhtar Donetsk in their first group stage game and face Spanish giants Real Madrid tonight.

Dubbing Transnistria "Sheriff Republic", investigative outlet RISE Moldova found that by 2015 one third of all the money from the separatist enclave's budget was paid out to companies owned by Sheriff. Today, its companies export goods ranging from textiles to construction materials across Europe and caviar as far as the United States and Japan.

'Happy with the status quo'

Vadim Krasnoselsky, the current head of Transnistria whose presidential campaign was financed by Sheriff, hails the company as the region's "main taxpayer". "They create new jobs, they invest," he told AFP. "They are a reliable partner, they can be trusted."

Their monopoly, though, may not be a boon for Transnistria. The region is hemorrhaging young people, with its population halving to as low as 250,000 from around 500,000 during the Soviet era, according to several estimates. The main reason, analysts say, is Transnistria's average wage of \$250-300 per month — lower than the rest of Moldova.

In a 2006 referendum 97 percent of Transnistria's population wanted the region to join Russia. Now there is a "diversification of choice among the youth," said Andrei Mospanov, deputy director of the Tiraspol-based ISPIRR think tank.

Like all of his older friends, Andrei, 17, said he plans to leave for university to Russia or Chisinau. "I don't see any development in Transnistria," he told AFP. New Moldovan President Maia Sandu has said she wants her country to join the European Union and demanded Russian troops leave Transnistria.

But the breakaway statelet still affirms its allegiance to Moscow. In Tiraspol, a billboard reads "Russia in our hearts," while a portrait of Russian President Vladimir Putin hangs on a wall in Krasnoselsky's offices.

Negotiations on ending the frozen conflict have stalled for years — and insiders say that's because the leadership is happy with things just as they are. "Russia gives us free gas and troops, and they get their point of influence" on Europe, said Litskay. "We are very happy with the status quo." —AFP



TOKYO: This picture taken on March 15, 2021 shows Mongolian-born sumo wrestler Hakuho performing a ring-entering ceremony at Ryogoku Kokugikan in Tokyo. —AFP

The one-time rival called Hakuho "a tremendous yokozuna", in a post on Twitter after news of the retirement emerged. "I will save the rest of my words for when the two of us speak in person. But to sum up, thanks for all your hard work," Asashoryu wrote. Hakuho outlasted fellow yokozuna Harumafuji,

Kakuryu and Kisenosato.

Hakuho acquired Japanese citizenship in September 2019, giving him the right to run his own sumo stable after retirement. He leaves the sport as sumo's longest-serving yokozuna, having fought his 1,000th bout at the rank in July 2020. —AFP

Sports

Guardiola and Messi meet again as PSG take on Manchester City

Grealish signing highlights City's summer after missing out on Messi

PARIS: There was a time when a reunion between Lionel Messi and Pep Guardiola looked distinctly possible, but tonight they will be on opposite sides again when Paris Saint-Germain play Manchester City in the Champions League.

Had it not been for Jack Grealish, perhaps things would have turned out differently. City announced the £100 million (\$139m) signing of Grealish from Aston Villa on August 5, the same day Barcelona revealed Messi would not be staying at the Camp Nou.

A year ago, when Messi tried to force his departure from Catalonia, City appeared the most likely destination. In the end Barcelona prevented the six-time Ballon d'Or winner from leaving then and 12 months later Messi was prepared to stay put until it became clear the financial mess at the Camp Nou meant he could not.

If City had anticipated Messi becoming available, they might have moved for him. But instead, they focused their sights on Grealish and were trying to sign Harry Kane, a move that ultimately didn't happen. "Right now, it is not in our thoughts," Guardiola said when asked if City might move for Messi. It says much about the modern game that PSG were the only other realistic destination for the 34-year-old who Guardiola has described as the greatest player of all time.

Messi has played just three games for his new club and is yet to score. He has sat out PSG's last two matches with a knee problem, but the feeling is that Mauricio Pochettino has been saving him for City. After being held 1-1 by Club Brugge in their opening game, PSG need a positive result against City to stop their



Messi looks to open PSG scoring account

rivals taking control of their Champions League group.

On the receiving end

Messi has fancy opening his account in Paris on such an occasion, and Guardiola has already been on the receiving end of the Argentine's genius in Europe. After Guardiola left Barcelona in 2012 at the end of four glorious years in which he oversaw Messi's transition from superstar in the making to the best in the world, he faced his old club for the first time in the

Champions League semi-finals in 2015.

Barcelona beat Guardiola's Bayern 5-3 on aggregate on the way to winning the trophy. Messi produced a sublime performance to score two late goals in a 3-0 first-leg win at the Camp Nou that effectively killed the tie. The only other time the duo have come up against each other was in the group stage in 2016, just after Guardiola arrived at City. Messi scored a hat-trick as Barca won 4-0 at the Camp Nou and he then put his side ahead in Manchester, but City won 3-1.

This time the expectation is both City and PSG will progress from their group and both men are desperate to win the Champions League again — the last of Messi's four titles came in 2015, while Guardiola has not lifted the trophy since Messi inspired Barcelona to a 3-1 win over Manchester United in the 2011 final.

While the world waits to see how Messi's move to Paris turns out, Guardiola continues to regret the absence of a prolific center-forward as the final piece of his jigsaw at City. That was evident on Saturday when, for all their chances, they were restricted to a single goal by Gabriel Jesus in a 1-0 win at Chelsea. Prior to that Guardiola had spoken of his regret at City's lack of a "weapon" up front. "The club needs in the next years a striker. When it's not possible, it's not possible,



SAINT-GERMAIN-EN-LAYE, France: PSG's Brazilian sporting director Leonardo (left) speaks with president Nasser Al-Khelaifi as forward Lionel Messi arrives for a training session at the club's Camp des Loges training ground in Saint-Germain-en-Laye yesterday on the eve of their UEFA Champions League first round group A football match against Manchester City. — AFP

we move on with the fantastic squad we have," he said. PSG, of course, have more than one such player. Kylian Mbappe has been the top scorer in France in each of the last three seasons. Messi left Barcelona as their all-time top scorer with 672 goals in 778 appearances. His peak at

the Camp Nou came in Guardiola's final season there, in 2011-12, when he scored an incredible 73 goals. Nobody knows Messi's game better than Guardiola, but nobody knows better than Pep that there is no stopping Messi when he is at the top of his game. — AFP

Rebic emerging from Zlatan's shadow as Atletico await

MILAN: Zlatan Ibrahimovic might hog the headlines at AC Milan but Ante Rebic has quietly carved out a key role for himself in the Rossoneri attack despite stiff competition from both veteran stars and up-and-coming talent.

Milan fans are preparing for their first home Champions League match in over seven years with Spanish champions Atletico Madrid visiting the San Siro tonight. With ageing forwards Olivier Giroud and Ibrahimovic troubled by injuries and the coronavirus since the start of the season Croatia attacker Rebic has stepped into the breach up front, shifting away from his preferred position of winger to give Milan a point around which their younger attacking talent can buzz.

A scorer so far this season at Liverpool, where he gave Milan their half-time lead, and in a creditable 1-1 draw at Juventus, the 28-year-old also laid on Ibrahimovic's only goal of the season in their 2-0 swatting of Lazio earlier this month.



LA SPEZIA: Spezia's defender Petko Hristov tackles AC Milan's forward Ante Rebic during the Italian Serie A football match between Spezia and AC Milan on Saturday at the Alberto-Picco stadium in La Spezia. — AFP

His two goals add to the 11 he netted last season, all in the second half of the league campaign as Milan finished second behind champions Inter Milan, their highest league placing since 2012, when Ibrahimovic was in his first spell at the seven-time European champions.

This season Ibrahimovic has only featured in the 24 minutes he played against Lazio at the San Siro, and with

Giroud first being hit with a bout of COVID-19 and then a back problem Rebic has happily taken on the mantle of two prolific international goal scorers.

On Saturday Ibrahimovic admitted "I am not Superman" in an interview with magazine Sportweek, and with the Swede turning 40 next weekend and his contract up at the end of the season Rebic knows there is plenty of space

for him in coach Stefano Pioli's plans for the season. "I give him credit every day and after every match. He's a player who can play in any role and can help us change matches," said Pioli after the draw at Juve.

Low key performances in Milan's recent wins over Venezia and Spezia, which temporarily earned them top spot in Serie A, should not distract from the fact that Rebic has become a big game performer that the Rossoneri can rely on. He has scored in his last three matches against Juventus and has most impressed when it matters — such with his well-placed header at the Allianz Stadium which ensured Milan remain unbeaten in Italy.

Pioli subbed Rebic at half-time on Saturday against Spezia, saying afterwards that he was tired after featuring in every Milan match so far this season, alongside Giroud who was not fully match fit and struggled to make an impact on his return. Milan will take to the field tonight with memories of Liverpool's aggression fresh in their minds and with plenty of vibrant attacking talent ready to pounce on an Atletico team who were beaten by lowly Alaves. Brahim Diaz, Rafael Leao and Alexis Saelemaekers, who are all 22 years old, are growing into match winners but Rebic is one of those without whom Pioli can rarely do. —AFP

Ajax star Haller takes to Champions League in style

AMSTERDAM: Forget Lionel Messi or Cristiano Ronaldo, the real star of the opening round of games in this season's Champions League was Sebastien Haller, who scored four times for Ajax in their 5-1 thumping of Sporting in Portugal.

It was a remarkable Champions League debut for the 27-year-old Ivory Coast striker, the first player to score four goals in his maiden appearance in European football's flagship club competition since Marco van Basten for AC Milan against IFK Goteburg in 1992. "I remember when Marco van Basten did it, and he is one of the greatest players in the history of the game," said Ajax coach Erik ten Hag. "That proves how historic a performance it is from Sebastien, but it is also a reflection of his qualities. It's not just his physique but also his positioning and his finishing, and you also need to be really strong mentally to be able to do that."

Haller's first two goals in Lisbon came from inside the six-yard box in the opening nine minutes. He added two more in the second half from a fraction further out. That poaching ability is exactly why Ajax spent 22.5 million euros (\$27.5m) to bring Haller back to the Netherlands from West Ham United in January, but Haller had something of an inauspicious start to his career in Amsterdam.

Ajax somehow forgot to register their new recruit for last season's Europa League knockout phase. Had he been available they might have beaten Roma in the quarter-finals. Instead they went out. Haller did score 11 times in the Eredivisie in the second half of last season as Ajax romped to the title.

And he has started this season averaging a goal a game in an Ajax team that can't stop scoring — their first six Eredivisie outings featured three 5-0 wins and one 9-0 victory. It is something of a turnaround in fortunes for a player who cost West Ham a club record £45 million (50 million euros) from Eintracht Frankfurt in 2019 but scored just 10 times in 48 Premier League games.

He previously starred in Frankfurt alongside the likes of Ante Rebic and Luka Jovic, who went on to AC Milan and Real Madrid respectively. Before that Haller made his name in the Dutch league at Utrecht, scoring over 50 goals in three years, so Ajax knew exactly what they were getting. Meanwhile France, even with such attacking strength in depth, might regret missing out. Haller was born and brought up in the Paris suburbs and played for France all the way up to Under-21 level.

However, having reached the age of 26 without getting the call from Didier Deschamps, he opted to represent the Ivory Coast instead when the country of his mother's birth contacted him last year. "There comes a time when you need to make a decision, look at the competition in your position and be honest with yourself," he told So Foot magazine last year of his decision. "When I scored my first goal on my first cap against Madagascar, it was really something. I was so happy."

Haller recently scored both goals in a World Cup qualifying win against Cameroon and will hope to represent the Ivory Coast at the Africa Cup of Nations in the new year. First, he will be hoping to keep his remarkable Champions League goal-scoring record going when Ajax host Besiktas tonight. — AFP

Mum's the word for Dortmund's rising star Bellingham

DORTMUND: Jude Bellingham only turns 19 next June, but the England midfielder has already emerged as a leader on and off the pitch for Dortmund, where he shares a flat with his mum who keeps his feet firmly on the ground. Bellingham is in his second season in Germany, but will be one of the first names in Dortmund's starting line-up against Sporting Lisbon tonight in the Champions League.

"He's the most mature, most serious 18-year-old I've ever met," insists Dortmund's 2014 World Cup winner Mats Hummels. "Jude is already one of the leaders, one of the loudest on the team. He's a great footballer and a great guy. He'll go his own way no doubt about it."

Exactly where Bellingham's future "way" lies is the subject of much UK media speculation. His Dortmund contract runs until 2025, but Liverpool are reportedly at the front of a queue of Premier League clubs eager to sign the central midfielder who has been outstanding this season.

Dortmund sold Jadon Sancho to Manchester United for 85 million euros (\$100 million) this summer in July and Bellingham is the latest talented Englishman the German club has developed into a potential Premier League star.

England manager Gareth Southgate saw enough to give Bellingham his international debut last November. Signed from home-town club Birmingham City for 23 million euros as a raw 17-year-old last year, Bellingham has matured into one of the Bundesliga's best central midfielders.

"I'm sure we will see him in the Premier League in a few years," former Liverpool winger Steve McManaman wrote in an online column, predicting Bellingham is "going to be worth triple what Dortmund paid for him a year ago". Bellingham scored a dazzling goal, then set up Erling Braut Haaland to score in a 2-1 win at Besiktas in Dortmund's opening Champions League game.



MONCHENGLADBACH: Dortmund's midfielder Jude Bellingham (left) and Monchengladbach's midfielder Manu Kone vie for the ball during the German first division Bundesliga football match Borussia Monchengladbach and Borussia Dortmund in Monchengladbach, western Germany, on Saturday. — AFP

'Crazy how good he is'

Bellingham planted a kiss on Haaland's cheek during a post-match interview and their fledgling partnership also produced goals in August's 3-2 win over Hoffenheim. "It's crazy how good he is and he's only 18, three years younger than me," enthused Haaland. Dortmund coach Marco Rose is just as enthusiastic. "Jude is a great boy," said Rose, who listed the midfielder's "mentality", "willingness to work" and "intensity" as his main assets.

Bellingham still has much to learn, such as when he allowed Moenchengladbach's Denis Zakaria to react fastest to a loose ball in the area to score in Dortmund's 1-0 away defeat on Saturday. Without injured Haaland and club captain Marco Reus, Bellingham struggled to assert himself.

Off the pitch, Bellingham lives like any normal teenager. During his four years at Dortmund,

Sancho was regularly dropped for poor time-keeping. Bellingham has his mum keeping a close eye as they share a Dortmund flat while his younger brother and father are back home in Birmingham. COVID-19 travel restrictions meant the family were rarely together during the pandemic.

"We always said that one of us, either myself or Mark (Bellingham's father) would accompany him," Denise Bellingham told broadcaster DAZN. "There isn't a day that goes by when you don't think it would be nice to be together as a family, but we always knew it was on the cards."

Bellingham says he "couldn't be more grateful" to have a parent living with him. He claims not to suffer from pre-match nerves, but his mother has "butterflies every time I watch him. You worry about things, which is natural as a parent." — AFP

Brady outgunned as Stafford, Rams down Bucs

Tucker's record 66-yard field goal propels Ravens over Lions



INGLEWOOD: Matthew Stafford #9 of the Los Angeles Rams hands the ball to Sony Michel #25 during the first quarter in the game against the Tampa Bay Buccaneers at SoFi Stadium on Sunday in Inglewood, California. — AFP

LOS ANGELES: Matthew Stafford threw four touchdowns as the Los Angeles Rams outgunned Tom Brady and the Tampa Bay Buccaneers 34-24 in a heavyweight NFL showdown on Sunday. A potent offense and suffocating defense made it three wins out of three for Los Angeles as the reigning Super Bowl champion Buccaneers suffered their first defeat of the season.

Stafford, who joined the Rams from the Detroit Lions in a blockbuster trade earlier this year, finished with 343 yards with 27 completions and no interceptions as the Rams underscored their Super Bowl credentials with a convincing win.

Brady meanwhile threw for 432 yards but only one touchdown. The 44-year-old rushed for one score but was sacked three times during a torrid outing against a ferocious Rams defense led by Aaron Donald. Stafford found Tyler Higbee and Cooper Kupp for second-quarter touchdowns either side of a two-yard score by Tampa Bay wide receiver Chris Godwin to put the Rams 14-7 up heading into the second half.

DeSean Jackson's score put the Rams 21-7 ahead before Brady sneaked over for a close-range rushing touchdown to cut the deficit. Kupp's second touchdown and a 48-yard Matt Gay field

goal stretched the Rams lead to 31-14. After both sides swapped field goals, Tampa Bay rounded out the scoring with a consolation touchdown from Giovanni Bernard.

Elsewhere Sunday, Justin Tucker booted the Baltimore Ravens to victory over Detroit with the longest field goal in NFL history, sealing a dramatic 19-17 win. Tucker's monstrous 66-yard effort with three seconds remaining bounced off the crossbar and over at Detroit's Ford Field to complete a thrilling win for the Ravens.

'Best in history'

The long-range effort surpassed the previous longest field goal in NFL history, a successful 64-yard attempt by Matt Prater in 2013. "When it went off his foot, I thought it had a chance," Ravens coach John Harbaugh said. "He's the best kicker in NFL history." Tucker's winning field goal was his fourth of the day — he had also made successful kicks from 36, 50 and 32 yards.



Packers beat 49ers; Chiefs woes continue

In the late game, Green Bay also got a game-winning field goal with three seconds to go when kicker Mason Crosby made a 51-yard field goal to lift the Packers over the San Francisco 49ers 30-28. Quarterback Aaron Rodgers completed two long passes to Davante Adams during a last-minute drive to set the stage for Crosby's heroics.

In Kansas City, Justin Herbert threw for four touchdowns to win a thrilling shoot-out with Patrick Mahomes as the Los Angeles Chargers upset the Chiefs 30-24. The Chiefs slumped to their second consecutive defeat of the season after Herbert and a fired-up Chargers defense claimed victory in a tense divisional tussle at Arrowhead Stadium. Herbert threw for 281 yards with 26 completions and no interceptions to complete a win that leaves the Chiefs bottom of the AFC West after three games.

The Chiefs' Super Bowl-winning coach Andy Reid was taken to hospital following the game

after complaining of feeling ill but his condition was not believed to be serious, local media reported. The Rams' win over the Buccaneers means five teams now possess unbeaten records heading into week four.

The Arizona Cardinals — who face the Rams next week — maintained their undefeated start to the campaign with a 31-19 defeat of the Jacksonville Jaguars. The Jaguars had taken a 13-7 half-time lead after a remarkable touchdown from Jamal Agnew, the wide receiver galloping 109 yards to score after a missed Arizona field goal attempt. But a pair of second half touchdowns by running back James Conner and a pick six from Byron Murphy sealed victory for Arizona and left the Jags winless after three games.

In the AFC, the Las Vegas Raiders moved to 3-0 after a 31-28 overtime win over the Miami Dolphins. Daniel Carlson's 22-yard field goal settled a see-saw encounter which went to overtime after Dolphins quarterback Jacoby Brissett rushed for a touchdown in the dying seconds before a successful two-point conversion attempt. Raiders quarterback Derek Carr finished with 386 passing yards and two touchdowns in the win. — AFP

US young guns overwhelm Europe in Ryder Cup rout

KOHLER: The United States crushed Europe 19-9 to recapture the Ryder Cup on Sunday in a performance captain Steve Stricker called the "greatest of all time." Collin Morikawa, the 24-year-old world number three, delivered the winning half point when he tied his match with Viktor Hovland at Whistling Straits.

He was one of eight 20-somethings on a US team that featured nine players in the world's top 11 — all gunning to regain the coveted trophy won by Europe in France three years ago. "Speechless," US captain Steve Stricker said, tearing up as he talked of the commitment that resulted in dominant victory.

The Americans became the first team to notch 19 points, beating the previous record of 18.5 achieved twice by each team before. "This is the greatest team of all time right here," Stricker said. "These guys are unbelievable. They come with a lot of passion, a lot of energy, a lot of game. They are just so good."

World number two Dustin Johnson, at 37 the oldest member of the team, provided a template for his younger colleagues, his 1-up victory singles victory over Paul Casey giving him a perfect 5-0 record in a maximum five matches.

He became the first American since Larry Nelson in 1979 — and just the fifth player ever — to go five-for-five when he prevailed in a tightly contested battle with Casey that saw them tie the first five holes. Johnson took the lead for good at the eighth, but he

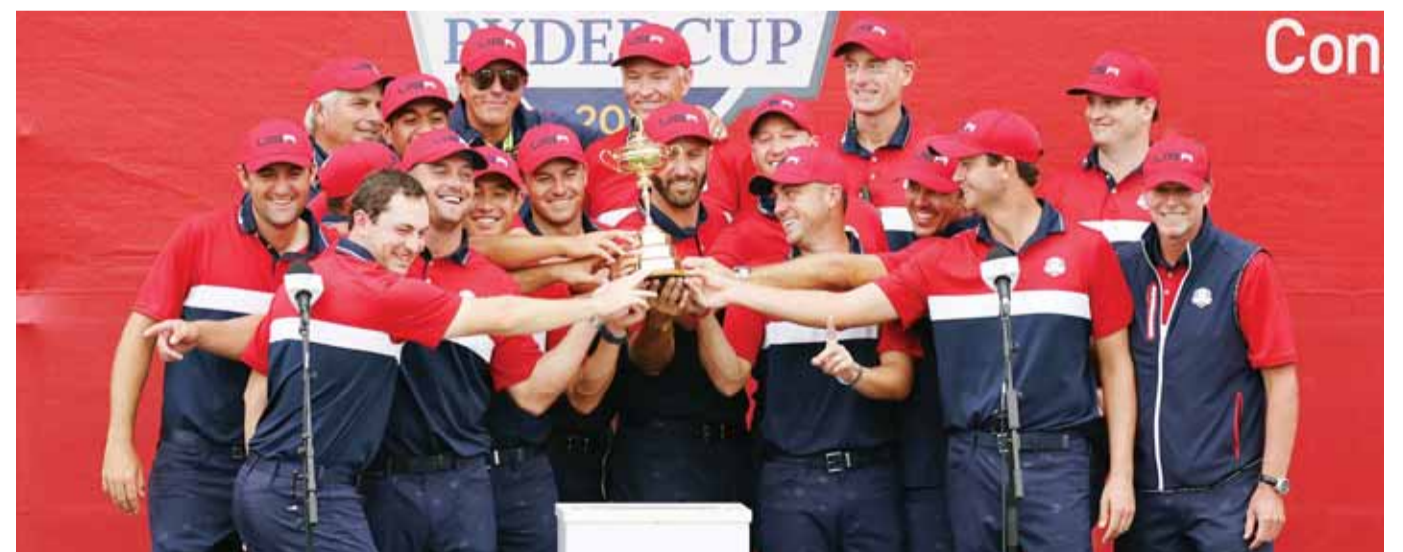
never led by more than two and couldn't put Casey away until the bitter end.

Johnson said he shared a key trait with his young teammates in that fueled their bid to stop Europe winning a fifth Ryder Cup in six editions. "We do not like to lose," he said. "We had a lot of rookies on the Ryder Cup, but it didn't feel like they were rookies ... and they didn't play like they were rookies ... and they stepped up to the plate and they all wanted it."

They made that clear from the start and took an 11-5 lead into Sunday's 12 singles matches, the six-point gap more than either team has ever overcome on the final day to lift the trophy. It meant the Americans needed just 3.5 points to win the Cup.

Pdraig Harrington's Europe needed nine to retain it, and it was clear when the US powered to the lead in most of the early matches that they wouldn't do it. Morikawa, who won his second major title at the British Open this year, had assured the US of victory with a brilliant birdie at the par-three 17th, where he blasted his tee shot to three feet, going 1-up with one to play. He missed a six-footer at 18 to win the match outright, but thanks to his half-point the American celebrations were already underway.

Scottie Scheffler, a Ryder Cup newcomer with the lowest ranking in the US team at 21 in the world, had opened the floodgates when he took out world number one Jon Rahm 4&3. Rahm, who had excelled all week amid Europe's overall struggles,



KOHLER: Team United States celebrates with the Ryder Cup after defeating Team Europe 19 to 9 during Sunday Singles Matches of the 43rd Ryder Cup at Whistling Straits on Sunday in Kohler, Wisconsin. — AFP

became just the third world number one to lose a Ryder Cup singles match. "We all saw it, we knew it was happening," Jordan Spieth said of Scheffler's convincing victory, which Johnson called "one thing that could really push the US team."

'Best event in golf'

Rory McIlroy gained the first point of the day with a 3&2 victory over Olympic champion Xander Schauffele, but his first win of the week was no cause for celebration as he contemplated the flood of red on the scoreboard. "(I'm) incredibly proud to be a part of this team," McIlroy said, his voice cracking. "I've been extremely disappointed that I haven't contributed more for

the team." Patrick Cantlay, the US PGA Tour's player of the year and FedEx Cup playoff champion, polished off European rookie Shane Lowry 4&2. Bryson DeChambeau followed with a 3&2 victory over Sergio Garcia, the Spanish Ryder Cup great who this week took his tally of match wins to a record 25.

DeChambeau's power proved too much for Garcia. The American set the tone at the first hole, driving the green at the par-four and striding off the tee to wild cheers with his driver held aloft. He won the hole with a 41-foot eagle putt and led the rest of the way.

Lowry, the 2019 British Open champion, had taken a 1-up lead over Cantlay with a birdie at the par-5 second, but Cantlay

roared away from there. The American won four straight holes for a 3-up lead, and didn't trail again, winning the last three holes for the convincing score.

Four-time major champion Brooks Koepka rallied for a 2&1 victory over Bernd Wiesberger and Justin Thomas led all the way in a 4&3 victory over Tyrrell Hatton. Veterans Ian Poulter and Lee Westwood delivered singles victories, Poulter beating Tony Finau 3&2 and Westwood edging Harris English 1-up. Tommy Fleetwood grabbed one more half point for Europe when he rallied from 1-down through 15 to tie Spieth — who has still never won a Ryder Cup singles match in four attempts. — AFP