

2 Kuwait remembers late Amir on first anniversary of his passing



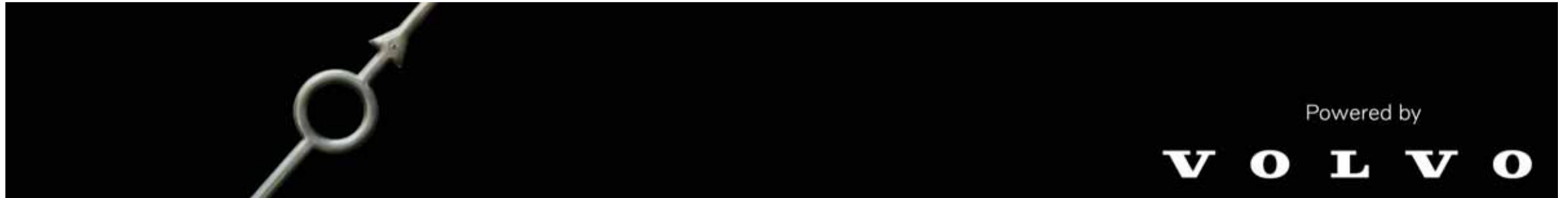
5 Murders rose 30% in US in 2020: FBI



12 Art flourishes on walls of Morocco



14 England World Cup winner Roger Hunt dies aged 83



Health minister declares life in Kuwait back to normal

Kuwait waiting for approval to vaccinate children under 12

Outstanding achievements during Sheikh Nawaf's reign as Amir



KUWAIT: In this photo taken on Sept 30, 2020, HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah gestures after he was sworn in as the country's 16th ruler during a National Assembly's special session. — KUNA (See Page 3)

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Life in Kuwait has returned to normal and all places have reopened for normal operations, Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah said yesterday, adding that precautionary health measures should still be observed. The minister said that Kuwait is among a few countries where life has returned to normal following more than 18 months of closures due to the coronavirus pandemic.

He also said vaccinations are carried out in the best of ways and enough vaccines are available, adding health conditions should continue to be observed at schools, malls and mosques. The minister however said there could be restrictions for certain activities, but these restrictions will be lighter than before.

Health authorities in the country have said more than 70 percent of the population has taken two doses of approved vaccines, thus achieving what is known as "herd immunity". The ministry has started giving a third booster dose to certain sections of the society, especially the elderly, high-risk patients and medical staff.

Sheikh Basel said the country is waiting for authorization to start vaccinating children aged 5 to 12, adding the ministry is prepared whenever the approval will be granted. The health situation in Kuwait has improved substantially, with the

country reporting under 100 new coronavirus cases for the last 24 days, including less than 50 new cases for the past seven days in a row. The number of coronavirus patients in hospitals dropped to only 50, including 10 cases in intensive care units.

Yesterday, schoolteachers who have refused to take the vaccination demonstrated again outside the education ministry for being prevented from entering schools without a negative PCR test result. The teachers are insisting that the ministry requirement is an act of discrimination against them. They are demanding to be allowed to enter schools without vaccination or PCR tests.

Meanwhile, a number of Kuwaiti lawmakers posted on their Twitter accounts a statement they said was issued by MPs condemning what they called a campaign of violence and discrimination against Muslims in India. The statement said acts of killing, arson and evictions have been carried out against Muslims by fanatic Hindu groups without sufficient condemnation by the government of India.

The statement strongly condemned the brutal atrocities and "ethnic cleansing" against Muslims and called for protecting their rights, especially the right to live in peace. It was not clear how many of the 50 lawmakers signed the statement, which called on the Kuwaiti government to issue a statement condemning the crimes committed against Indian Muslims.

Campaigning muted as Qatar goes to polls



AL-WAKRAH, Qatar: Saeed Al-Burshaid, a candidate for Qatar's inaugural Shura Council election, holds a campaign rally on Sept 19, 2021. — AFP

DOHA: The modest crowd listens respectfully as TV actor Saeed Al-Burshaid gives his first stump speech ahead of Qatar's inaugural legislative polls, an unprecedented exercise in democracy in the resource-rich monarchy. Burshaid gesticulates passionately as he builds to a crescendo in a nondescript and largely undecorated sports hall south of Doha, watched by a few dozen people sipping tea served by waiters.

"It's our job to let them (voters) know, and to educate the people," enthuses Burshaid, a minor celebrity in the Gulf who also previously ran Qatar TV's drama department. The Oct 2 election is for 30 members of the 45-strong Shura Council, a body with limited powers that was previously appointed by the amir as an advisory chamber.

While it is a rare nod to democracy in the region, observers say this is no turning point for Qatar, and point out that it comes with heightened scrutiny on the country ahead of next year's World Cup. Burshaid's laminated manifesto pledges action on both workers' and women's rights, issues for which the 2022 World Cup hosts have been criticized.

Continued on Page 2

Dubai Expo to welcome millions

DUBAI: Millions of people will begin converging on Dubai this week as the COVID-delayed Expo 2020, the world's biggest event since the pandemic, finally unveils its gleaming pavilions in the desert. The Expo site in the dusty Dubai suburbs has remained strictly off-limits during its year-long postponement but the wraps will come off on Thursday at an opening ceremony attended by Emirati royalty.

Architectural marvels and a long list

of technological innovations will feature among the exhibits, or pavilions, showcasing the ingenuity of more than 190 countries. The first world fair was held in London in 1851, when it was housed in the purpose-built Crystal Palace, and it featured the Eiffel Tower - intended as a temporary attraction - in Paris in 1889.

Dubai's edition, the first in the Middle East, is expected to be the biggest event ever held in the region with estimates of 25 million visitors over its six-month lifespan. The next biggest event held in the world during the pandemic was the Tokyo Olympics, where strict virus rules saw spectators banned from nearly all venues. Expo 2020 will be indelibly tinged by the pandemic, however, with masks and social distancing

Continued on Page 2



In this file photo taken on May 13, 2021, Arabian oryx are pictured in the UAE desert with the Dubai skyline in the background. — AFP

Saudi Arabia's women cyclists break norms

JEDDAH: For years, Samar Rabhini thought it would be "impossible" to cycle in the streets of conservative Saudi Arabia, where women's sport was long frowned upon. Now she runs the "Courage" mixed-gender cycling club in the Red Sea city of Jeddah,

ignoring the raised eyebrows that persist despite the kingdom's social reforms. "I chose the name 'Courage' because what we are doing takes courage... to go out on the streets and practice in public and in crowded places," she told AFP.

Still, Rabhini said the reactions have been vastly more subdued than before 2017, when the Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman kicked off a drive for liberalization. "The situation before 2017 was very difficult because of society's reluctance to

Continued on Page 2



JEDDAH: A picture taken on Sept 17, 2021 shows Saudi and foreign women, part of a mixed-gender cycling club, taking a break during a cycling tour. — AFP

Bangladesh mom and son reunited after 70 years

DHAKA: A Bangladeshi man in his 80s has been reunited with his nearly 100-year-old mother after about 70 years thanks to social media. Abdul Kuddus Munsu was sent to live with his uncle when he was about 10, but lost touch with his family after running away and being adopted by two sisters. "This is the

happiest day of my life," the 82-year-old told AFP from Brahmanbaria, the eastern border district where he was born in 1939.

In April a businessman posted a video of Kuddus on Facebook, appealing for help finding his parents. All Kuddus could remember about his first decade was the name of his parents and his village. A distant relative in the village spotted the post and informed Kuddus that his mother, Mongola Nessa, thought to be in her late 90s, was still alive.

So Kuddus - himself a father to three grown-up sons and five daughters - travelled about 350 km from the western city of Rajshahi, to end the decades of estrangement. Over the weekend he was finally

Continued on Page 2



Abdul Kuddus Munsu interacts with his mother Mongola Nessa following their reunification. — AFP

Local

Kuwait remembers late Amir on first anniversary of his passing

His humanitarian efforts deeply recognized by international community



Kuwait's late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.



KUWAIT: This picture taken on September 29, 2020 shows mourners carrying the coffin of the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to be laid to rest at the Sulaibikhat cemetery. — KUNA photos

KUWAIT: As it marks today the first anniversary of the passing of its late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Kuwait remembers his great national and international contributions and achievements during his 14-year rule. On September 29, 2020, Kuwait was deeply saddened by the departure of its leader at the age of 91. His passing was not only a loss to Kuwait but also to the Arab World and the international community, as the late Amir was known for his neutral policy in resolving conflicts, as well as his wise leadership.

On January 29th, 2006, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad became Kuwait's 15th ruler and the first to take the constitutional oath in front of the National Assembly since 1965. He was fully backed by members of the legislative and executive authorities. Since his assumption of power, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad was regionally and internationally appreciated for his wise leadership and diplomatic efforts to protect his country from any surrounding instability. Before becoming the ruler of Kuwait, the late Amir had also exerted great efforts in maintaining a neutral foreign policy as a former Foreign Minister.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad received many awards of appreciation during his time, the last one being on September 18, 2020, as former US President Donald Trump recognized him with the Legion of Merit Degree Chief Commander. The award is the highest US military medal given to a non-American, in appreciation of Sheikh Sabah's efforts and achievements.

Rich resume

Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad was the fourth son of Kuwait's late Amir Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, who sent him to Al-Mubarakiya school in his childhood, and later to different countries to continue his studies and gain experience. The first position he assumed was a member in the supreme executive committee in 1954, where he was tasked with maintaining and monitoring the country's interests. Moreover, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad became president of the Department of Social Affairs and Labor in 1955, where he organized job opportunities for for-

eign workers and launched a youth technical training center. He also launched centers for child-care, motherhood, elderly and people with special needs, while encouraging women societies and sports clubs.

Meanwhile, the late Amir supported arts and culture, opening the first center for national folklore in 1956. In 1957, he became president of the department of publishing, where he issued the "Kuwait Al-Yawm" Gazette and established Kuwait's printing center and supervised Al-Arabi Magazine. Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad also supported re-issuing old books and documents. He formed a special committee for the "Writing Kuwait's History" project, and played a role in issuing the law of media and publications.

After the country's independence in 1961, the late Amir was appointed as a member in the Constituency Assembly, which was tasked with writing Kuwait's constitution. Sheikh Sabah was later appointed as minister of guidance and information in 1962, in the country's first government. After the first parliamentary election on 28 January, 1963, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad became Minister of Foreign Affairs, where he had great international achievements during his 40-year term in the position, gaining the title "pioneer of the world's diplomats" in appreciation of his efforts.

Peace efforts

Kuwaitis remember with pride the role of Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad as former Foreign Minister and how he raised the Kuwaiti flag over the UN's building, after Kuwait became a member on May 11, 1963. The peace efforts of Kuwait's late Amir were also deeply appreciated by Arab states, as he brought an end to the civil war in Yemen in August 1966. He also played a role in signing a peace agreement between South and North Yemen in October 1972, while he succeeded in ending the media war between Yemen and Oman in 1984 and establishing diplomatic ties between the two countries. The wise and neutral leadership of the late Amir was key to protect Kuwait's security and stability, as the country was surrounded by multiple dangers and instability, espe-

cially during the Iraqi-Iranian war from 1980 to 1988. While serving as Foreign Minister, Sheikh Sabah worked hard to boost Kuwait's relations with the international community and build strong ties with the five permanent UN member countries. Such efforts served Kuwait well especially during the Iraqi Invasion in August 1990, as the international community stood with the Kuwaiti right in regaining its sovereignty by any means.

Furthermore, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad served as Acting Minister of Information between February 2, 1971, and February 3, 1975. On February 16, 1978, he was appointed as Deputy Prime Minister and on March 4, 1981, he became Minister of Information, in addition to Minister of Foreign Affairs until February 9, 1982. On March 3, 1985, Sheikh Sabah was appointed as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs until October 18, 1992, when he became First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs. On July 13, 2003, an Amiri decree was issued to appoint Sheikh Sabah as Prime Minister, which was the first time in Kuwait separating the Crown Prince position from the Prime Minister.

Development boost

As Prime Minister, Sheikh Sabah focused on development, mainly in the economic field. He strongly encouraged the private sector and supported youth's Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), aiming to turn Kuwait into a regional financial center. Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad continued serving as Prime Minister until January 2006, when he became Kuwait's ruler, succeeding late Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. During his ruling term, Kuwait saw a prominent development boost, supported by big projects such as Sabah Al-Ahmad Sea City, the first city executed by the private sector. Other projects launched include Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah Hospital, Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port, Jaber Al-Ahmad Bridge, Al-Zour Refinery, Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium, Kuwait Airport's new terminal and multiple residential areas.

Meanwhile, the humanitarian efforts of Sheikh Sabah were deeply recognized by the international

Speaker recalls 'exceptional, wise' late Amir

KUWAIT: The Speaker of Kuwait National Assembly Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem said yesterday, on the occasion of the first anniversary of the passing of late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, it is a chance to recall the traits of this "exceptional and wise leader." In a press statement, Ghanem said "we should remember, with pride and gratitude, the late Amir who secured the country during an extremely sensitive regional and international conditions." The late Amir was keen on solving problems of his people, and people of other countries and was keen to strengthen the values of moderation, accord and reconciliation, and rejected conflict and crises, Ghanem noted. "As much as we mourn the passing of our late Amir, we look high upon his successor, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, who is faithful to the late Sheikh Sabah, and his wise, mature and far-sighted politics," Ghanem added. — KUNA

community, leading the UN to present Kuwait with the "Humanitarian Center" title, and the "Humanitarian Leader" for the late Amir. The titles were presented by the UN after Kuwait had held the international donor conferences for Syria for three consecutive times, where the country pledged generous donations to support Syrian refugees. Also, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad greatly supported the Palestinian cause and made it one of Kuwait's top priorities, exerting great efforts to aid and ease the suffering of Palestinians. — KUNA

Dubai Expo to welcome...

Continued from Page 1

mandatory on site. Visitors will need to be vaccinated or have a negative PCR test to enter.

The United Arab Emirates, population 10 million, has reported rapidly dwindling coronavirus cases in recent weeks, dropping below 300 on Sunday - less than half the figure a fortnight earlier. Dubai's ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum is typically bullish about the fair, promising "the most exceptional Expo in the history of the event". "Our nation's talented citizens were able to convert this vision into a comprehensive plan for success, conveying a message to the world that our commitment to excellence makes us an important contributor to shaping the globe's future," he said, according to official media.

The fair is another feather in the cap for Dubai, which has long strived for recognition with achievements such as the Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building at a towering 828 m. UAE media highlighted a travel company report which named the building as the world's most searched landmark, with The National wondering: "Has Expo 2020 made Burj Khalifa the new

Eiffel Tower?" "The core of World Expo has always been a sense of global spectacle, and the UAE's built environment is well placed to give it just that," said an opinion piece in the newspaper.

The postponement has worked out well in one respect for the UAE, which celebrates the 50th anniversary of its founding on Dec 2. Workers were putting the final touches on infrastructure and facilities at the site this week as the clock ticked down to the delayed launch. A succession of politicians, business leaders, celebrities and sports people are expected at Expo, whose diverse attractions include the Harlem Globetrotters and a Chinese robot panda.

A full-scale hyperloop cabin, touted as the future of long-distance travel and transport, is among the exhibits, while Egypt has imported an ancient coffin from pharaonic days. China has one of the largest pavilions - a LED-lit, lamp-shaped creation - while Morocco's is made from traditional mud-building methods. The Dutch have a pyramid covered with edible plants and irrigated by solar-generated rainwater.

Expo's major themes are opportunity, mobility and sustainability, and the site centers on the imposing Al Wasl ("Connection") Plaza, which will be lit by 360-degree projections on its giant dome. The fairgrounds will be opened to the public on Friday. — AFP

Campaigning muted as Qatar...

Continued from Page 1

Burshaid praises the country's Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani and his 2030 development plan. "The system - we want to make it more open, and also to discuss modern issues," says Burshaid, who is wearing an immaculate white thobe and was ushered into the hall on a thick red carpet. The Shura will be allowed to propose legislation, approve the budget and recall ministers. But the all-powerful amir will wield a veto. After a pre-event break for prayers, the speech by Burshaid, a candidate for the 14th district, goes ahead uninterrupted, with neither of his two rivals present.

Campaigning in the Arabian desert nation has been subdued for much of the 14-day period allotted for drumming up support. The candidates are mostly men, with just 28 women among the 284 hopefuls running for the 30 available council seats. The remaining 15 seats will be appointed by the amir. Male voters at Burshaid's segregated campaign event, who greet each other with customary kisses on the head, outnumber women five to one.

Analysts say the influence of the Shura is likely to be limited, and expect many voters to cast ballots for family members. "I don't think it portends great things for Qatar in terms of domestic legislation or reform," said Michael Stephens, a senior fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute. Diplomatic sources suggest families and tribes have already conducted internal ballots to determine who will be elected for their constituencies.

Candidates will have to stand in electoral divisions linked to where their family or tribe was based in the 1930s, using data compiled by the then-British authorities. Voter Nasser Al-Kuwari said he hoped people would not simply opt for those "closest to (their) family or friends". — AFP

Saudi Arabia's women...

Continued from Page 1

accept women in sport, especially cycling," the 23-year-old told AFP. "There would be glares, people filming and bewilderment, with people unable to comprehend what's going on when we biked."

In the past, the involvement of Saudi women in sport has been met with hostility from some conservatives who see it as immoral and a gateway to indecent acts. But now women's cycling has become far more common in Jeddah, where Rahbini and her friends glided past cars on a recent ride. She was wearing a black tracksuit, white jacket and a helmet, with her hair flowing underneath in the wind. "Now, the large number of women who cycle on almost a daily basis have made female cycling a familiar thing," said Rahbini, whose

club has hundreds of women members. Saudi Arabia's social changes have included allowing women to drive, the reopening of cinemas, and mixed-gender music concerts. Rahbini, who organizes bike tours and gives riding lessons twice a week, said she hopes to see more women and girls involved in cycling. The "Courage" club rents out bikes and all the necessary equipment for a small fee, or for free for those who cannot afford it, she said.

For Fatima Salem, 44, cycling is not only fun but a great way to stay fit. "I used to cycle when I was a child, and it took me a long time to take it up again," said the mother of four, who wore a headscarf and a pink T-shirt over her long-sleeved tracksuit. "What is happening is new to us and to women in society, and it is beautiful allowing women to discover their hobbies." While Saudi Arabia is not equipped with bike lanes, Rahbini hopes that will soon change, urging the government to set up proper infrastructure. "My dream is for every Saudi woman to cycle," she said. — AFP

Bangladesh mom and son...

Continued from Page 1

reunited with his mother, who identified him by a tear-mark on his hand, as well as his sister. "My mother is

very old and she can't speak properly," he added. "She was crying after seeing me and holding my hands. I told her that your son is back and you don't have to worry about anything from now." "They held each other's hands and cried for a long time as they were reunited," Kuddus's nephew Shafiqul Islam told AFP. "Hundreds of villagers who came to see this remarkable scene also have tears in their eyes." — AFP

Local

Outstanding achievements in Sheikh Nawaf's reign as Amir

Amir receives congratulations on 1st anniversary of power assumption

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday a cable of congratulations from His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, on the first anniversary of his office assumption. In the cable, His Highness the Crown Prince expressed his sincere wishes for His Highness the Amir, with full health and wellness, and for the State of Kuwait further progress, growth and prosperity under his wise leadership. His Highness the Amir sent a cable to His Highness the Crown Prince, thanking him for his kind feelings, wishing him a long healthy life.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir received a congratulatory cable from National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem yesterday on the occasion of the first anniversary of His Highness' assumption of office. Ghanem wished His Highness a long healthy life and more development for Kuwait. His Highness the Amir sent a cable to Speaker Ghanem, thanking him and the MPs for their kind feelings.

Furthermore, His Highness the Amir received a congratulatory cable from Chief of Kuwait National Guard His Highness Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah on the occasion. His Highness Sheikh Salem expressed his gratitude for His Highness Sheikh Sabah's wise leadership and great achievements. His Highness the Amir sent a cable to His Highness Sheikh Salem Al-Ali, thanking him for his kind feelings. His Highness the Amir also prayed to Allah to protect Kuwait's peace and security and wished His Highness Sheikh Salem a long healthy life.

Moreover, His Highness the Amir received a cable from His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, congratulating him on the same occasion. In the cable, His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad appreciated His Highness the Amir's sincere efforts to push forward the country's national development process, while commending the achievements made so far in various fields. In reply, His Highness the Amir sent His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad a cable thanking and appreciating him for his kind sentiments.

His Highness the Amir also received a cable from His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, congratulating him on the 1st anniversary since he came to power. In the cable, His Highness the Prime Minister said he is proud of His Highness the Amir's wise leadership and directions, appreciating the country's national development thanks to his farsightedness and relentless efforts for wider development horizons. His Highness the Prime Minister wished His Highness the Amir good health and wellbeing, and security and peace for the dear nation. His Highness the Amir replied by sending His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled a thank-you letter appreciating his noble feelings and wishing more development accomplishments in the country.

Outstanding achievements

Following a long list of outstanding achievements, Kuwait has pledged allegiance to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-

Jaber Al-Sabah as the country's ruler on September 29, 2020, after the passing of the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. On that day, the first anniversary of which falls today, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad was named as the country's 16th ruler amid a smooth transition as usual when the new Amir takes charge of the State after his predecessor. At that time, the government held a special session and named His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad as Amir, in line with Kuwait's Constitution and Article Four of law No 4 issued in 1964. As a result, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad was chosen as the country's ruler after 54 years of service under several Kuwaiti rulers, gaining him confidence of all rulers. He was appointed Governor of Hawally, then Minister of Interior, Minister of Defense, Minister of Social Affairs and Public Work, Deputy Chief of National Guards and Deputy Prime Minister and finally Minister of Interior.

Before being named Amir, Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad was appointed as the Crown Prince, in line



Mediation efforts crowned with Gulf reconciliation

with the Amiri Decree issued by the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad on February 7, 2006, and held that position for 14 years. As Crown Prince, His Highness Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad backed the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and contributed to development of the country, and maintaining its stability and security. On September 30, 2020, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad was sworn in as the country's new ruler before a National Assembly special session held in accordance with the 60th Article of the Constitution.

Period of progress

Under the era of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad, the country has begun a historic period of construction and progress towards a prosperous future, in completion of the phases started by his predecessors. His Highness the Amir paid much attention to local issues: as he is keen on all details related to the country's affairs and citizens' matters, in addition to the ongoing conditions facing the world due to the coronavirus that prompted His Highness the Amir to instruct officials to do their best to curb the pandemic's repercussions in the country.

On economy, His Highness the Amir inspired the concerned bodies to make efforts that contribute to spurring the economic sectors and developing their products and services as well as creating

tion of the vision for the 'New Kuwait 2035' vision. He also added that Kuwait is proud to be the first country in the Gulf Cooperation Council to launch the 'Women's Economic Empowerment Initiative.' The Kuwaiti ambassador pointed out that women have a prominent role in the private sector, whether they are banks' CEOs or major companies, where the percentage of women's participation in the private sector has reached 50 percent and in the government sector reached 63 percent.

The ambassador affirmed Kuwait's endeavor for the comprehensive development of the individual's personality through a distinguished educational system based on human development in all its mental, social, professional and emotional aspects. He stressed on Kuwait's interest in developing its legislation in order to enhance the protection of domestic workers, as it issued Law No 68 of 2015 regard-



Ambassador Jamal Al-Ghunaim

ing domestic workers and established a center for housing domestic workers in 2016. This center received praise from the rapporteur on human trafficking, especially women and children, in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration. At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, Kuwait provided a financial contribution to the World Health Organization, as well as several countries, estimated at \$100 million. He also touched on the World Health Organization's Secretary-General praise during his official visit to Kuwait. The ambassador affirmed Kuwait's commitment to cooperation with treaty bodies, special procedures and United Nations experts in the field of human rights. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights is a multilateral treaty adopted by United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2200A on December 16, 1966, and in force from 23 March 1976 in accordance with Article 49 of the covenant. — KUNA



KUWAIT: In this photo taken on September 30, 2020, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah swears in as the country's 16th ruler before a National Assembly special session. — KUNA

competitive investment opportunities, in addition to paying attention to the industrial and agricultural sectors and developing their products and exports. Furthermore, His Highness the Amir paid much attention to youth and directed officials to take care of this segment of society and open future horizons for them through providing them with the best academic and scientific methods, and boosting Kuwait's values amongst them to help them take part in the country's process of construction and development.

On media, His Highness the Amir has stressed the importance of national responsibility put on media institutions' shoulders to highlight the country's issues and concerns of citizens. His Highness the Amir was keen on honoring those who made outstanding achievements and pioneering initiatives to encourage them for further excellence and success so as to partake in developing and enhancing their country's status in international arenas.

Gulf reconciliation

Kuwait's mediation efforts, started during the late Amir's era and intensified by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad, and succeeded in reaching the Gulf reconciliation and consequently signing the Al-Ula agreement on January 5, 2021, on the sidelines of the GCC Summit hosted by Saudi Arabia. Kuwait has played a key role in making that paramount step. His Highness the Amir has been maintaining Kuwait's policy in terms of its ties with Arab countries and keen on coordination and constructive cooperation with the Arab leaders in all issues to resolve the problems facing the Arab

nation, giving top priority to the Palestinian cause as the Arab central issue.

Under the leadership of His Highness the Amir, Kuwait has maintained its long-standing policy in terms of respecting the countries' sovereignty, and avoid interfering in their domestic affairs, sticking to international legitimacy, maintaining international security and peace, and settling the conflicts amongst countries through dialogue and peaceful ways. His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad was born on June 25, 1937 as the sixth son of late Amir Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah who is the 10th Amir of the country from 1921-1950.

Since the country's independence, His Highness the Amir has worked in politics since he was appointed by the late Amir Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah as Governor of Hawally on February 12, 1962. He maintained that post until March 19, 1978, when he was named as interior minister in the era of the late Amir Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. On January 26, 1988, he was appointed as defense minister and minister of social affairs and work on April 20, 1991, after the liberation of Kuwait from the Iraqi invasion.

From October 16, 1994, he was named as deputy chief of National Guard and interior minister on July 13, 2003, then First Deputy Prime Minister along with the interior ministry portfolio on October 16, 2003. He maintained in that post until he was named as the Crown Prince in 2006. His Highness the Amir is highly characterized by enhancing values and principles, and believes in the unity, cooperation and cohesion amongst all Kuwaitis that contribute to strengthening, developing, progressing the country. — KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah chairs the Cabinet's weekly meeting. — KUNA

Cabinet congratulates Amir on 1st anniversary

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti Cabinet voiced sincere congratulations and greetings to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on the first anniversary of his assumption of power. This came during the Cabinet meeting held yesterday at Seif Palace, under the chairmanship of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. The ministers wished His Highness the Amir everlasting good health and success in leading the country. The Cabinet recalled with great appreciation the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah who contributed greatly to the country's prosperity.

Furthermore, the Cabinet listened to a presentation by His Highness the Prime Minister on the results of his participation in the 76th session of the UN General Assembly in New York, as His Highness the Amir's representative, Minister of Health, and Acting Foreign Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Dr Basel Humoud Al-Sabah said after the meeting. During the UNGA session, His Highness the Premier delivered Kuwait's speech, which highlighted the most outstanding regional and international issues, including the coronavirus, and its repercussions on food security and education. The speech also focused on the Palestinian cause, the Yemeni and Syrian crises, the situation in Iraq and Libya's affair.

Afterwards, the Cabinet listened to a presentation made by Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel on the latest statistics on coronavirus-related deaths and caseload that are still witnessing a great decline. The minister briefed the Cabinet on the vaccination campaign in the country, as there is a third booster dose given to people to provide the best way of protection against the virus.

Meanwhile, the Cabinet reviewed recommendation of the economic affairs committee on the follow-up report of the 2020/2021 annual plan for the final account. The Cabinet has assigned Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment to refer the recommendation to the National Assembly.

The Cabinet was informed about the committee's recommendation on the visual presentation submitted by the Minister of Finance on measures taken by government bodies regarding the Cabinet's decision on depletion of liquidity of the general reserve and the necessity of finding radical solutions to face the State's budget deficit. The Cabinet urged assigned government bodies to rapidly re-order their situation and coordinate with the Ministry of Finance on the details of the Cabinet's decision in this regard.

Moreover, the Cabinet discussed latest regional and global political affairs, expressing sincere congratulations to Saudi King Salman Bin Abdulaziz and Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman on the 91st anniversary of the Kingdom's National Day, which occurred last Thursday. Finally, the Cabinet condemned the failed coup attempt in Sudan, affirming Kuwait's support to, and solidarity with, Sudan's institutions and efforts aiming to meet aspirations of Sudanese people of achieving security, stability and prosperity in the Arab country. — KUNA

Kuwait's development plans focus on promoting human rights: Ambassador

GENEVA: Kuwait's development plans focused on investing in people and promoting human rights, said Kuwaiti permanent delegate to the UN Ambassador Jamal Al-Ghunaim Tuesday. This came during the discussion of Kuwait's 3rd international covenant report on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in the United Nations' headquarter in Geneva.

Ambassador Ghunaim stressed that Kuwait has taken several measures in order to guarantee and preserve these rights, and has already been able to provide several legislative, institutional and societal guarantees for human rights. He also affirmed that Kuwait has taken a firm decision to include the 2030 sustainable development goals (SDGs) in the second plan (2015/16-2019/20) within the New Kuwait 2035 Vision, and the government's work program has been formulated under the slogan 'Towards Sustainable Development'. Furthermore, he said that the third development plan 2020-25, which was in harmony with the 2030 SDGs, included a set of programs, policies and goals related to human rights.

He noted that this plan is based on five main goals: the development of the northern region, building a knowledge economy, the development of a government that supports the sustainability of welfare, and the empowerment of citizens. It also includes nine major development programs: building an international economic zone, public privatization, strengthening an active private sector, enhancing the capabilities of citizens and institutions, developing a coherent and transparent government, developing a coherent infrastructure, developing environmentally harmonious living areas, promoting health and wellbeing and an effective contribution to the global community, he added.

At the same time, Ghunaim affirmed that Kuwait would continue to work on implementing the national project to support and accelerate the implementation of the fifth goal of SDGs, gender equality and women's empowerment as an expres-

Diabetes institute wins UN award on NCDs prevention

KUWAIT: After careful consideration by the UN Interagency Task Force on prevention of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) and in recognition of continuous efforts of the Dasman Diabetes Institute, it has been selected to receive the prestigious international award of year 2021. This award is the result of months of tireless work with the Ministry of Health to develop a national diabetes registry, as well as the Institute's remarkable contributions to the prevention and treatment of diabetes and its related complications, as well as obesity. It is worth noting that The United Nations Interagency Task Force on the Prevention and Control of NCDs, was established by the United Nations Secretary-General in 2013 and has more than 40 members with World Health Organization acting as its secretariat.

It called for nominations for the 2021 awards to recognize achievements during 2020 on multisectoral action in the prevention and control of NCDs, mental health and the wider NCD-related Sustainable Development Goals. This is the fourth year that the awards Scheme has been running and a number of organizations from all over the world competed for this award from which DDI emerged as a winning institution in its category.

The announcement of the Institute's winning of this important award, is an addition to the rich balance of honors, awards and achievements, which it has accomplished, and is still striving to achieve more of, was made recently during the meeting of the working groups on the occasion of the convening of the United Nations General Assembly.



Dr Qais Al-Duwairi

Dr Qais Al-Duwairi, Director General of the Dasman Diabetes Institute, which was established by the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences, has expressed his gratitude for the institute's winning of this award, saying, "This award is another international honor awarded to the institute, and this award motivates us to aspire and strive to do more. Putting all our efforts, energies and expertise to make more progress in the medical, research and awareness fields for the benefit of our beloved country."

Dr Duwairi added, "I take this opportunity to express our great gratitude to the World Health Organization for their confidence and being a partner with our institute, as well as many thanks to Dr Khaled Al-Fadhel, Director General of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences and members of its board of directors for the continuous support and funding provided by the Foundation to the Institute since its establishment until today, and for the Foundation's support for the acceleration of science, research and development."

"Many thanks also to the Ministry of Health, headed by the Minister of Health Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah for all the support and cooperation they provide," Dr Duwairi also expressed. "Thanks are also extended to Dr Hilal Al-Sayer, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Dasman Diabetes Institute, for his vision and guidance for the institute's vision and goals."

In conclusion, it is worth noting that the Institute has made great progress, especially in the field of research and the publication of a large number of studies in prestigious international journals and in cooperation with leading institutions in the world, where the Institute pays most of its attention to scientific research, but this goes hand in hand with the services it provides, such as treatment in various specialties of complications of diabetes, awareness and training at an advanced and integrated level.

Kuwait could settle ban on 60+ visas within week

KUWAIT: Commerce and Industry Minister Abdullah Al-Salman discussed with His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah the decision to not renew work permits of residents over 60 who do not have a degree unless they pay KD 2,000, as several proposals were discussed to find a final solution for the issue in the near future.

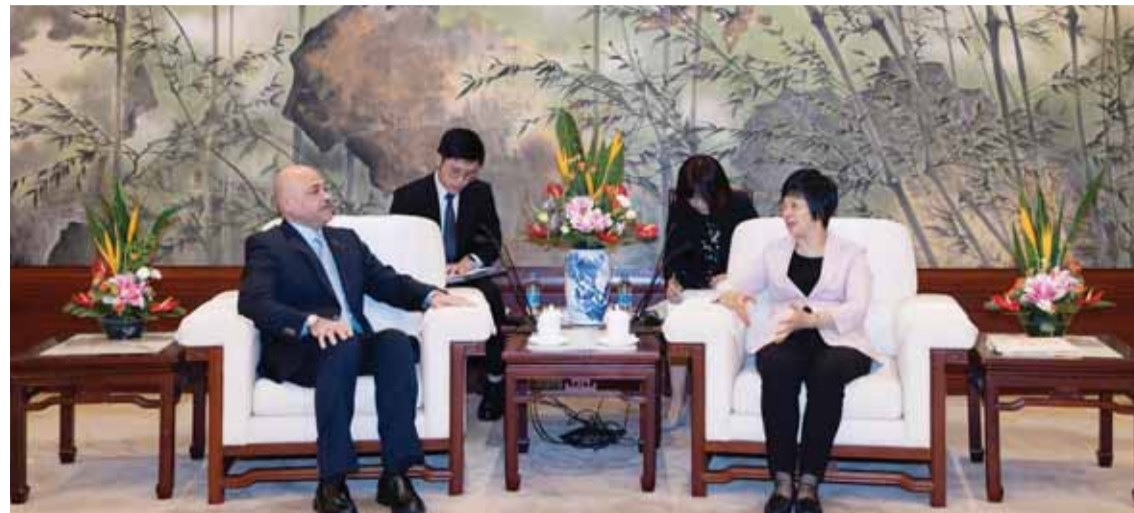
Salman is leaning towards making residents who are over 60 pay KD 500 to renew their residency permits, in addition to having health insurance, Al-Rai Arabic daily reported yesterday, quoting sources familiar with the discussions. Meanwhile, His Highness the Prime Minister asked that all proposals be submitted to the Cabinet's advisory team to make suitable recommendations in a way that safeguards the interests of the market. The sources said that proposals by the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry will also be considered, and they oppose PAM's decision in this regard. A decision is expected this week.

Taking authority

In the meantime, the same newspaper reported quoting informed sources that Minister Salman relieved the Director General of Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) Ahmad Al-

Kuwait, China keen on establishing institutional framework: Consul General

Kuwait presents dhow to Shanghai Municipal Museum



BEIJING: The Consul General of Kuwait in Shanghai Mishal Al-Shamali meets Deputy Mayor of Shanghai Zhong Ming. — KUNA photos

BEIJING: The Consul General of Kuwait in Shanghai Mishal Al-Shamali said yesterday that there is a serious need to start implementing the agreements concluded between Kuwait and China by setting a systematic institutional framework for them to develop and strengthen bilateral ties in the upcoming years. In a statement to the press, Shamali said that development of ties between both sides in all fields was explored during a meeting with Deputy Mayor of

Shanghai Zhong Ming.

New Kuwait's 2035 vision to transform Kuwait into a regional financial hub with the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative, will create a strategic development partnership between both countries, he explained. He congratulated China on its 72nd anniversary of the founding of the Republic. He also congratulated the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China, which falls this year.



The Consul General of Kuwait in Shanghai Mishal Al-Shamali and Deputy Mayor of Shanghai Zhong Ming are seen with a Kuwaiti dhow presented to the Shanghai Municipal Museum.

He presented the Shanghai Municipal Museum a Kuwaiti dhow, as a symbol of Kuwait's history and to strengthen historical ties between both sides, as this gift marking the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties. Meanwhile, Zhong referred to the advanced stages of bilateral ties, as characterized by actions, not words along with efforts made by both sides. She commended Kuwait's international efforts to limit the spread of COVID-19. — KUNA

Kuwait's Defense Minister meets Indian Ambassador

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah discussed yesterday with Ambassador of India to Kuwait Sibi George issues of common interest and means to enhance bilateral cooperation between both nations. They tackled the latest developments in regional and international arenas, in a meeting attended by Army Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Khaled Saleh Al-Sabah, a press release issued by the Ministry of Defense said. The diplomat expressed his thanks and appreciation to Kuwait for the urgent aid it offered to his country, which played a key role in alleviating the negative impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic spread in the



KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah meets Ambassador of India to Kuwait Sibi George. — Defense Ministry photo

country, it added. The Defense Minister received later yesterday the Ambassador of Kuwait to Italy Sheikh Azzam Mubarak Al-Sabah, and they

tackled the efforts Kuwait's Embassy in Italy exerted to boost bilateral ties between both countries, it said. —KUNA

ACK holds induction for new staff members

KUWAIT: The Human Resources Department at the Australian College of Kuwait (ACK) organized an induction for new staff members to introduce them to the college and welcome them into its community. The attendees included both abroad participants who accessed the induction through Microsoft Teams, along with local staff members who attended the orientation on campus.

The Induction took place over the course of two days, with the first day's session introducing the new staff members to the college, and giving them an overview of its structure, policies and procedures. Following the introduction, the Human Resources Department presented a detailed agenda; the detailed session began with a welcome message by Prof Isam Zabalawi, President of ACK, and Prof Hussein Abdullah, Vice President - Academic Affairs.

In addition, the attendees were given overviews of the Academic and Administrative departments. They were also educated regarding the COVID-19



safety protocols on campus by the Health and Safety Department in order to protect their health and their coworkers throughout their career journey at ACK.

The session on the second day was specifically targeting new faculty members, covering topics such as ACK's teaching and learning philosophies, academic policies for classes and much more. They were also taught regarding the college's research

programs and funding details, at last they were briefed about the effective use of the college's distance learning platforms.

The Induction concluded with a final speech from Prof Hussein Abdullah, where he began by thanking the Induction's attendees and organizers for helping make the event a success, and afterwards explained ACK's mission, vision and strategic plans for the future.

Mousa of 15 authorities he previously had. The sources said Salman took back the authorities that former economic affairs minister Mariam Al-Aqeel had given to Mousa.

They said the most notable authorities Salman took back include those to appoint senior officials and reshuffle them, permanent appointments in supervisory vacancies and appointment and re-appointment of public jobholders. This in addition to terminate people, canceling disciplinary decisions, sending employees into retirement, and signing contracts and tenders of distribution and public works.

Mousa can give leave to public workers, but as for the procedures, they are under the minister's authority. The sources said this will lead to speeding up actions required from PAM, especially with regards to improving Kuwait's stands in indicators of improving the business environment according to international requirements.

Ration quantities

In other news, the commerce and industry minister postponed a plan to reduce quantities of rations dispensed to citizens, including rice and sugar, as other alternatives are being discussed. Al-Rai reported yesterday quoting sources. The sources said commerce officials started coordination with the finance ministry to discuss the possibility of reducing the quantity of some staples, headed by rice and sugar. The sources said the plan had called for reducing the quantity of rice from 6.25 kg to 5 kg per person, which means reverting back to the quantity that used to be given till 2009, while reducing the quantity of sugar from 2 to 1 kg.

Man left suicide note before leaping to death: Report

KUWAIT: A note from a lawyer who jumped to his death from his 12th-floor office in Bneid Al-Gar confirmed the case as suicide and not murder, a local daily reported yesterday. The Egyptian man asked his family to forgive him as he could not continue living as he couldn't provide them with the standard of living they were used to, especially after he was terminated as a legal advisor from a government agency, Al-Anbaa Arabic newspaper reported, quoting a security source. The prosecutor had ordered the case to be considered as murder, but the letter that was found in his office in his handwriting confirmed the case as a suicide.

Meanwhile, the court sentenced a Kuwaiti actor to five years in jail and fined him KD 5,000 for using drugs. In another case, a Kuwaiti man and his Iranian girlfriend were arrested after a failed attempt to escape by jumping from the first floor of a building in Jabriya. A firearm and drugs were confiscated. A security source said tips were received by detectives that a citizen wanted by state security was in a Jabriya flat. When they went there, the two attempted to escape after realizing detectives were at the door. Separately, the prosecutor ordered an Indian woman in her 30s and a man in his 60s be sent to jail after they confessed to having an illicit



KUWAIT: This handout photo released by Kuwait Fire Force yesterday shows fire engines at the site of a fire reported in Sharq.

relationship. The woman said she was paid to maintain the relationship. Both were caught naked in a vehicle. When police arrived at the scene, the woman ran out half-naked, but was caught, while the man was found without clothes.

In the meantime, four vehicles parked near a Kuwait Flour Mills factory in Ahmadi caught fire. Firemen put out the blaze and prevented it from spreading, as more than 80 vehicles were parked in the area. No injuries were reported. In another incident, firemen put out a blaze in a basement of an eight-storey building in Sharq. The basement was used to store clothes. Residents were evacuated as a precautionary measure. Investigations were opened in both incidents to reveal the cause of the fire, Kuwait Fire Force said.



'Non-lethal' guns:
A deadly scourge
in Colombia cities

COVID treatments: What works, what doesn't, what might



SEOUL: People watch a television news broadcast showing file footage of a North Korean missile test, at a railway station yesterday after North Korea fired an 'unidentified projectile' into the sea off its east coast.—AFP

Nuke-armed N Korea fires 'missile'

Pyongyang insists on right to weapons tests

SEOUL: Nuclear-armed North Korea fired a presumed short-range missile into the sea yesterday, the South's military said, as Pyongyang's UN ambassador insisted it had an undeniable right to test its weapons. The projectile was fired from the northern province of Jagang into waters off the east coast, according to South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff, and a Japanese defense ministry spokesman told AFP it "appears to be a ballistic missile".

Less than an hour later, Pyongyang's United Nations ambassador Kim Song told the UN General Assembly in New York: "Nobody can deny the right to self-defense for the DPRK", North Korea's official name. It was the latest in a series of mixed messages from Pyongyang, coming days after leader Kim Jong Un's influential sister Kim Yo Jong, a key adviser to her brother, dangled the prospect of an inter-Korean summit.

But she insisted that "impartiality" and mutual respect would be required, calling for South Korea to "stop spouting an impudent remark". She condemned as "double standards" South Korean and US criticism of the North's military developments, while the allies build up their own capacities. Washington condemned the latest launch, with the State Department calling it a threat to North Korea's neighbors and the international community, and a "violation of multiple UN

Security Council Resolutions".

In recent days, South Korean President Moon Jae-in, who has only months left in office, reiterated at the UN General Assembly his longstanding calls for a formal declaration of an end to the Korean War. The North invaded the South in 1950 and hostilities ceased three years later with an armistice rather than a peace treaty, leaving them technically still in a state of conflict.

Pyongyang is under multiple sets of international sanctions over its banned programs to develop nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles. In his own General Assembly speech, ambassador Kim Song said North Korea had a right to "develop, test, manufacture and possess" weapons systems equivalent to those of the South and its US ally. "We are just building up our national defense in order to defend ourselves and reliably safeguard the security and peace of the country," he said.

'Heinous human rights abuser'

Pyongyang has already carried out several mis-

sile launches this month, one involving long-range cruise missiles and another that the South Korean military said was of short-range ballistic missiles. Seoul also successfully test-fired a submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) for the first time, making it one of a handful of nations with the advanced technology.

Yesterday, it launched its third SLBM submarine as it spends billions to strengthen its military capabilities. Talks between Pyongyang and Washington have been largely at a standstill since a 2019 summit in Hanoi between leader Kim and then-president Donald Trump collapsed over sanctions relief and what North Korea would be willing to give up in return. The North has since then repeatedly excoriated the South and its president Moon, and blown up a liaison office on its side of the border that Seoul had built.

After an emergency meeting, the South's National Security Committee issued a statement yesterday saying it "expressed regret for the

launch at a time when political stability on the Korean Peninsula is very critical". Yang Moo-jin, a professor at the University of North Korean Studies, told AFP: "It looks like North Korea wants to see how genuine Seoul is when it comes to its willingness to improve inter-Korean ties - and to officially end the Korean War."

"Pyongyang will monitor and study Moon's reaction after today's launch and decide on what they want to do on things such as restoring the inter-Korean hotline." Washington stations around 28,500 troops in South Korea to defend it against its neighbor and protect US interests in northeast Asia. The administration of US President Joe Biden has repeatedly said that it is willing to meet North Korean officials anywhere, at any time, without preconditions, in its efforts to seek denuclearisation.

But the North has not shown any willingness to give up its arsenal, which it says it needs to defend itself against a US invasion. On Monday, the North's official Korean Central News Agency carried an article calling the United States "the most heinous human rights abuser in the world" for its sanctions policies on various countries. The North was also due to open a session of its rubber-stamp parliament, the Supreme People's Assembly yesterday.—AFP

Crunch time for Biden as Congress debates historic agenda

WASHINGTON: Joe Biden faces the most important test of his presidency this week as Democrats in the US Congress launch a highwire bid to implement his sweeping economic agenda while keeping the government's lights on. The House and Senate are moving toward votes on legislation dealing with infrastructure and social programs worth almost \$5 trillion while also averting a government shutdown on Friday and a looming debt default.

Failure on any front would be catastrophic for a president looking to cement his legacy, while Democrats would see their chances diminished for hanging onto the House of Representatives and Senate in next year's midterm elections. "You know me: I'm born optimistic. I think things are going to go well. I think we're going to get it done," an upbeat Biden told reporters at the White House.

At stake is the fate of Biden's \$3.5 trillion Build Back Better social welfare package that only Democrats support, and a \$1.2 trillion infrastructure bill to improve transport networks and broadband coverage that has already passed the Senate with cross-party support. Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi told colleagues that there would be a vote on infrastructure tomorrow - the same day Congress needs to strike a funding deal to avoid a government shutdown.

'Intensity'

Progressive Democrats in the House have repeatedly threatened to tank infrastructure without a significant commitment from their moderate colleagues

on Build Back Better. But moderates nervous about freewheeling spending have said they may not vote for the bigger bill without infrastructure crossing the line first - and have talked about scaling back the \$3.5 trillion ticket price in any case. "The next few days will be a time of intensity," Pelosi wrote to House Democrats, who have a three-vote margin in the House, plus the anticipated support of at least 10 Republicans for infrastructure.

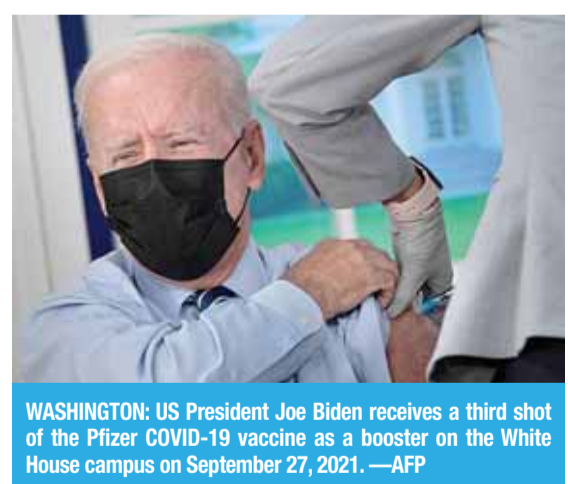
Biden says the two bills would save the average family \$15,000 a year through expanded care and education programs and reduced drug pricing, while transforming public transport, highways, bridges and broadband internet access would make life easier and greener. The president told reporters Monday that agreement on Build Back Better may not be completed before the infrastructure vote and shutdown deadline, although he added: "I hope it's by the end of the week."

'Week from hell'

Adding to the drama, lawmakers have until midnight going into Friday to green-light a package to fund the government ahead of federal agencies running out of money. Failure would shut down the government, which typically leads to hundreds of thousands of workers being sent home as public services are closed. The House passed a "continuing resolution" last week to keep the government open until December 3 - but the evenly-divided 100-member Senate rejected the package on Monday, with Democrats failing to secure the 60 votes necessary to begin debate.

Republicans are opposed to a 14-month debt ceiling hike that was included in the wording following warnings that the Treasury Department will be unable to obtain new loans sometime in October. They say Biden's spending plans are out of control, and that the Democrats - who control both chambers of Congress - should avoid the disastrous looming credit default

The latest
in a series
of mixed
messages



WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden receives a third shot of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine as a booster on the White House campus on September 27, 2021.—AFP

by lifting the borrowing cap on their own. In reality, the debt limit suspension would cover spending backed by Republicans under Donald Trump, as well as other spending already authorized by the government. Biden, who discussed the bills via phone earlier Monday with Pelosi and Senate majority leader Chuck Schumer, slammed what he called Republican "actions that show a lack of concern about our economic recovery," according to a White House statement.

The upper chamber is now likely to send a "clean" continuing resolution back to the House to pass without the debt-limit provision, averting the shutdown for two months. That would leave the debt-limit problem unresolved, however - a worrying outcome that will make the markets increasingly jumpy as the mid-to-late October deadline draws closer. "You want me to be honest? It's going to be a week from hell," congresswoman Debbie Dingell told CNN on Sunday. "But failure is not an option. There is too much at stake."—AFP

Murders rise 30% in US: FBI

WASHINGTON: The number of murders in the United States rose by around 30 percent in 2020 over the previous year, to some 21,500, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) said Monday. A number of large US cities had already reported an increase in the number of homicides last year but the FBI figures provided the first picture of the situation nationwide. It was the steepest rise in the number of murders since the FBI began collecting data in the 1960s, but the total number of such killings still remained below that of the 1980s.

The number of murders last year rose sharply from June, with no part of the United States was spared-although the southern state of Louisiana continued to have the highest murder rate in the country. According to the FBI's Uniform Crime Report, 77 percent of the murders in 2020 were committed with a firearm, up from 74 percent in 2019. Experts have not provided a clear explanation for the rise in the number of murders last year but have pointed to the destabilizing impact of the COVID pandemic and a rise in gun sales.

The FBI said some 16,000 federal, state, county, city, university, college and tribal agencies had submitted data to the crime report. The FBI has not released homicide statistics so far for 2021, but the numbers from several large cities indicate there has been no let-up in the increased murder rate. According to World Bank figures, there were 6.5 murders per 100,000 inhabitants in the United States in 2018, compared with 35 in Mexico, 27 in Brazil, eight in Russia and one per 100,000 in France and Germany.—AFP

International

Battle for 'future of Yemen' as rebels close on key city

Millions of refugees are at risk, experts warn

MARIB: Yemen's Houthi rebels could be on the verge of changing the course of the war as they close in on a key northern city, experts say, warning millions of refugees are at risk. Hundreds of fighters have died in fierce clashes this month after the Iran-backed insurgents renewed their campaign for Marib, the government's last bastion in the oil-rich northern region. Seizing Marib would be a game-changer, completing the rebels' takeover of Yemen's north while giving them control of oil resources and the upper hand in any peace negotiations.

It also raises fears for the more than two million refugees living in camps in the region after fleeing other frontline cities during the long-running conflict. "The battle of Marib will determine the future of Yemen," Abdulghani Al-Iryani, a senior researcher at the Sanaa Center for Strategic Studies said. "Houthis control most of the governorate and are closing in on the city." The severe threat to Marib comes just over seven years after the rebels overran the national capital Sanaa, just 120 kilometers to the east, in 2014.

The takeover prompted the Saudi-led intervention to prop up the government the following year. The grinding war has created what the United Nations calls the world's worst humanitarian crisis with millions of displaced people on the brink of famine. "The refugees will probably pay the highest price for this destructive war," said Iryani.

Air bombardments

Marib sits at a crossroads between the southern and northern regions and is key to controlling

Yemen's north. If it falls, the Houthis could be emboldened to push into the government-held south, analysts say. Ahmed Nagi, of the Malcolm H. Kerr Carnegie Middle East Center, said they have made significant advances after opening new fronts around Marib in recent weeks. If they seize the city, "the Houthis will use Marib to advance towards the southern governorates bordering it", he said.

The Houthis began a big push to seize Marib in February and, after a lull, they renewed their campaign this month, prompting intense air bombardments from coalition forces. "Losing Marib to the Houthis could change the course of the war," said Elisabeth Kendall, researcher at the University of Oxford's Pembroke College. "It would be another nail in the coffin of the government's claim to authority and would strengthen Houthi leverage in any projected peace talks."

According to Iryani, there still lies the possibility that Marib's tribes and parties, which fight on the government side, accept a Houthi deal to spare the city destruction. "It's unlikely that they will fight their way into the city. More likely, they will strike a deal. Neither side wishes to engage in a bloody urban battle," he said. "The offer stipulates the local government disavow the coalition, declare neutrality and share the governorate's resources with (the rebels in) Sanaa. "In return, Houthis will leave the city alone and recognize its local government."

'Dire' fallout

The city had between 20,000 and 30,000 inhabitants before the war, but its population has



MARIB: Fighters loyal to Yemen's Saudi-backed government perform a traditional dance at a position near the frontline facing Iran-backed Houthi rebels in the country's northeastern province of Marib. —AFP

ballooned as Yemenis fled there from other parts of the country. With about 139 refugee camps in the province, according to the government, hosting approximately 2.2 million people, the displaced civilians are caught in the line of fire once again. "As they disperse, it will be harder for them to access humanitarian assistance and, with the spectre of famine looming over Yemen, the Marib battle will make it more imminent," said Iryani. Kendall said "if the rebels seize Marib, the impact on the humanitarian situation will be dire", while Nagi predicted a "huge" disaster.

About 80 percent of the 30 million people in Yemen, long the Arabian Peninsula's poorest country, are dependent on aid. While the UN and the US are pushing for an end to the war, the Houthis have demanded the reopening of Sanaa airport, closed under a Saudi blockade since 2016, before any ceasefire or negotiations. "Taking over Marib will not push the Houthis to accept the brokered peace or even to be committed to it if it is accepted," said Nagi. "On the contrary, it encourages Houthis to move to the other southern parts to ensure its full control over all Yemen." —AFP

Greece to buy French warships in boost for EU defense

PARIS: France and Greece yesterday signed a multibillion-euro deal for Athens to buy three French warships, in an accord hailed by President Emmanuel Macron as a major boost for the EU's defense ambitions. The memorandum of understanding for the purchase of the Belharra frigates was inked less than two weeks after France was left reeling by the cancellation by Australia of a contract to buy French submarines as part of a new defense pact with Britain and the US.

Macron said after meeting Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis at the Elysee Palace that Greece would buy the three frigates from France as part of a deeper "strategic partnership" between the two countries to defend their shared interests in the Mediterranean. The deal marks "an audacious first step towards European strategic autonomy", Macron said.

He called Athens' decision to buy the Belharra ships "a sign of confidence" in France's defense industry, against competition notably from the American group Lockheed Martin, according to press reports. The deal also sent a clear signal from Paris after its stinging loss this month of a multibillion-euro contract for submarines with Australia, which announced it would instead buy nuclear-powered subs from the US.

"It contributes to European security and the reinforcement of Europe's strategic autonomy and sovereignty, and therefore to international peace and security," Macron said. The French leader has long insisted that Europe needs to develop its own defense capabilities and no longer be so reliant on the United States, even warning that NATO was undergoing "brain death". "Today is a historic day for Greece and France. We have decided to upgrade our bilateral defensive cooperation," Mitsotakis said. He said the agreement involves "mutual support" and "joint action at all levels," as well as an option to purchase a fourth frigate. —APF

COVID treatments: What works, what doesn't, what might

PARIS: Overshadowed by the global push for vaccines, the search for treatments for COVID-19 has made steady - if slower - progress. Here is a look at what works, what might work, and what definitely doesn't.

Proven therapies

The World Health Organization (WHO) has approved three types of COVID-19 treatment. The first is a class of steroids called corticosteroids, recommended in September 2020 by the UN's health authority, which said it should only be used by seriously ill patients. Inexpensive and widely available, the steroid fights the inflammation that commonly accompanies severe cases,

Exiled from Crimea, Tatars struggle start over in Ukraine

KIEV: Born in exile, Rustem Skybin returned to his ancestral homeland Crimea in the mid-1990s only to be uprooted - just like his family before him - nearly 20 years later. The 45-year-old ceramics artist is among thousands of ethnic Tatars to have fled Crimea for mainland Ukraine since 2014, when Moscow captured the peninsula and made it part of Russia. The Muslim minority opposed Russia's takeover, fearing a repeat of Soviet-era repressions like the mass deportations that drove Skybin's relatives to Uzbekistan in Central Asia.

Today, many among those fleeing say their fears of Kremlin rule are being borne out. "If we look at the past, they did everything to prevent our people from existing," Skybin told AFP in his workshop stacked with ornately painted crockery in Kiev. "And what they're doing now does not guarantee it will change. In fact, now, there are repressions, political orders, imprisonment." Most of Crimea's approximately 300,000 Tatars boycotted a disputed vote set up by Moscow in 2014 on integrating with Russia.

Authorities cracked down hard on the Turkic

Vote on breakaway region as Ethiopia faces tests to unity

BONGA: The hilltop bamboo palace in southwestern Ethiopia was once a formidable power base, where the now-defunct Kingdom of Kaffa hosted extravagant festivals and stored rich reserves of gold and buffalo hides. These days, however, the royal family's descendants can scarcely pay for basic palace maintenance, while local administrators of what is now Kaffa zone complain they lack funds even for rudimentary roadworks.

The decline of Kaffa - a storied forest realm once dubbed "Africa's Tibet" - underscores what activists and politicians in Ethiopia's diverse southern region describe as more than a century of underinvestment by the authori-

minority after the takeover, banning its traditional assembly, the Mejlis, closing a Tatar television channel and detaining activists. The arrest this month of the deputy head of the Mejlis, Nariman Dzhehial, on charges of conspiring to blow up a gas pipeline with several other activists was the latest shock to the beleaguered community. "This situation has dealt a painful blow to families," Skybin said of the crackdown and the exodus it spurred.

History repeats itself

Although he now has a stable life in Ukraine's capital Kiev, his mother and sister returned home, and his marriage collapsed. Fearing for his safety, he has not visited Crimea since 2017. "There are fewer and fewer opportunities to visit or cross the border. We all want to see each other and we are all separated from each other," Skybin told AFP. Russia, which has jailed more than 90 Tatars, has rejected allegations the arrests are politically motivated, saying it targets only Islamists or pro-Kiev "terrorists".

Speaking to Russian journalists this month, the head of a Tatar cultural society, Eyvaz Umerov, described Crimea as a "multi-ethnic" society where various groups live in "harmony". Still, Kremlin rule has forced an estimated 10 percent of Tatars to leave Crimea since 2014, an exodus that 33-year-old rights activist Alim Aliev described as a "brain drain". "The most active people have left: students,

ties in Addis Ababa. But Kaffa's leaders have a plan to fix it: A referendum scheduled for tomorrow that, if successful, would carve out a new South West region - Ethiopia's 11th - and funnel more federal cash their way, along with control over how it is spent.

"In the rest of the country, everything is growing and changing. When I compare Kaffa with other places, it's still backwards," said Girma Kidane Gallito, grandson of the last king of Kaffa, who was deposed in the late 19th century. "There are houses that haven't changed and there are roads that have not been improved" since that time, he told AFP, explaining why the referendum was necessary. Since Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed took office in 2018, similar efforts to create new regions in the south have spurred protests and bloodshed.

The tensions show how challenges to national unity go well beyond the 10-month-old war in northern Ethiopia against rebels from the Tigray region. Abiy is also contending with insurgents in the largest region Oromia and opposition politicians who dispute the credibility of his landslide election win this year. Yet officials in Kaffa are

reducing the need to be placed on a ventilator and the likelihood of death. The WHO has also endorsed two known arthritis drugs - tocilizumab and sarilumab - which have been shown to suppress a dangerous overreaction of the immune system to the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes COVID.

Both drugs, approved in July, likewise reduce the risk of death and the need for ventilators. And last week the WHO recommended Regeneron, the expensive synthetic antibody cocktail given to former US president Donald Trump during his brush with the virus. But it said it should only be used in patients with specific health profiles, for example with non-severe COVID who are still at high risk of hospitalization. Critically ill patients who cannot mount an adequate immune response can also take the antibody combo, the WHO said.

Therapies being tested

Several labs are working on antiviral drugs that can be taken orally as pills. One of the most advanced is molnupiravir, an experimental therapy developed by

Ridgeback Biotherapeutics and Merck that is meant to stop the virus from replicating. Currently in phase 3 trials, the drug is being tested on COVID patients and also as a preventative measure for contact cases. Results are expected by the end of the year. Atea Pharmaceuticals and Roche laboratories are evaluating a similar treatment. Vaccine maker Pfizer is also working on a medication that combines two molecules, including one that is already used to combat HIV.

The market for treatments that are "effective and easy-to-administer against early forms of COVID is potentially huge", said infectious disease specialist Karine Lacombe. So far, antiviral medications have not been very effective against COVID. In May, the US Food and Drug Administration gave sotrovimab - an new monoclonal antibody therapy developed by GSK - emergency use approval for the treatment of mild-to-moderate COVID-19.

The European commission later classified it as one of the five most promising treatments for the disease. AstraZeneca released preliminary results of its antibody cocktail at the end of August, saying it could prevent



KIEV: Rustem Skybin, 45, ceramics artist, attends an interview with AFP at his workshop in Kiev. Born in exile, Rustem Skybin returned to his ancestral homeland Crimea in the mid-1990s only to be uprooted - just like his family before him - nearly 20 years later. —AFP

young specialists, businesspeople, political and cultural figures and journalists," said the co-founder of Crimea SOS, a non-governmental group.

It is a fate that many in the community, which has lived on the peninsula for centuries, say has repeated throughout their history. After Tsarist Russia took over Crimea in 1783 hundreds of thousands of Tatars fled the peninsula to escape religious and political persecution. Under Joseph Stalin, they were accused of collaborating with Nazi Germany and deported to Central Asia. Nearly half died of starvation or disease. —AFP



BONGA: Ethiopian Orthodox devotees walk outside a church in Anderacha, formerly the site of a palace of the Kaffa kingdom, near the town of Bonga. —AFP

optimistic tomorrow's vote will go smoothly, allowing Abiy to shore up much-needed public support during a turbulent period. —AFP

COVID in fragile patients. And French company Xenothera is working on a different kind of synthetic treatment called "polyclonal antibodies". Its therapy - based on pig antibodies adapted to the human immune system - is in the final stages of clinical trials.

What doesn't work

Hydroxychloroquine, remdesivir, ivermectin and the HIV drug lopinavir-ritonavir (Kaletra), have all proved ineffective against COVID-19, according to multiple studies and trials. Despite this, demand for these drugs as COVID treatments remains high, fuelled in large part by dodgy or fraudulent claims on social media. Researchers had hoped to 'reposition' these drugs - try them on COVID patients even though they were created to fight other conditions. "Repositioning a drug is what you do in an emergency at the very beginning of a pandemic," said Lacombe. But the fact that no therapies were able to be repurposed - besides the arthritis anti-inflammatory medication - shows the limit of that kind of approach, she said. —AFP

International

Death by sadness, or the Taliban: LGBTQ in hiding

Young gay men and women erase all traces on social networks

KABUL: As the Taliban appeared on every corner of Kabul, Marwa and her friend - both gay Afghans - took the drastic decision to become husband and wife. The hurried marriage was conducted with no ceremony or family around them. "I was telling myself that the Taliban would come and kill me," the 24-year-old told AFP in an interview conducted over WhatsApp. "I was afraid, I was crying all the time... so I asked my friend to prepare a marriage docu-

networks, according to NGOs and testimonies collected by AFP.

One gay man was raped and beaten by a group of men who lured him away on the pretence that he would be evacuated, according to LGBTQ rights activists cited by media reports. "When the Taliban first came, we didn't come out of our homes for about two or three weeks and now we go outside wearing different clothes, trying to look plain," said Abdullah, who spoke to AFP in the western city of Herat. "Before, we wore trousers and jeans, or T-shirts, and some gay men wore make-up," added the 21-year-old, who also used a pseudonym.

Stay with our families

Under successive US-backed governments over the past 20 years, only slight progress was made in LGBTQ rights, with the issue little understood in Afghanistan. Even after the Taliban's 2001 ouster, gay sex was still a criminal offence that came with a prison sentence. People were routinely subjected to discrimination, assault and rape, with little accountability.

Still, tiny pockets of acceptance began to bloom. "They had a little freedom and some safe places in Kabul," said Artemis Akbary, a prominent Afghan LGBTQ rights activist who fled to Turkey several years ago. "There was a cafe in Kabul where every Friday LGBTQ friends met each other and they danced." Abdullah also described how support had begun to build in recent years, thanks to media coverage and access to information. "This was motivation for all of us to remain in Afghanistan and strengthen the LGBT community here, and at least remain in our country with our own families," he said.



Yahya, an Afghan who identifies as gay and a non-conforming person, speaks during an interview at an undisclosed location. — AFP

But as cities began to fall to the Taliban over the summer, some found ways to escape the country, including to Pakistan and Iran. Since their August takeover, the Taliban have replaced the ministry of women's affairs with a department notorious for enforcing strict religious doctrine during their first rule two decades ago. "For those still present in Kabul, it is clear that the reopening of the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice is by far the most dangerous Sword of Damocles," said Arnaud Gauthier-Fawas, a spokesperson for Inter-LGBT France.

The ministry's enforcers were known in the 1990s for carrying whips and were responsible for strictly implementing hardline interpretations of Islam. The

Rainbow Railroad in Canada, a rights group that helps LGBTQ people escape state-sponsored violence, said it had been contacted by more than 700 Afghans since the start of the crisis. "We have been getting direct reports of LGBTQ people targeted in violent attacks, some of which have been fatal," the group's executive director Kimahli Powell said. "People are in hiding and in fear for their lives. There is great uncertainty about what comes next."

'Like a bird'

Yahya, who identifies as gay and a gender non-conforming person, says they were beaten by a Taliban guard wielding a blue PVC pipe the first time they dared to venture outside after Kabul fell. "It's not written on my face that I am this person. But he used a curse word and said, 'Don't you know how to walk like a man?' "My eyes were full of tears but I could not say anything to him because he had a gun hanging on his other shoulder. So I said nothing, and I just got in a taxi and went." Yahya, who was beaten by their brother after being outed by a relative eight years ago, told AFP in Kabul that life would get worse "day by day" under the Taliban.

After weeks of frantic contact with international organizations, Yahya was evacuated. "I'm so very happy, I can't explain it," Yahya told AFP after leaving Afghanistan. "I feel like a bird who is freed from a cage and ready to fly." AFP changed their name to protect their identity. For Marwa, who is relying on her new marriage for protection, Afghans who stay must live under the constant threat of death. "They will be killed by isolation, starving, sadness, depression or stress, or they will be killed by the Taliban or their family," she said. — AFP



LGBTQ Afghans haunted by the Taliban's reign

ment," said Marwa, using a pseudonym for security reasons. Many LGBTQ Afghans are haunted by the Taliban's brutally repressive reign from 1996 to 2001, when gay men were stoned to death or crushed by toppled walls as punishment.

The militants have not officially commented on the subject since they overran Kabul on August 15, but former senior judge Gul Rahim told Germany's Bild newspaper that the death penalty for gay people would return. More broadly, the Taliban have made it resoundingly clear that they will apply their restrictive interpretation of Islamic law - which is unequivocal on the rights of LGBTQ people. Terrified for their lives, many young gay men and women have gone underground, erasing all traces of their former lives on social

Joblessness and jihadists stalk Niger nomad youth

INGALL: For Veli Rabo, a 28-year-old Nigerien, the idea of finding a job has almost become a joke. His time is spent being "completely unemployed-I am even too unemployed!" he says with a laugh. A member of the Fulani community, also called Peuls, he is among thousands of young nomads who cannot find work, living on the front line of a complex and entrenched conflict.

Around four out of every five young people in northern Niger are out of work, the International Crisis Group (ICG) think tank estimated in 2018. And joblessness, poverty and drift are powerful recruiting sergeants for jihadists. At an annual nomad festival in the oasis town of Ingall in mid-September, young men spoke to AFP about the bloody Islamist campaign that has ravaged their country for half a dozen years. "Alhamdulillah (praise be to Allah), with us everything is fine," said Rabo.

But he added: "The truth is, if people sit around doing nothing and they have to provide food for their family, many might say 'yes' to a friend who comes along and suggests doing something bad in exchange for some help." Rabo gets by with his motorbike taxi, which earns him between 1,000 and 2,000 CFA francs (1.5 to three euros/up to \$3.60) a day to "feed the little family," he says, his head wrapped in a blue scarf. But the young man from the village of Foudouk has no other source of income. Further handicapping nomadic peoples such as the Fulani is their scant access to education and health care. And prospects seem increasingly dim with booming population growth alongside relentless desertification. The young men went to school in Agadez, the regional capital, leaving at age 14 or 15. Out of their class of 40 pupils, only a handful are working today, they say. So, "a lot of people don't do anything," says Rabo's



INGALL: A young boy stands next to his horse during the annual festival for nomad people called Cure Salee in Ingall, in Niger. — AFP

friend Bidji Gaya, also 28, describing idle hours of chatting over tea. Others have returned to their villages, wondering how their peers fare in other countries.

'Future is scary'

The high rate of youth unemployment worries the local authorities. President Mohamed Bazoum, during a meeting with traditional chiefs at the nomad festival, said jihadists linked to the Islamic State group have a strategy of "targeting (these) young people, indoctrinating them and using them as cannon fodder".

Nigerian jihadist group Boko Haram has recruited many youths in the Diffa region of southeastern Niger bordering on Nigeria. The same is true in the Tillaberi tri-border area where Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger converge. The government is trying to raise awareness among nomadic youths, urging them to shun jihadists and consider joining the army instead. At the festival in Ingall, Niger's traditional gateway to the Sahara, the authorities made a point of meeting with youths. One of them was Doula Dokao, a 48-year-old Wodaabe Fulani, who set up a local awareness-raising association 14 years ago. — AFP

'Non-lethal' guns: A deadly scourge in Colombia cities

BOGOTA: One can buy them on street corners, legally, for the price of a toy - so-called non-lethal guns that nevertheless maim, and which proliferate in Colombia's crime-plagued cities. Imitation guns are sought after by criminals and citizens alike, for attack and self-defense - a symptom, observers say, of creeping lawlessness in a country still traumatized by decades of civil war. The guns' "impact on public security is lethal," Colombian security expert Orlando Carillo said. According to the FIP peace-building think tank, some 1.6 million imitation guns have been sold in Colombia in the 12 years since imports were legalized. They look like the real thing and shoot projectiles from a 9 mm or 7.65 mm cartridge. The only real difference is that the bullets are rubber. Still, up to a distance of 15 meters, a rubber bullet "can cause serious injuries to a bone or muscle. To the soft parts (of the body), like an eye or an artery, an impact can be deadly," said Carillo. Originally designed as sports guns, for target-shooting, the guns are imported from China and Turkey, and sold everywhere from malls to supermarkets, on the street or the internet.

Store windows in Bogota display veritable caches of Glock, Storm Beretta, CZ or Heckler & Koch replicas that even police and other expert gun-handlers can mistake for the real thing. The most popular product on the market is the Blow Tr92 Beretta, a convincing copy of its real, Italian-made counterpart. "It is very easy. You just need the money and an ID document," says one sales advert. The guns sell for the equivalent of about \$130 to \$400 - a fraction of the cost of the real deal, about \$2,000 for a Glock.

'Out of control'

"We find ourselves in a situation that is out of control," said the owner of a shooting club in Bogota, a former policeman who did not want to give his name. "We have made it possible for criminals to arm themselves with guns that are almost the same as the real thing, with no regulation... and at a price that defies competition!" he said. According to the FIP, imitation gun sales have shot up from about 8,500 in 2009 to more than 190,000 last year - not counting those sold on the black market. They were mostly handguns, but also some automatic rifle replicas, adding to an estimated 4.2 million illegal guns - real ones - already in circulation. Some imitation gun owners replace the rubber bullets with lead or steel projectiles. Faced with a growing problem, the government is working on a law to regulate a sector that has flourished as violent personal and property crime has sky-rocketed.

Official data for the capital Bogota shows the number of robberies increasing by 22.8 percent this year from 2020 and murders by 15.3 percent. A robbery takes place every five minutes in Bogota, with similarly high rates in Cali, Barranquilla, and Medellin. Nearly 1,500 soldiers were recently deployed to Colombia's main cities to assist the police in crime prevention. According to the Bogota city council, imitation guns are "increasingly used to commit crimes" though there are no statistics. — AFP



BOGOTA: View of a non lethal gun during test at a shooting range in Bogota. — AFP



RAQA: Syrian students walk to school past damaged buildings in the northern city of Raqqa. — AFP

Syria water crisis spurs spike in disease: MSF

BEIRUT: Limited access to clean water in northern Syria is causing a rise in illnesses and undermining the battle against COVID-19, Doctors Without Borders (MSF) said yesterday. The medical aid group blamed the "acute water crisis" in recent months on a decrease in funding for water, sanitation and hygiene operations as well as the destruction of water and sanitation infrastructure during a decade of civil war.

"We are regularly confronted with the health impact of poor water quality, which often brings waterborne diseases and other health issues into the camps, such as diarrhoea, hepatitis, impetigo, scabies and many others," MSF's Ibrahim Mughlaj said. The crisis is most acute in northwestern Syria, the country's last major rebel stronghold, where more than three million people live in squalid conditions. Water and sanitation aid operations are funded at only a third of last year's levels, MSF said,

adding that much less water was being trucked in. "In July 2021, our teams noticed rising diarrhoea cases in more than 30 camps in Idlib governorate and also detected frequent scabies cases," it added. "Since the beginning of the year, 28 percent of the total consultations in an MSF-supported hospital in Idlib governorate were reported as acute watery diarrhoea cases."

The water crisis has also made it more difficult to contain the COVID-19 pandemic, with infections surging in the northwest, Mughlaj said. The situation is also dire in northeastern Syria, largely controlled by an autonomous Kurdish administration. The region struggles to access safe water because of repeated sustained disruptions from the Alouk water station, which is under the control of Turkish authorities, MSF said.

The problem is compounded by a severe reduction in the volume of water flowing in the Euphrates river, which is the region's most significant source. An MSF-supported primary healthcare centre in the city of Raqa reported that the number of diarrhoea cases in May 2021 was 50 per cent higher than the previous year, the group said. The medical charity said it was trying to ease the crisis but said its means were limited. "People's health is at risk, and they cannot survive if they don't even have access to the basics," MSF field coordinator Benjamin Mutiso was quoted as saying. — AFP

News in brief

10 dissident rebels killed

BOGOTA: Colombia's armed forces killed 10 rebels suspected of belonging to one of the largest dissident FARC units, a senior military official said Monday. The country is experiencing some of the worst attacks by armed groups since a peace deal was signed with the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC) in 2016. "This is still happening now but we have the death of 10 outlaws" of a dissident faction commanded by "Mono Ferley," armed forces commander Luis Fernando Navarro said in a message shared with the media. The group commander, who uses the alias "Mono Ferley," is one of "Ivan Mordisco's henchmen," whom authorities identify as one of the greatest leaders of the former FARC guerrillas who did not demobilize. — AFP

Mexico celebrates 200 years

MEXICO CITY: Mexico celebrated the 200th anniversary of the country's independence from Spain on Monday with a commemoration featuring fireworks, theatre, and pyrotechnics in the capital's central plaza. The event in Mexico City's Zocalo square, once the heart of the Aztec empire, was headed by President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador. "What we experienced that day, 200 years ago, marked forever our political separation with Spain," said AMLO, the acronym by which the president is known. Multiple countries sent congratulatory messages, including US President Joe Biden, who assured that his country "has no closer friend than Mexico." "I look forward to all that our two nations will accomplish together in the years to come," Biden said in recorded video. Pope Francis' congratulations included an acknowledgment of the Catholic Church's "sins" in Mexico. — AFP

More arrests in DR Congo

KINSHASA: Two more people have been arrested for possessing a video of the 2017 killing of two UN experts in central Democratic Republic of Congo, the military prosecutor's office said yesterday. The video has become the focal point for a murder investigation that had been stalled, and the new arrests came as a journalist held in the case was moved to Kananga, the capital of Kasai Central province. "The military prosecutor's office have arrested two people - a lawyer who turned himself in to magistrates and a resident of Bunkonde, the village where the murder took place," a senior prosecutor said, declining to be identified. He added that investigators were "now detaining the four people, whom we consider to be suspects." — AFP

Air strike kills 20 fishermen

KANO: At least 20 fishermen were killed accidentally in a Nigerian military strike on a jihadist camp in northeast Nigeria, two security sources and locals told AFP on Monday. A Nigerian fighter jet early on Sunday bombarded Kwatar Daban Masara in Lake Chad, which straddles Nigeria and neighboring Niger, Chad and Cameroon, the sources said. The area is a bastion for the IS-affiliated Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). The reports of casualties came less than two weeks after officials say another air strike on a village killed nine civilians in Nigeria's northeast where the military is battling a 12-year Islamist insurgency. ISWAP recently lifted a ban on fishermen in its territory, allowing them to move in and fish in the freshwater lake for a fee. That led to an influx of fishermen who had abandoned the area. — AFP

Business

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2021

OPEC expects oil demand to grow over next two decades

Oil to remain dominant source of energy despite climate warnings

VIENNA: OPEC said yesterday it expects oil demand to rise between now and 2045, and remain the dominant source of energy despite warnings that it must fall to combat climate change. The cartel's world oil outlook goes against the vision of the International Energy Agency, which warned in May that demand must fall over the next decades for the world to meet its climate goals.

Oil demand and prices fell sharply as the pandemic emerged last year, but both have rebounded this year as economies recover from the COVID crisis. Developing countries will fuel demand while it will begin to fall in wealthier nations from 2023, according to a report by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries. "Energy and oil demand have picked up significantly in 2021, after the massive drop in 2020, and continued expansion is forecast for the longer-term," OPEC chief Mohammad Barkindo said in the group's World Oil Outlook.

Demand is forecast to grow from 90.6 million barrels per day between 2020 and 2045 to reach 108.2 million—an increase of 17.6 million bpd, according to the cartel's world oil outlook. But taking 2019, the year before the pandemic, as a basis of comparison, oil demand will only rise by 8.2 million bpd by 2045. OPEC's 2045 forecast is also slightly lower than what it had predicted in last year's outlook. Global demand is expected to rise faster over the next few

years before slowing progressively and nearly plateauing after 2035, when it will reach 107.9 million bpd.

The OPEC paper comes as Brent crude oil prices jumped above \$80 per barrel for the first time in almost three years on expectations for surging demand and concerns about tight supplies as the world slowly emerges from the pandemic crisis. The IEA, which advises developed countries on energy policy, warned in May that all future fossil fuel projects must be scrapped if the world is to reach net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 and stand any chance of limiting warming to 1.5C.

The IEA report, which sent shockwaves through the industry, said oil demand should never return to its 2019 peak and decline to 72 million bpd in 2030 and 24 million bpd in 2050. OPEC, however, said that oil will "retain the highest share in the global energy mix" during the period covered by its report, although renewables will see the largest growth. Oil demand is expected to rise gradually from 30 percent last year to more than 31 percent in 2025 before it begins to decline and reach 28 percent in 2045. Barkindo said "huge investments" are necessary to meet the demand. "Without the necessary investments, there is the potential for further volatility and a future energy shortfall, which is not in the interests of either producers or consumers," he said. —AFP



From ketchup to telephone: Five Expo revelations

DUBAI: Expo 2020 opens in Dubai on Friday, hoping to attract millions of visitors with its imaginative pavilions and technological advances.

Ahead of the six-month event, here are five innovations that featured at previous world fairs:

The Eiffel Tower

The most famous Expo was perhaps the Paris 1889 edition, where the Eiffel Tower by architect Gustave Eiffel was unveiled. The 324-metres (1,063-feet) "Iron Lady" was originally built as a temporary attraction, but became a permanent feature of the French capital's skyline and a world-renowned symbol of the country.

It was the world's tallest building until 1929, a title now held by Dubai's Burj Khalifa at 828 metres (2,717 feet).

The telephone

The history of the telephone is closely linked with Expo, after Alexander Graham Bell's telephone was first demonstrated to the public at the Philadelphia world fair in 1876. Almost 100 years later, a proto-

type wireless phone was showcased at the World Expo 1970 in Osaka in Japan, causing quite a stir. The same technology ultimately led to the first generation of mobile phones.

Ketchup

US manufacturer Heinz started producing ketchup in 1876, introducing it that year at the Philadelphia world fair as "Catsup". But it was not until Expo 1893 in Chicago that ketchup really made its mark, offering free watch charms with samples to spice up interest. By the end of the fair, over one million pickle-shaped charms were handed out. Other notable foods that were either popularized or introduced at world fairs include ice cream cones, hamburgers, hot dogs, peanut butter, cotton candy, and the club sandwich.

Ferris Wheel

In Chicago in 1893, more than 2,000 people at a time could ride the world's first Ferris Wheel, a giant contraption that rose 80 meters (more than 260 feet). The attraction, built to rival the Eiffel Tower, was designed by George Washington Gale Ferris. It had 36 cars, each carrying up to 60 people.

The 20-minute ride was the most popular attraction at that year's fair, where the Midway Plaisance—a one-mile strip dedicated to entertainment—became the forerunner of amusement parks such as Disneyland. The "Chicago Wheel" was dismantled after the Expo and later returned for the 1904 fair in

St. Louis, Missouri. Two years later, it was demolished and sold for scrap.

X-ray

The X-ray machine, now standard equipment at hospitals and airports, was introduced to the public at the St. Louis Expo in 1904. German Wilhelm Roentgen discovered the technology "by accident" in 1895, for which he was rewarded the first Nobel prize in physics in 1901. The technology was then developed in the United States, with a number of companies producing X-ray machines by the early 20th century. —AFP

Qatar Airways gets \$3 billion in state aid after huge loss

DOHA: Qatar Airways said yesterday it received \$3 billion in state aid to weather the coronavirus travel downturn and to offset losses it blamed on the cost of grounding aircraft. The airline reported an overall loss of \$4.1 billion for the year to March 31, double the figure for the same period the year before. Without the cost of grounding its Airbus A380 and A330 aircraft, Qatar Airways reported an underlying operating loss for the year of \$228.3 million compared with \$310 million the previous year.

The Gulf carrier did report a slight uptick in overall earnings and a 4.6 percent increase in the amount of cargo carried in the last 12-month period.

with 2020 as our factories operated uninterrupted and the majority of retail stores reopened," he said in a statement. Its top-performing themes this year include Lego City, Star Wars, Harry Potter, Lego Creator Expert and Lego Technic. But Christiansen said the company expects "top-line growth to stabilize to more sustainable levels (in the long term) as people return to pre-pandemic spending patterns."

Like other companies worldwide, Lego saw a bump in online sales during the pandemic, growing 50 percent in the first half compared to the same period last year. But the toy-maker also expanded its global retail footprint as it opened more than 60 new Lego stores in the first six months of 2021, with more than 40 of them in China. Lego had 737 retail stores, including 291 in China, as of June.

Greener bricks

After a vast restructuring in 2017, Lego turned its focus to multimedia games and sustainability. In addition to its classic bricks, the company has in recent years moved strongly into areas such as video games, movies, cartoons and Legoland amusement parks. While Lego's iconic bricks are virtually unbreakable and reusable for generations, plastic is increasingly shunned due to the lasting



DUBAI: A woman walks by the waterline at the Dubai Marina in the United Arab Emirates. Millions of people will begin converging on Dubai this week as the COVID-delayed Expo 2020, the world's biggest event since the pandemic, finally unveils its gleaming pavilions in the desert. —AFP

rival-charges Qatar denied-closing their airspace, borders and markets to Doha until a deal was struck in January.

Qatar Airways is the second largest airline in the Middle East after Dubai-based Emirates, operating a fleet of 253 aircraft—although some remain grounded during the pandemic. —AFP



DOHA: Qatar Airways said yesterday it received \$3 billion in state aid to weather the coronavirus travel downturn and to offset losses it blamed on the cost of grounding aircraft.

harms its chemical components do to the planet. Lego has vowed that its bricks will be 100 percent sustainable by 2030. It has developed a prototype brick made from recycled plastic bottles.

The company said yesterday it remains on track to make its packaging 100 percent sustainable by 2025, as it completed a successful trial of paper bags designed to replace single-use plastic in boxes. They will be phased in from next year. —AFP



HELSINKI: In this file photo, finished lots of a new Lego city are pictured during the Lego building event in Helsinki. —AFP

Stocks dip as oil tops \$80 mark

LONDON: Stock markets tumbled yesterday as traders tracked a strengthening dollar, high oil prices, political impasse in Germany and US debt concerns. Brent crude oil jumped above \$80 per barrel for the first time in almost three years on expectations for surging demand and concerns about tight supplies as the world slowly emerges from the pandemic crisis.

Wall Street opened lower, with tech shares hit hard as Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen urged Congress to quickly raise the debt ceiling to keep the US government operating. Analysts attributed the disproportionate declines in tech names to rising treasury yields. Higher interest rates generally hit tech companies more than some other businesses because of their greater reliance on debt to fund growth.

"Technology stocks came under heavy selling pressure early yesterday as investors looked at a combination of uncertainty on Capitol Hill coupled with all but certainty that borrowing costs will increase," said JJ Kinahan, chief market strategist at TD Ameritrade. Republicans have blocked a Democrat move to raise the US borrowing limit, meaning the government will likely run out of cash at the end of the week.

The country could default on its debt obligations next month, which most observers say would spark a massive financial crisis, with Republicans saying they will refuse to pay for Democrats' spending plans.

The brewing crisis comes as Democrats fight to pass President Joe Biden's multitrillion-dollar infrastructure and social spending bills, with party infighting fuelling concerns that the president's agenda could end up dead in the water. Bond yields were also up in Europe, with stock markets in London, Frankfurt and Paris all down in afternoon trading.

Germany, Europe's biggest economy, was in focus as it headed for weeks, if not months, of protracted coalition haggling following weekend elections. Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservatives have insisted on trying to form a government even after losing to the Social Democrats in a tight race.

Energy crunch

In Britain, army tanker drivers were put on standby to deliver petrol as the country battles a fuel crisis. The British pound dipped more than one percent against the dollar to \$1.3531, the lowest level since January. Bank of England governor Andrew Bailey hinted Monday that the central bank would refrain from aggressive monetary policy tightening despite elevated inflation. "The pound took a pounding after governor Bailey implied that the BoE will not aggressively tighten its belt, as the UK is facing stagflation risks," ThinkMarkets analyst Fawad Razaqzada said. China was also facing an energy crunch, with Goldman Sachs lowering its annual growth forecast for the world's second biggest economy. "While each country appears to be struggling with their own mix of issues, the ongoing squeeze on energy supply has helped drive fuels sharply higher across the board," said Joshua Mahony, senior market analyst at IG trading group. China has also been in the spotlight over concerns about the possible collapse of troubled Chinese developer Evergrande. —AFP

Business

Calls to prioritize key workers amid rising fuel crisis in UK

British army on standby as fuel pumps run dry

LONDON: The UK government yesterday faced calls for nurses, police, teachers and other key workers to be given priority at petrol pumps, as the army was put on standby to ease a fuel supply crisis. Filling stations across the country have seen long, snaking queues of frustrated and angry motorists concerned that a shortage of tanker drivers could lead to pumps running dry. But four days of panic-buying, even as the government insisted there was no shortage of fuel stocks, has left some frontline public sector workers unable to get to work.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said there were "tentative signs of stabilization", as filling stations were restocked, although that has not yet shortened queues. But he blamed the public for panic-buying and the pandemic, which prevented 30,000 heavy goods vehicle drivers being tested, for the issue. "Once we all return to our normal buying habits... the quicker we can get back to normality," he told Sky News. The British Medical Association and the Royal College of Nursing, however, said "urgent action" was still required, as healthcare staff were increasingly unable to travel.

"We can't be waiting in queues for two or three hours for petrol or diesel when we have patients to see," BMA deputy chairman David Wrigley told Times Radio. Britain's biggest public sector workers' union, Unison, called for the government to trigger emergency powers, as some local authorities mulled unilaterally declaring a major incident to give priority to essential staff. Paramedic Jennifer Ward, 21, said she had to try five different garages in Norfolk, eastern England, before she could fill up her ambulance. "We work a stressful job and we don't need any added anxiety," she told the Daily Mail.

'Get a grip'

The government maintains that a lack of tanker drivers to deliver fuel and unprecedented demand is behind the crisis, and the situation was likely to ease in the

coming days. Despite repeated denials throughout the day, Prime Minister Boris Johnson late Monday announced that troops had been put on alert to deploy if required. Even The Sun newspaper, normally supportive of Johnson, said the mixed messaging was undermining public confidence, and accused the government of being "asleep at the wheel". "Is anyone actually in charge in Downing Street?" it asked in an editorial. "Get a grip on it, PM. Public patience is close to breaking point."

Fuel shortages at filling stations are now having a knock-on effect across several sectors. Dozens of non-league football matches were called off because players and officials have been unable to travel, and some schools said online lessons could return. The head of the NASUWT teaching union, Patrick Roach, said public transport was "simply not an option" for many teachers, as their schools could only be reached by car. David Brown, chair of the National Courier and Despatch Association, told AFP his drivers were unable to commit to some longer journeys as they were "struggling to find fuel".

'Utter incompetence'

Britain was contending with a shortage of truckers even before the shortfalls in tanker drivers began to bite, with the resulting empty supermarket shelves and delivery delays stoking fears of a lack of food and toys for Christmas. The British Meat Processors Association has said fears the panic-buying of fuel could make existing supply chain problems to supermarkets worse and cause further shortages.

The government insists Europe is facing the same problem and has eased its post-Brexit immigration rules for three months in the hope of enticing foreign truckers back. But critics say that is unlikely to help, blaming the country's departure from the EU that took full effect in January, combined with the pandemic, and a failure to replace the thousands of overseas drivers



LONDON: Britain's fuel crisis has led for calls to prioritize key workers when it comes to access to petrol.—AFP

who left. The main opposition Labor party's home affairs spokesman, Nick Thomas-Symonds, accused the government of "utter incompetence" and blamed it on its "handling of Brexit". "The blame lies squarely with them, it lies with no-one else," he added.

Army on standby

Meanwhile, Britain put the army on standby to help with the ongoing fuel crisis as fears over tanker driver shortages led to panic buying, leaving many of the country's pumps dry. "Limited number of military tanker drivers to be put on a state of readiness and deployed if necessary to further stabilize fuel supply chain," the Department for Business, Energy &

Industrial Strategy said in a statement issued late on Monday.

Desperate motorists queued up at fuel pumps across Britain, 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 says a lack of tanker drivers to deliver fuel and unprecedented demand is behind the crisis. The military drivers will receive specialized training before deploying if the crisis does not ease in the coming days. "While the fuel industry expects demand will return to its normal levels in the coming days, it's right that we take this sensible, precautionary step," said Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng. — AFP



DUBAI: In this file photo, a view of Bluewaters Island and the Ain Dubai (Dubai Eye) 250-metres high Ferris wheel in the Gulf Emirate.—AFP

Greatest shows on earth: How expos changed the world

DUBAI: International expos, or world fairs, draw millions of visitors to a chosen city every few years. Over two centuries these mega events have introduced the world to tomato ketchup, color television and mobile phones and have left us the Eiffel Tower, Seattle's Space Needle and Shanghai's enormous China Pavilion. This year it is the turn of Dubai in the United Arab Emirates, which had to postpone the 2020 expo because of the pandemic. We look at the history and the organization of these major international gatherings.

Born in Paris

The first universal exposition took place in Paris in 1798 to show off French industrial know-how at the dawn of the industrial revolution. Similar events took place in the French capital sporadically until 1849.

London's Crystal Palace

Imperial Britain then took up the challenge, inviting industrialists and inventors from around the world to London in 1851, marking the birth of genuinely universal exhibitions. An immense glass "Crystal Palace" was built to host nearly 14,000 exhibitors from 40 countries in Hyde Park. Later reassembled in the south London suburb that still bears its name, the building was destroyed by a fire in 1936.

Paris strikes back

Among the six million visitors to the Crystal Palace was Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte, the future Napoleon III, who decided to create a universal exposition in the French capital. In 1855 the expo was held in an enormous building called the Palace of Industry and Fine Arts near the Champs Elysees, which was demolished at the end of the 19th century to make way for an even bigger expo.

Millions of visitors

From then on they became major global events with

32 million people attending the Paris expo of 1889 to see the latest inventions and gadgets, and 51 million coming in 1900. The record is held by the Chinese city of Shanghai, which drew 73 million visitors in 2010.

Propaganda tool

As well as symbolizing the triumph of modernity, the fairs have often been used for propaganda. The Paris expo of 1867 celebrated the victories of Napoleon III—three years before his ignominious downfall. And the expo of 1937 saw a titanic ideological clash between the German Third Reich and the Soviet Union, whose pavilions faced each other near the Eiffel Tower.

Meanwhile the Spanish pavilion showed "Guernica", Pablo Picasso's immense canvas denouncing fascist violence, during the country's civil war that dictator General Francisco Franco would later win.

Iconic landmarks

The expos have also created some of the world's most famous monuments, not least the Eiffel Tower, the centerpiece of the 1889 Paris expo. The city's Grand and Petit Palais, and its Chaillot and Tokyo palaces of culture, were also inherited from expos.

Seattle's Space Needle became the emblem of the US city after it was built for the 1962 world fair, just as the huge steel spheres of the Atomium sculpture had helped put Brussels on the map five years earlier.

Every five years

Since 1928 the Paris-based International Exhibitions Bureau has run the expos. Some 170 countries are members and the host city is chosen by a vote of its general assembly. Since 2000 international expos have taken place every five years, with a hiatus in 2020 due to the pandemic. The 2025 expo is planned for Osaka in Japan.

'Promoting progress'

A universal expo is expected to both mirror and predict the needs of contemporary society. The event is meant to improve knowledge, respond to human and social aspirations and promote progress.

In Milan in 2015 the theme was "Feeding the planet, energy for life!" after Shanghai in 2010 organized under the banner of "Better city, better life" and Aichi in Japan centered on the idea of "Nature's wisdom" in 2005. — AFP

Kalyan Jewellers announces festive season offers, discounts

KUWAIT: With the onset of the festive season, Kalyan Jewellers, one of the most trusted and leading jewelry companies, has announced exciting cashback offers on its distinctive jewelry collections. As part of this festive offer, customers will be able to maximise the value of their purchases with up to 25 percent cashback on their jewelry purchases.

While up to 25 percent cashback can be availed on making charges of gold jewelry, up to 20 percent cashback offer is available on the diamond jewelry collection. On precious stone jewelry and uncut diamond jewelry, cashback is up to 20 percent. Cashback offers can be availed in the form of instantly redeemable vouchers. These offers are valid until Nov 30th, 2021, across all showrooms in Kuwait.

Customers can also avail the benefits of the Gold Rate Protection Offer by paying 10 percent advance of the total intended purchase amount and booking their jewelry at the current market price of gold. This unique offer enables customers to lock-in the price of gold and stay protected from future price hikes and fluctuations. Ramesh Kalyanaraman, Executive Director, Kalyan Jewellers said, "With the arrival of the festive season, we are drawing closer to a time of joy and togetherness. At Kalyan Jewellers, we want to mark the

country's undying spirit of celebration by extending the festive - discount offers to our customers, allowing them to take home the latest jewelry designs from Kalyan Jewellers and the love and happiness that come along with it."

Kalyan Jewellers has rolled out extensive measures to ensure a safe retail environment for the brand's employees and customers. The staff is 100% vaccinated and apart from common practices such as temperature check with thermal guns, double masking or providing safety gloves to customers, frequent deep cleaning of high touchpoints, sterilization and contactless billing have all been implemented in showrooms.

With the growing impetus on social distancing, Kalyan Jewellers has also launched the LIVE video shopping facility (<https://campaigns.kalyanjewellers.net/livevideoshopping/>) through which consumers can browse through the Kalyan Jewellers' jewellery collections at the comfort of their homes.

Patrons will also receive the Kalyan Jewellers 4-Level Assurance Certificate which guarantees purity, free lifetime maintenance of ornaments, detailed product information and transparent exchange and buy-back policies. The certification is part of the brand's commitment towards offering the very best to its loyalists.

ABK raises awareness of services for special needs customers

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK), continues its efforts in raising awareness on the importance of services for special needs customers, in line with Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) and Kuwait Banking Association's (KBA) nation-wide awareness campaign, 'Let's Be Aware'. This initiative also aligns with the Bank's commitment to building a financially inclusive community across all segments of society.

ABK provides specialized branches for people with special needs in each governorate of Kuwait with customized facilities designed to meet their specific requirements. Across the branch network, there is at least one wheelchair-accessible ATM and an easily accessible private glass chamber equipped with headphones. The Bank also ensures every branch has reserved parking spaces with wheelchair access, and where necessary, elevators to facilitate easy entry and exit as well as reserve wheelchairs in each branch.

ABK has a number of personnel proficient in sign language as well as the ability to print documents in Braille, to ensure clients with special needs can bank independently. In addition, the Bank has incorporated sign language into all its social media videos for the 'Let's Be Aware' campaign. ABK's website also features voice guidance services, allowing customers to assess and document their experience independently.

ABK is an ardent supporter of CBK initiatives and campaigns to increase financial awareness and inculcate banking culture amongst all segments of society. The 'Let's Be Aware' campaign adds to Central Bank of Kuwait's track record of safeguarding financial and economic stability in Kuwait.

UK risks 'crippling' food security: Trade group

LONDON: The UK government's crash program of visas for foreign poultry workers risks being too little, too late to avert food shortages, an industry group said Monday. The government's post-Brexit immigration and trade policies "risk crippling British food security", and longer-term solutions are needed, British Poultry Council Chief Executive Richard Griffiths said.

The announcement of a temporary visa scheme for 5,500 poultry workers and 5,000 lorry drivers for the three months to Christmas was "a positive step in the right direction", he said in a statement.

"Nevertheless, there is a risk that this intervention comes too late," Griffiths warned.

"Supply chains are not something that can be simply switched on and off, so plans for production are already well underway and the necessary cut-backs due to ongoing labor shortages have already been made." In part driven by the government's restrictions on EU workers after Brexit, Britain is facing critical shortages of personnel in key sectors.

Fuel pumps have run dry as panic-buying drains tanks at petrol stations, after energy companies were unable to find enough drivers to make deliveries last week. The government said it was not "currently" planning to draft in army reservists to drive fuel tankers. "But as a responsible government, we are taking the preparatory steps necessary should further measures be needed," a Downing Street spokesman said. Trade groups are warning of Christmas shortages for turkeys and toys, and say the three-month visa program falls well short of what is needed.

"On the short-term I think that will be a dead end," Edwin Ateama of the Dutch FNV union, which represents lorry drivers across Europe, told BBC radio. "So more is needed, and I think the EU workers we speak to will not go to the UK for a short-term visa to help UK out of the shit they created themselves." — AFP

Business

Zahran: Future of Islamic financial services institutions looks promising

KFH participates in Moody's webinar 'Global Islamic Financial Institutions Outlook'

KUWAIT: Group Chief Financial Officer at Kuwait Finance House (KFH), Shadi Zahran said that in the last decade, the global Islamic financial services industry (IFSI) has achieved double digit annual growth and the future of Islamic financial services institutions look promising with strong growth potential mainly in emerging markets.

Zahran's statement was made during his participation as a Guest Speaker in Moody's Investors Services webinar themed "Global Islamic Financial Institutions Outlook" - How Islamic FI's' growth and financial performance compare with conventional peers.

He added that during COVID -19 pandemic, both conventional and Islamic banks focused on preserving asset quality, protecting capital and maintaining liquidity rather than business expansion which negatively impacted credit growth and revenues. However, based on the reported results of Islamic banks it was noted that most Islamic

Banks managed to weather the pandemic better than the conventional banks. Technological innovation and digitization to drive operational efficiency



Strong growth potential in emerging markets

and customer penetration besides leveraging on natural alignment between Islamic Sharia and ESG principles can help accelerate growth of IFSI.

With regards to Takaful and Asset Under

Management AUM industry, Zahran explained that although these constitute a very small proportion of IFSI, however these are on the rise due to growing demand for Sharia compliant takaful and investments.

Responding to a question on growth potential of Islamic Banking in Turkey, Zahran pointed out that Islamic banks in Turkey represent only 7 percent of total banking sector and Turkey economy is real economy and well diversified with huge SMEs businesses. The growth was always double digit and the potential for Islamic Banks in Turkey is expected to maintain same positive trend. He also highlighted importance of digital banking and how it has contributed to KFH Turkey especially during COVID-19.

Moreover, Zahran shared, during the webinar, his views and thoughts on outlook of Islamic financial institutions including banking, asset management and takaful, how COVID-19 pandemic has



Shadi Zahran

affected Islamic Financial Institutions compared to conventional banks, growth prospects for Islamic and conventional asset managers and performance of takaful companies and impact of new regulations and digitalization on the industry.

KFH's participation in Moody's webinar and similar events underlines its role and commitment to contributing and enriching international economic and financial conferences, in addition to promoting Islamic financial services, as well as viewing the latest economic developments and discussing the current landscape of Islamic banking and its future trends and the challenges of the pandemic with analysts and industry experts.



Building an Omani-Kuwaiti bridge in cooperation with Reconnaissance Research

KUWAIT: At the invitation of the Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to Kuwait, Dr Saleh Al-Kharousi, the Embassy of Oman, in cooperation with Reconnaissance Research, held the first discussion session in a series of upcoming sessions with a group of companies and businessmen from the two countries to assess the reality of commercial relations between Oman and Kuwait, and discuss ways to develop them.

Regarding the meeting, Ambassador Al-Kharousi said: "I was pleased with the honorable attendees, as the meeting constituted a good opportunity for direct communication with elite businessmen from different sectors of the two brotherly countries, to raise the current rates of trade exchange. We also thank Reconnaissance Research for cooperating with us to build a bridge of solid business relations, as we always seek to coordinate with effective, serious and competent entities. We believe in the importance of transparent and open discussions with both businesswomen and businessmen to obtain the best results and outputs."

Al-Kharousi added: "This meeting comes as part of a series of upcoming meetings, in coordination with Reconnaissance Research, which are aimed toward:

1. Discussing the advantages and investment opportunities in the Sultanate of Oman.
2. Listening to all the challenges facing businessmen.
3. Understanding their vision of the optimal form of legal frameworks that attracts investments.
4. Discussing the most appropriate solutions to overcome challenges."



The ambassador added: "We are seeking to form a joint Omani-Kuwaiti team of experts in investment and legal prowess to provide integrated solutions with the aim of creating sustainable investment opportunities, and monitoring everything that might disturb the investment environment. And among the projects discussed, for example, are those located in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD), which has an area of about 1,600 square kilometers, making it at the forefront of the economic regions in the Middle East in terms of size. It is also characterized by a very important geographical location in terms of its views of the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean. It is located on the shipping lines bound for East Asia, East Africa and the rest of the world."

On the role of Reconnaissance Research, the founder and CEO of the Center, Abdulaziz Al-Anjeri, said: "The center aims to work with all the friendly and brotherly countries, and His Excellency the Omani ambassador is keen to ensure that the current and upcoming meetings depart from the rigid framework of diplomatic protocol, and focus rather on a result driven approach that is aimed towards diagnosing and suggesting what leads to greater commercial cooperation, and we believe in our center that transparency and honesty is a pre-



emptive blow to calamities and a compass to better define our future paths, especially in matters of an intertwined political and commercial nature."

The meeting was attended by Yaqoub Yusuf Aljoun, Tawfeeq Ahmad Sultan, Samir Abdulmohsen Algharaballi, Ali Abdulmohsen Al-Fulaj, Qais Abdullah Aljoun, Abdulla Abdulaziz Al-Qandi, Mohammed Al-Sayegh, Mohammed Al-Sharhan, Jamil Ali Sultan, Hussain Jawad Abdul Rasool, Nabil Al Maskati, Mohammad Tawfeeq Sultan and Abdulaziz Mohammed Al-Anjeri.

Gulf Bank's Al-Danah: Tomorrow last day to deposit for a chance to win KD 1.5m grand prize

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank announced that the last chance to participate in the annual Al-Danah account draw is tomorrow, Thursday (September 30, 2021), to win the account's grand annual prize of KD 1,500,000. Last year, the bank announced an increase in the value of its rewards for Al-Danah customers to include monthly opportunities to win a thousand Kuwaiti dinars for ten winners, in addition to two quarterly draws, each with a prize of KD 100,000, and a semi-annual draw with a prize of KD 1,000,000, not to mention the large annual draw in which the opportunity to participate ends this month.

Mohammed Al-Qattan, General Manager Consumer Banking at Gulf Bank, encouraged the residents of Kuwait to take advantage of this opportunity saying: "We announced in January of this year the first lucky Gulf Bank customer who won the grand prize of KD 1,500,000. And today, we reach the last date to participate in this year's draw. On this occasion, I would like to remind Gulf Bank customers of the possibility of opening and depositing into an Al-Danah account online through



Mohammed Al-Qattan

the Gulf Bank app."

The Al-Danah account is one of the most rewarding savings accounts in Kuwait, with its periodic draws that award valuable prizes and its many advantages for account holders. Gulf Bank's Al-Danah account offers monthly opportunities to win KD 1,000 to ten lucky winners, in addition to two quarterly draws with KD 100,000 prizes each, a semi-annual draw prize of KD 1,000,000 and a grand draw prize of KD 1,500,000.

Numerous benefits

The Al-Danah account is the only account that rewards customers for their loyalty by providing loyalty chances. Loyalty chances are the total chances gained in the previous year, which are then transferred to the current year to reward customers for their loyalty to the bank.

Accordingly, all chances gained by existing Al-Danah customers in 2020 (from January 1 to December 31, 2020) have been transferred to the 2021 draws. It is also worth noting that all account draws are attended by a representative from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, with the quarterly and annual draws also reviewed by Ernst & Young.

To increase their chances of winning, account holders must either keep their account with a mini-

mum deposit amount of KD 200, or increase their Al-Danah savings - the more deposits into an account, the more chances accumulated over time. Gulf Bank's Al-Danah account holders also have the opportunity to enter and win cash prizes all year long through monthly, quarterly and annual draws.

Opening an Al-Danah Account

To enter the upcoming draws, Gulf Bank customers can open an Al-Danah account today with only KD 200. To open an Al-Danah account, existing Gulf Bank customers can apply through Gulf Bank's online and mobile banking services, or book an appointment at their nearest branch by using the new "Visit Gulf Bank" app for a faster and more convenient branch visit. New customers can also open an Al-Danah account by visiting their nearest Gulf Bank branch or by scheduling an appointment through the app.

Deposit more for more chances to win!

With Gulf Bank, depositing into an Al-Danah account is easier and more secure than ever, as clients can deposit into their accounts through the following channels: Online/Mobile Banking App which includes the ePay service, ATMs and ITMs, the Customer Contact Center at 1805805 which is available 24/7, in addition to the free standing order service from other Gulf Bank accounts.

Gulf Bank's Al-Danah account is open to both Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti residents of Kuwait. A minimum of KD 200 is required to open an account and the same amount must be maintained for customers to be eligible for the upcoming Al-Danah draws. If the customer's account balance falls below KD 200 at any given time, a KD 2 fee will be charged to the account monthly until the minimum balance is met. Customers who open an account and/or deposit more will enter Gulf Bank's Al-Danah draws throughout the year, for cash prizes totaling up to more than KD 2 million.

Huawei nova 8i, the young people love the most

KUWAIT: Since its inception, the Huawei nova Series has aimed to become the smartphone that young people love the most. The Huawei nova 8i comes with a 66W Huawei SuperCharge, 64MP Quad AI Camera, an iconic 6.67-inch Huawei Edgeless Display in addition to a large RAM and internal memory storage in addition to the cool features of EMUI 11. We had the chance to explore newest smartphones and we must say this is absolute beast!

66W Huawei SuperCharge

Low-battery anxiety is outdated as Huawei nova 8i brings you the 66W Huawei SuperCharge and a large 4300mAh battery. Thanks to the innovative single-cell tri-electrode technology, Huawei nova 8i can be charged to 68 percent in just 20 minutes and can be fully charged in just 38 minutes. In addition, power-saving AI algorithms provides battery management for mobile tasks so you can make better use of the battery for games and entertainment that last throughout the day.

Great camera setup

On the camera front, Huawei phones have the reputation of offering excellent camera capabilities - the Huawei nova 8i is no exception. You will find a superb AI Quad Camera matrix on the back of the phone, which packs a 64MP High-Resolution Camera, an 8MP Ultra-Wide Angle Camera, a 2MP Depth Camera and a 2MP Macro Camera, with the right tools at your disposal. Equipped with an incredible 1/1.7-inch sensor, the 64MP High-Resolution Camera lets you snap any fleeting moment in the crispest quality. The best part is that it also supports Super Night Shot 2.0 to offer powerful night photography capabilities. Feel free to



take your best shot in low-light conditions and let the HUAWEI nova 8i do the work for you!

What is more? With an Ultra-Wide Angle Camera capable, you can capture sweeping mountain vistas with zero compromises on image resolution and quality. If you are someone who enjoys videoing those little moments in life, the Huawei nova 8i has you covered too! With its impressive 64MP rear main camera, feel free to take Full HD 1080P videos anywhere you go, capturing the moments.

Edge-to-edge display

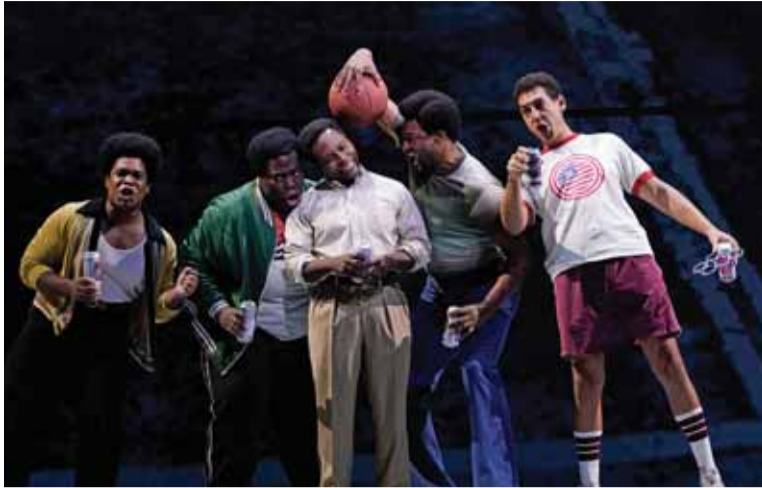
If you happen to love binge watching a show on your smartphone, you will find a good reason to fall for this smartphone. Its expansive screen is deeply captivating at first sight. Despite a slim body, the Huawei nova 8i manages to accommodate a 6.67-inch Huawei Edgeless Display on the front. Combined with the ultra-thin bezel arrangement on all four sides, the screen achieves a remarkable screen-to-body ratio of 94.7 per cent, overall enabling a maximized field of view to various media consumption. Meanwhile, the Huawei nova 8i's FHD+ large screen along with a 2376 x 1080 resolution, rendering rich, vibrant colors and true-to-life details. So, you can enjoy a premium visual experience when indulging yourself with the fun of watching movies.

Upcoming Al-Danah Draw Prizes 2021

Draw Prize	Winners	Draw Date	Last Day to Deposit & Enter Draw
KD 1,000	10	Monthly	Seven days prior to the month's end date
KD 1,500,000	1	13 January 2022	30 September 2021



Dancers perform a scene during a rehearsal for Terence Blanchard's 'Fire Shut Up in My Bones,' at the Metropolitan Opera in New York. — AFP photos



Actor Will Liverman and cast members perform a scene during a rehearsal for Terence Blanchard's "Fire Shut Up in My Bones."



Cast members perform a scene during a rehearsal for Terence Blanchard's 'Fire Shut Up in My Bones.'

MET OPERA REOPENS WITH LANDMARK FIRST SHOW BY BLACK COMPOSER

After an 18-month shutdown due to the coronavirus pandemic and protracted labor disputes with its musicians and crew, the Metropolitan Opera reopened Monday with a history-making debut—the first work by a Black composer. "Fire Shut Up In My Bones," a poignant opera centered on the tension of growing up a Black man in the American South, was composed by Terence Blanchard, a top-tier jazz trumpeter and Spike Lee's go-to film score master for three decades. When the premier US opera company in 2019 first announced its forthcoming staging, it was unclear when exactly "Fire" would come to Manhattan.

But the months of Black Lives Matter protests that reverberated nationwide and beyond over the summer of 2020 lent the project new urgency. The Metropolitan

Opera is the largest performing arts institution in the United States, but in its 138 years of existence has never before presented an opera by a Black composer. Reopening the Met's doors with Blanchard's work offered an opportunity to make a statement. It's progress "bigger than me," the Grammy-winning, Oscar-nominated artist told AFP when the Met first announced it would produce "Fire."

"It says more about what's going on in our country; what's going on in the world of art... and the statement that this makes." "Fire," which originally premiered in St. Louis, is Blanchard's second opera. With a libretto from film director Kasi Lemons, "Fire" is based on the searing memoir of Charles Blow, a columnist at The New York Times. The book recounts his coming-of-age as a black boy in the US Deep South, grappling with racism

and abuse, sexuality and inner rage. Blanchard, 59, is a showbiz regular: He's scored dozens of films during a vibrant career that has included working with greats like Herbie Hancock, Dr. John and Stevie Wonder.

'Momentous'

About an hour before thousands of people dressed in evening-wear including a parade of vibrant jewel-toned gowns and feathered shifts-began sashaying into the storied house at Lincoln Center, a long line formed outside an open-air amphitheatre in Harlem for a simulcast of "Fire." Among that audience was Linda Taiton, who called it "sad" that it took the Met more than a century to feature the work of a Black composer. "There's so many Black composers who probably could have done this 50 years ago,"

the 54-year-old education consultant said. "This is just America."

Blanchard's jazz-inflected score ushered the powerful show with a world-class set through a number of emotional scenes. The performance also featured several gripping dance sequences, including a collegiate step-dancing number that brought the audience to its feet with applause midway through Act II. "Fire" began with Blow as a young child, played by the impressive Walter Russell III, and saw his development into a young adult, played by Will Liverman.

The acclaimed Angel Blue played his college girlfriend Destiny, and also appeared onstage throughout as a captivating metaphor for "Loneliness." The Met's 3,800-seat theater opens its doors at Lincoln Center after months of heated labor talks—a dispute that had threatened

to derail the opening performance. But in late August, the orchestra struck a deal with management, which reportedly included pay cuts for musicians with vows to restore some of that pay once box office revenues hit 90 percent of pre-pandemic levels.

All customers and staff along with orchestra and chorus members must show proof of vaccination against COVID-19 during the 2021-22 season, as will attendees. The rest of the Metropolitan Opera season features works by Verdi, Mozart, Wagner, Stravinsky and Puccini. "Fire" is currently slated to run until October 23. "I have a feeling it's going to be a momentous thing, and not because it's me," Blanchard had told AFP of the historic staging. "Just because it is." — AFP



In this file photo singer R Kelly turns to leave after appearing at a hearing at the Leighton Criminal Courthouse in Chicago, Illinois. — AFP

R Kelly, the disgraced R&B star convicted of sex crimes

A Chicago native who soared to global celebrity on a burst of megahits in the 1990s, for years R Kelly endured as one of R&B's top stars, even as he faced a slew of sex abuse allegations. But now, nearly 30 years after he was first documented to have abused a minor, the 54-year-old artist faces up to life in prison after a New York jury convicted him of running a criminal ring that trapped teenagers and women in a web of sexual, emotional and physical abuse. The three-time Grammy winner born Robert Sylvester Kelly has sold over 75 million records globally, making him one of the most commercially successful R&B musicians ever, with hits like "I Believe I Can Fly" and "Ignition (Remix)."

But Kelly's success always included an asterisk: Rumors of criminal sexual activity swirled for decades and the artist periodically settled sex crime allegations out of court. In a pre-#MeToo world that saw victims far less empowered, Kelly acted with impunity, multiple indictments said. In delivering closing arguments after six weeks of testimony in Brooklyn federal court, assistant US attorney Elizabeth Geddes detailed a "Robert Kelly-centric universe" that saw his associates support the singer's predatory behavior. The musician's defense dubbed Kelly a "playboy" and a "sex symbol" who was merely living the hedonistic, jet-set life international superstars are accustomed to. But the jury of five women and seven men found him guilty on all charges, convicting him of using his fame to systematically recruit his victims for sex, buttressed by his entourage.

Child porn acquittal

Born January 8, 1967, in Chicago, Kelly was the third of four children raised by his mother. In his 2012 memoir, he describes sexual experiences as early as eight years old, saying he sometimes watched older couples have sex, and was instructed to photograph them. He said an older woman raped him, also when he was eight, and that an older man in the neighborhood sexually abused him when he

was a pre-teen. Kelly has long been rumored to be illiterate, which was repeatedly raised during the Brooklyn trial, despite 14 solo albums to his name.

His former attorney said Kelly writes in phonetic notes rather than standard English. Jive Records signed him in 1991, after a label executive reportedly heard him singing at a barbecue in Chicago. Kelly released his first solo album "12 Play" in 1993, featuring sexed up jams such as "Bump N' Grind," a record that topped the R&B charts for nine weeks. Despite his tumultuous personal life—including his ultimately annulled marriage to 15-year-old protege Aaliyah, which was core to the prosecution's case—Kelly's fame skyrocketed.

But in the early 2000s, Chicago reporter Jim DeRogatis anonymously received two tapes that appeared to show Kelly having sex with young girls, the second of which led to the artist's indictment for child pornography. After years of trial delays, during which he continued to tour and record, Kelly was acquitted on all counts in that controversial trial.

'Mute R Kelly'

For years, the accusations had little impact on his fame. From 2005 to 2012, Kelly wrote, produced, directed and performed in the notorious "hip hopera" entitled "Trapped in the Closet," an absurdist tale of sex and lies that bewildered and impressed critics. In July 2017, BuzzFeed published a lengthy investigation by DeRogatis, which alleged Kelly was operating a "sex cult" and holding six women hostage between Chicago and Atlanta.

At the same time, two women in Atlanta, Kenyette Barnes and Oronike Odeleye, founded the "Mute R. Kelly" movement, which encouraged boycotting his music. "Someone had to stand up for Black women," Odeleye said at the time.

In January 2019, a Lifetime docu-series again said the quiet part out loud, interviewing women who cast Kelly as manipulative, violent and hyper-focused on young girls, who he allegedly demanded call him "daddy." This time, the renewed scrutiny appeared to prompt a sea change: Artists including Lady Gaga apologized for past collaborations with Kelly, and his label dropped him. As outrage boiled over, fresh legal action brewed. Not long after Chicago prosecutors levelled 10 counts of aggravated criminal sexual abuse against him, federal prosecutors in both Illinois and New York indicted Kelly in 2019. — AFP

Versace and Fendi take their turn as Milan Fashion Week ends

Milan Fashion Week drew to a close on Monday, a day after Versace and Fendi shared the catwalk in a collaboration that saw each artistic director playing with the codes of the other house. But some critics regretted a return at the week's events to the old norms of ultra-slim, very young models compared to the more recent use of more mature models of varied sizes. The fashion world knew that Fendi and Versace would be putting on a joint show. What they did not know was that the two creative directors, Donatella Versace and Kim Jones, would switch roles, Versace creating a Fendi collection and Jones one for Versace.

The resulting "Fendace" show creations will be in the shops by spring of 2022. Fashion magazine Harper's Bazaar welcomed the show as "a glorious celebration of fashion and the power of collaboration". The Fendace event featured a range of top models of different generations—and sizes—including Naomi Campbell and British singer Dua Lipa. But some commentators expressed unease at a return to super-young, disturbingly thin models at other shows. While fashion hubs such as New York had made efforts to move on, "in Milan the models are once again very young and very thin", wrote the The New York Times.

Bras, bikinis... and mini-skirts are back. Mini-skirts, bras and bikinis were all back on the podium for next season's big thing, suggesting a need to free the body and party. But some commentators lamented the accompanying pressure to shed the extra kilos to feel good in such



A model presents a creation for Ermanno Scervino's Women's Spring-Summer 2022 collection during the Fashion Week in Milan.



A model presents a creation for Francesca Liberatore's Women's Spring-Summer 2022 collection. — AFP photos

outfits. Next year's spring/summer collections then will feature bras or bikini tops worn under very ample, fairly masculine tops, such as the blazers in the Fendi collection, Prada's leather jackets and Missoni's trench coats.

At Ferragamo and Cavalli meanwhile, the bra will be worn with large, men's style trousers. Dolce&Gabbana and Versace both drew their inspiration from the early 2000s including bikini tops and swimsuits that flirted with lingerie. After



A shop assistant poses with official merchandise of legendary British rock group Queen on sale.



A shop assistant poses with merchandise of legendary British rock group Queen on sale.

I want it all! Rock group Queen open London store

British rock legends Queen open a pop-up store on London's historic Carnaby Street this week to mark five decades of performances, despite the death of lead singer Freddie Mercury in 1991. "Queen The Greatest" opened its doors yesterday and take visitors back to the early days of the band, which was formed in 1971. The rockers went on to have worldwide hits with songs such as

"Bohemian Rhapsody", "We Are The Champions" and "Don't Stop Me Now". Through several themed rooms on two levels, the shop retraces Queen's career up to the 2010s, including their legendary concerts and tours of the 1980s.

The store will be open for three months on the famous Carnaby Street, the heart of Swinging Sixties London, a few steps from the shop of another cult British band, the Rolling Stones. A variety of memorabilia is on sale, including a Rubik's cube decorated with the faces of the band members, a "Queen" edition of the Monopoly board game and guitars signed by Brian May. A unique "Queen" pinball machine and concert footage projected onto the wall give the space a fan club feel. The band's greatest hits, such as "We Will Rock You" or "Killer Queen" provide the soundtrack,

piped through speakers.

"For a Queen fan it's an amazing opportunity to come here and be immersed in the world of Queen, to know that you can come here to speak with like-minded people... and be able to find mementos," Keith Taperell, vice-president of Bravado, the company responsible for merchandising within Universal Music group, told AFP. Despite Mercury's death due to complications from AIDS in November 1991, the band carried on and toured again in 2005 and 2008 with "Free" singer Paul Rodgers taking on frontman duties. Adam Lambert, who was discovered on the American Idol reality show, took over in 2012, touring the world with the band's two remaining founding members, guitarist Brian May and drummer Roger Taylor, on several occasions. — AFP

Lifestyle | Features



A cassette with the recording of four Danish schoolboys' interviews with John Lennon and Yoko Ono during the famous couple's winter stay in Thy, in Jutland, Denmark, in 1970, along with polaroid photos, are pictured at Bruun Rasmussen Auction House in Copenhagen.



In this file photo taken on January 26, 1970 John Lennon plays guitar with his wife Yoko Ono in Herred, Jutland in Denmark.



In this file photo taken on May 17, 1971 music legend John Lennon and his wife Yoko Ono pose for photographers in Cannes where they presented their movies 'Apotheosis' and 'The Flu'. — AFP photos

Imagine that: Unheard Lennon tape goes on sale

A 1970 tape of John Lennon singing a hitherto unheard song called "Radio Peace" and expressing frustration at his Beatles image to a group of Danish schoolboys goes under the hammer on Tuesday in Copenhagen. The 33-minute tape was recorded on January 5, 1970 when the former Beatle spent winter in a remote corner of Jutland in western Denmark with his wife Yoko Ono. Back then four eager boys, writing for their high school newspaper, braved a snowstorm in the hope of interviewing their idol.

They clinched the interview. The topics ranged from the couple's peace campaign, the Beatles, Lennon's hair and his frustration with his image as part of the "Fab Four". Lennon and Ono were famous for staging lie-ins and singing



A cassette with the recording of four Danish schoolboys' interviews with John Lennon and Yoko Ono.

songs of peace as the Vietnam War raged. "We went into the living room and saw John and Yoko sitting on the sofa, it was fantastic. We sat down with them and were quite close to each other," Karsten Hojen, one of the tape's owners,

told AFP. "I was sitting next to Yoko Ono and John Lennon was sitting next to Yoko and we talked, we had a good time," said Hojen, who is now 68.

"He stretched out his legs on the table with his woollen socks. It was just cosy," he added. Lennon and his wife arrived in Denmark in December 1969 to sort out the future of Ono's five-year-old daughter Kyoko, who was living with her father in northern Jutland. By then, the Beatles had recorded their last album, Abbey Road, and even though it was not official, the group had parted ways.

For a museum or Yoko?

Although Lennon and Ono spent their first week in Denmark incognito, the press found out and the singer organized a news conference that coincided with

the first day of the school term. Hojen and his friends convinced the headmaster to let them skip class to talk peace and music with the singer, a few months before the Beatles officially disbanded. Hojen and his friends said they decided to part with the audio cassette because they could not imagine sharing it among their numerous children.

"We would be happy if a museum was interested, or why not Yoko Ono herself?" the cultural consultant said. Labeled with the name "Skyrum Bjerger", the hamlet where it was made, the recording is of decent quality. "You have to sit back and take some time to listen to it and hope for the best," said Alexa Bruun Rasmussen, director of branding at Bruun Rasmussen Auction House which is handling the sale. "They actually play 'Give Peace a

Chance', but with different words," she said.

The recording also includes the unreleased song "Radio Peace", and is "heartfelt" and "unique", Bruun Rasmussen said, adding that the tape and photos could fetch up to 40,000 euros (\$46,000). Whoever buys it will not have the right to use it for profit. "John Lennon is talking to young schoolboys, they share the passion of the peace message. And it comes across clearly that there's a connection between them," she said. Although Hojen has recounted that winter day in detail to his children and grandchildren, he will no longer have any trace of it after the sale as the owners have not digitized the recording. — AFP



Moroccan street artist Omar Lhamzi works on a mural during the 'Jidar' street art festival in the capital Rabat.



Moroccan street artist Imane Droby works on a mural. — AFP photos

Art flourishes on the walls of Morocco

Artist Omar Lhamzi donned a bright yellow vest and paint-splattered shoes, selected a brush and set to work on his latest canvas—the wall of a house in Morocco's seaside capital Rabat. Lhamzi is one of a new generation of artists whose murals are changing the face of Morocco's cities. A wander through Rabat's avenues and alleyways reveals an array of freshly painted works, in which larger-than-life fantasy creatures co-inhabit with realistic portraits and scenes of daily life. Their creators flocked from across the North African kingdom and beyond to Rabat last week for Jidar-Arabic for "wall"—a festival dedicated to street art.

Lhamzi used the side of a house in the working-class district of Yaacoub Al Mansour for his latest work, a man with six ears and green and pink skin floating in darkness, with clouds that echo Vincent van Gogh's "Starry Night". The 25-year-old, who goes by the alias Bo3bo3, completed his first murals in the seaside city of Agadir four years ago. But he had not been expecting it to become his main field when he graduated in 2018 from the prestigious National School of Fine Arts in the northern city of Tetouan. "I never imagined that my work would be visible in the public space," he said. Today, however, he covers walls with bright colours, creating a surrealist world full of references to skating

and video games, breaking the monotony of the urban landscape.

Growing interest

In another part of the capital, Imane Droby perches on a stool in front of a school wall, tracing out a realistic portrait of a woman embroidering. The 36-year-old from Casablanca says she, too, fell into painting murals "sort of by accident". "I got a taste for it. It's great to transform a blank wall into a work of art," she said. She added that street art "is difficult for everyone but even more so for women. You have to make double the effort to make your mark."

It is an art form that has flourished since the early 2000s in Morocco's commercial capital of Casablanca. A decade later in 2013, the Sbagha Bagha festival stirred a new level of public interest in murals. "At first it was really complicated, because unlike graffiti or stenciling, painting murals requires organization," said Salah Malouli, artistic director of Sbagha Bagha and Jidar. "At the time, nobody felt comfortable working in public. There was lots of apprehension." But today both residents and institutions show more interest in murals, Malouli said, and in recent years the artworks have graced walls not just in big cities like tourist hub Marrakesh but also in more remote areas.

Portraits erased

The artworks are not always valued by landlords or the authorities. The municipality of the northern port city of Tangiers sparked outrage over the summer by starting to erase a tribute to French-Moroccan photographer Leila Alaoui, who was killed in a 2016 jihadist attack in Burkina Faso. The authorities later reversed the decision. Malouli said the artworks are most vulnerable in Casablanca, where flyposting often covers walls. "Public space is invaded by informal advertising, which complicates our work," he said. Two works by Italian street artist Millo were erased in recent years. Yet for the artists involved in Jidar, there is no question of giving up.

"It's the price of working in public space—you have to accept what happens, both good and bad," Malouli said. Despite the challenges, Lhamzi sees street art as a way of "learning to speak and listen to people". And every year, the scene is growing, with new artists contributing to a collective wall—just as Lhamzi and Droby started out. For visual artist Yassine Balzioui who managed the wall this year, the art form has wings. In the street, "everything is possible", he said. — AFP

Oldest bone tools for clothesmaking found in Morocco

Archaeologists in Morocco have identified clothesmaking tools fashioned from bone dating back 120,000 years, the oldest ever found, one of the researchers said. "It's a major discovery because while older bone tools have been found elsewhere, it's the first time we have identified bone tools (this old) that were used to make clothing," Moroccan archaeologist Abdeljalil El Hajraoui said. The international team discovered more than 60 tools in Contrebandiers (Smugglers) Cave, less than 20 kilometers (12 miles) from the North African country's capital. They had been "intentionally shaped for specific tasks that included leather and fur working", the team wrote in a study published in the journal *iScience*. The discovery could help answer questions on the origins of modern human behaviour, said El Hajraoui, a researcher at the National Institute of Archaeology and Cultural Heritage (INSAP). "Sewing is a behavior that has lasted" since prehistory, he told AFP.

"Tools like those discovered in the cave were used for 30,000 years, which proves the emergence of collective memory." The *iScience* paper predicted that "given the

level of specialization of the bone tool material culture at Contrebandiers Cave, it is likely that earlier examples will be found." The team also discovered living spaces dug into the ground or built in the cave, as well as perforated seashells apparently used as ornaments.

"This was a cultural evolution that still needs study," El Hajraoui said. Morocco has been the location of a number of significant archaeological findings, including on Wednesday when the country's culture ministry announced that researchers in a cave near Essaouira, about 400 kilometers southwest of Rabat, had discovered a collection of about 30 shaped marine snail shells dating back as much as 150,000 years. In a statement, it said they were "the oldest ornaments ever discovered". That followed an announcement in July when archaeologists revealed the discovery of North Africa's oldest Stone Age hand-axe manufacturing site, dating back 1.3 million years.

The find pushed back by hundreds of thousands of years the start date in North Africa of the Acheulian stone tool industry associated with a key human ancestor, Homo erectus, researchers on the team told journalists in Rabat. In 2017, the discovery of five fossils at Jebel Irhoud in Morocco, estimated at 300,000 years old, overturned evolutionary science when they were designated Homo sapiens. — AFP



Archaeologists walk to enter the Contrebandiers (Smugglers) Cave less than 20 kilometers from the Moroccan capital Rabat. — AFP

'Hand Solo': The one-armed boy who built a Lego prosthesis

David Aguilar was five when he first discovered Lego, entering a world where it didn't matter he was missing his forearm, and four years later, he built his first prosthesis with it. Now on the verge of finishing a degree in bioengineering, he dreams of working to help other children who, like him, were born different. Aguilar was born without a right forearm as a result of Poland syndrome, a rare disorder which can cause severe abnormalities in the shoulder, arm or hand, but it has not stopped him from living his life.

Now 22, this Andorran student—who has been obsessed with robots since he

was a child—has little free time: Aside from finishing his degree, he gives motivational speeches, has written a book and taken part in an innovation conference run by NASA. But getting here hasn't been easy and his face hardens as he recalls the years when building things with Lego was his only refuge from bullying.

"When I was a teenager, I carried on playing with Lego because it was a way of escaping the bullying, it really helped me ignore all the jibes I had to put up with every day," he told AFP at his university residence near Barcelona. During his teens, he set up a YouTube channel calling himself "Hand Solo", a play on the name of smuggler-pilot hero Han Solo from the early "Star Wars" films. Over the years, he fine-tuned his construction skills and by the age of 17, he had managed to create a fully-functioning Lego prosthetic that allowed him to do his first-ever pushups with two arms.

Since then, he has further refined his technique, proudly showing off his latest version, the MK5, which has a much more sleek robotic look and long pale-blue "fin-

gers" which are activated by muscles operating a motorized pulley. Long accustomed to life without his forearm, Aguilar doesn't use a prosthesis every day but he



2017 Guinness World record holder and 2020 Lego Masters France winner, Andorran university student David Aguilar, poses with his self-built prosthetic arm, made with Lego pieces, in Sant Cugat del Valles, near Barcelona. — AFP

knows that many people do, and that it can cost many thousands of euros for the newest models. "Since I made that first prosthesis, I realized that I had the power to help other people. And when I looked in the mirror and saw myself with two arms, I thought that other people really might need that too," he said.

Arming an 8-year-old

After he was awarded the Guinness World Record for creating the first functional Lego prosthetic arm in 2017, news about Hand Solo's wizardry quickly spread. Finding his story online earlier this year, Zaura Bektemissova decided to write him an email from her home in northeastern France. Her son Beknur, she wrote, was eight-years-old and had no arms. The doctors couldn't make him a normal prosthesis and she was looking for help.

"Prosthetics are mostly standard, they are big and heavy, so for his spine it was not a good idea," she told AFP at her home in Strasbourg where the family has lived for two years since her husband took

up a diplomatic post at the Kazakhstan consulate. Aguilar promised to try and at the end of August, Bektemissova and her son drove 1,300 kilometers (800 miles) to Andorra, a tiny principality in the Pyrenees mountains, sandwiched between Spain and France, to meet him and try out the new prosthesis he'd made.

Made entirely of Lego, the lightweight device has a pincer-like grapple at the end which Beknur can control with a cord manipulated by his left foot. "Now I can grab things with my hand, before I couldn't," beams Beknur, throwing a ball to his brother. Having that extra bit of independence has really helped, his mum says. "He can do a lot of things with it so his self-esteem is high now, compared to what was before," she smiles. And the experience has inspired Aguilar. "If I did it for Beknur, why not for any other boy or girl who's missing an arm or a leg or a foot?" he says, his eyes alight with ideas. — AFP

Lifestyle | Features

No time to wait: World premiere for new Bond movie

Celebrities and royals walked the red carpet in central London yesterday for the star-studded but much-delayed world premiere of the latest James Bond film, "No Time To Die". British actor Daniel Craig's fifth and final outing in the blockbuster franchise hits big screens after its release was repeatedly postponed during the coronavirus pandemic. The film premiered at London's historic Royal Albert Hall, with royal couples Prince Charles and Camilla and Prince William and Kate. It is part of a backlog of major productions held back by distributors during the pandemic, hitting cinemas hard, and forcing some new films to be streamed. The release will be in cinemas only, with struggling theatres hoping Bond will lure back crowds.

"There's a great deal of expectation surrounding this film," Craig acknowledged ahead of the premiere, saying he wanted "hopefully to give the industry some sort of boost". "Cinema is here to stay as far as I'm concerned and if we can help in some way, I'll be very happy," he added. Vue Entertainment, the UK



branch of the cinema operator Vue International, hailed the movie's release as "the cinematic event of the year". It will go on general release in Britain on

Thursday and in the United States on October 8 — a year and a half behind schedule.

Craig bows out

In the film, reportedly costing \$250 million (£182 million, 214 million euros), Bond returns to active service after retirement, vowing: "I have to finish this." He deploys his trademark hi-tech gadgets in spectacular scenery in Italy and Norway while battling the villainous Safin, played by Oscar-winner Rami Malek ("Bohemian Rhapsody"). "I get shot and then I get blown up. It feels like James Bond to me," Craig said in an official podcast. With Craig bowing out, calling the role "a massive part" of his life, speculation has mounted over who will inherit his fabled license to kill. UK bookmakers are tipping the likes of Tom Hardy ("The Revenant", "Dunkirk") or Rege-Jean Page, the mixed-race star of the Netflix hit "Bridgerton".

Craig, 53, has held onto the role longer than any of his predecessors since his 2006 debut in "Casino Royale". He

has won praise for adding depth and emotional complexity to the all-action role, but only reluctantly agreed to one final appearance as Bond. After "Spectre" in 2015, Craig told Time Out magazine he would rather "slash his wrists" than reprise the role but recently apologized for appearing flippant. Emmy-winning US filmmaker Cary Joji Fukunaga directed the new film, becoming the first American to helm the franchise.

His previous films include a 2011 adaptation of Charlotte Bronte's "Jane Eyre". The filmmaker stepped in after the original director Danny Boyle, known for "Slumdog Millionaire" and "Trainspotting", left over "creative differences" in 2018.

'World has changed'

Fukunaga said in a promotional video that his Bond is "like a wounded animal", struggling because "the world has changed, the rules of engagement aren't what they used to be: The rules of espionage (are) darker in this era of asymmetric warfare". The Bond films are based on a character created by upper-

class British writer Ian Fleming in novels published in the 1950s and 1960s. As the MeToo movement has heightened awareness of misogyny in popular culture, some have argued that time has run out for the franchise.

The new film's director has also criticized Bond's sexual exploits. In an interview with The Hollywood Reporter, Fukunaga said that in one 1960s-era film, "basically Sean Connery's character rapes a woman". "That wouldn't fly today," he stressed. Among those working on the screenplay was Phoebe Waller-Bridge, the British creator and star of the TV series "Fleabag" and writer of the first series of "Killing Eve". In the film, Bond spars with a black female MI6 agent, played by Briton Lashana Lynch, and has to take a back seat to her as she flies a plane. "They're doing exactly the right thing, and I think they'll continue to do that in the future," Lynch told Sky News of the creative team. —AFP



Beatles

Barry, Beatles, Billie: 60 years of Bond tunes

Ever since the twanging guitar of John Barry's theme song first appeared in "Dr No" in 1962, music has been crucial to the James Bond phenomenon. The songs written for each title sequence have become a way of marking out the evolution of pop music through the past 60 years, from the classics of Shirley Bassey and Paul McCartney to Adele and Billie Eilish.

Nobody remembers Monty

Many assume the original theme was written by John Barry, in part because he became so closely associated with the Bond franchise, composing the soundtrack for 11 of the films. In fact, Barry only arranged and performed the theme tune. The famous dung-digger-dung-dung line was actually written by theatre composer Monty Norman, developed from an unused Indian-themed score he had written for an adaptation of VS Naipaul's "A House for Mr Biswas". It was Barry's job to jazz it up, adding the blaring horns that made it so dramatic. While Norman was given a one-off payment of just £250, Barry built a Hollywood career that has included five Oscars and classic soundtracks to "Midnight Cowboy", "Out of Africa" and many more.

Golden girl Shirley Bassey

Bassey became almost as closely linked to Bond as Barry—the only singer to deliver three title tracks: "Goldfinger" (1964), "Diamonds are Forever" (1971) and "Moonraker" (1979). The first two are considered the most memorable in Bond history, the latter less so—Bassey later admitted she hated the "Moonraker" song and only did it as a favor to Barry. "Goldfinger" made her a star, but the recording sessions were grueling, with Barry insisting that Bassey, then 27, hold the last belting note for seven full seconds. "I was holding it and holding it—I was looking at John Barry and I was going blue in the face and he's going 'hold it just one more second. When it finished, I nearly passed out,'" she later recalled.

A new Beatles beginning

The first Bond film without Barry on

the baton was "Live and Let Die" in 1973. For this, the producers turned to another famous "B", The Beatles. The group's producer George Martin took over composing duties and brought in Paul McCartney and his band Wings for the theme song. It became another classic and spawned a famous cover by Guns N' Roses in later years. From this point on, the Bond title song became its own mini-industry, without the involvement of the composer. Big pop tie-ins followed, ranging from the not-so-successful (Lulu's "The Man with the Golden Gun") to classics like Carly Simon's "Nobody Does it Better" and Duran Duran's "A View to a Kill".

The next generation

After a few desultory outings during the Pierce Brosnan years, the Bond genre got a shot of adrenaline with Adele's "Skyfall" in 2012, which was the first to win an Oscar for best song. The following year's "Writing's on the Wall" by Sam Smith also won an Oscar, though it got a more mixed critical reception. The latest incarnation is pop princess Billie Eilish with "No Time to Die", which she co-wrote with her brother Finneas. It already has a thumbs-up from the doyenne of the Bond theme world, with Bassey telling The Big Issue: "She did a good job." — AFP



US singer/songwriter Billie Eilish performs during the 2021 Global Citizen Live festival at the Great Lawn, Central Park in New York City. — AFP



Adele



Shirley Bassey

WHO WILL BE THE NEXT BOND?

There are few casting decisions as hotly anticipated as the question of who will be the next 007, with many expecting that a black Bond or even female Bond is on the cards. Daniel Craig, a somewhat reluctant Bond at times, has had one foot out of the tuxedo almost from the moment he took on the role back in 2006. But "No Time to Die" appears to really be his fifth and final outing, and so the rumor mill is back in action. For years, several names have been closely linked to the role, which has previously been played by stars including Sean Connery, Roger Moore and Pierce Brosnan.

Tom Hardy

Craig was an attempt to toughen up Bond after Her Majesty's top agent was threatened by an American-Jason Bourne-and his grittier adventures. He was a massive success, with "Casino Royale" and "Skyfall" in particular seen



as two of the best Bond films of all time, and returning the character to the style of the original novels by Ian Fleming. Tom Hardy, often a villain or at least an anti-hero in films like "The Dark Knight Rises", "Venom" and "Mad Max: Fury Road", would be a way to maintain that darker vision of Bond. He is currently the bookies' favorite in Britain, according to betting agency William Hill.

Idris Elba

A name that is often in the discussion is Idris Elba, known for "The Wire", "The Suicide Squad" and hit BBC series "Luther". He set social media tongues wagging in 2018 when he posted: "My name's Elba, Idris Elba"-echoing Bond's famous catchphrase-but he added soon after: "Don't believe the hype!" Bond producer Barbara Broccoli has repeatedly said that the next 007 "doesn't need to be a white man".

Lashana Lynch

Broccoli seemed to rule out the possibility of a female bond, telling Variety: "I'm not particularly interested in taking a male character and having a woman play it. I think women are far more interesting than that." But that hasn't stopped speculation around Lashana Lynch, a 33-year-old black British woman. Craig, however, agreed with Broccoli's position, telling the Radio Times: "There should simply be better parts for women and actors of color. 'Why should a woman play James Bond when there should be a part just as good as James Bond, but for a woman?'"

Rege-Jean Page

Having set millions of hearts aflutter with Netflix hit "Bridgerton" over the past year, another bookmaker's favorite is the young British-Zimbabwean actor. He has been self-effacing about the idea, telling



US talkshow host Jimmy Fallon: "If you're a Brit and you do something of any kind of renown, then people start saying the B-word."

Tom Holland

Less coy about his desire for a license to kill is Spiderman star Tom Holland. Not content with being a superhero, Holland told Variety: "As a young British lad who loves cinema, I'd love to be James Bond. So, you know, I'm just putting that out there. I look pretty good in a suit."

Also in the running

There are plenty of other candidates, with Vogue recently offering a run-down that gave strong odds to "British-Malaysian dreamboat" Henry Golding, "Bodyguard" star Richard Madden-or for a more cerebral twist on the character, "Peaky Blinders" lead Cillian Murphy. For now, lips are sealed at Bond HQ, with Broccoli saying: "You can only be in love with one person at a time. 'For now, we just cannot think about anything beyond Daniel.'" — AFP

Five things to know about James Bond

"No Time to Die" is the 25th official Bond film, and the franchise retains its status as one of the most popular in the world. Here are five things to know about the man with a license to kill.

Born on paper

James Bond started life on the page, his name taken from the cover of a Jamaican bird-watching book because author Ian Fleming wanted something as mundane as possible. Fleming was able to draw from some rich real-life experiences, having served in naval intelligence during World War II. One of Commander Fleming's key missions was Operation Goldeneye, aimed at sabotaging ties between Spain and Germany—which later gave him the name for his Jamaican home, and inspired the 1995 movie.

His first novel, "Casino Royale", was released in 1953 and was a huge escapist hit at a time of post-war rations and hardship in Britain. He went on to write 13 more Bond novels and penned the children's story "Chitty Chitty Bang Bang" for his son, which also came to the screen as a hit musical. He died in 1964 at the age of 56, just two years after the first Bond film appeared.

Big money

The figures vary, but Bond is clearly one of the most successful film franchises of all time, having spawned 25 official films and enough product placements to make a glossy magazine editor blush. Industry data site The Numbers places Bond in third place for worldwide box office takings, behind only the Marvel Cinematic Universe and Star Wars. Although it has been run-

ning for fewer years than other franchises such as King Kong and Godzilla, it is perhaps the most consistent—rarely going more than two or three years between installments.

The longest gap was between Timothy Dalton's last 1989 outing "License to Kill" and Pierce Brosnan's "Goldeneye" in 1995. Underlining the immense value of the franchise, Amazon this year bought the Bond rights from MGM for a cool \$8.45 billion.

International agent

The various Bonds of the past 60 years have included Englishmen Daniel Craig and Roger Moore, Scotsman Sean Connery, George Lazenby from Australia, Timothy Dalton from Wales and Irishman Pierce Brosnan. In the novels, Bond is actually the son of a Scottish father and Swiss mother—both of whom die in a climbing accident when Bond is a boy.

Codenames

The codename "007" has a specific meaning. The "00" designation signifies the agent's license to kill, while the "7" is his identification within the elite unit of MI6, Britain's external intelligence service. The M designating Bond's boss comes from the "Missions Department". Q, who furnishes Bond with all his nifty gadgets, gets his moniker from "quartermaster"—a military term referring to the person in charge of supplies. The bad guys have their own codenames. "SPECTRE", the organization that causes Bond so much trouble, is short for "Special Executive for Counter-intelligence, Terrorism, Revenge and Extortion".

A famous fan

One big name who gave Bond an early boost was President John F Kennedy, who cited "From Russia With Love" in his top 10 books. Reportedly, it was also the last film he ever watched before leaving for Dallas in November 1963. — AFP

Sports

England World Cup winner Roger Hunt dies aged 83

LONDON: England World Cup winner and Liverpool's record league goalscorer Roger Hunt has died at the age of 83, the Premier League club announced yesterday. Hunt, who played in the 1966 World Cup final against West Germany at Wembley, which England won 4-2, scored an unsurpassed 244 league goals for the Reds.

"We are mourning the passing of legendary former player Roger Hunt," the club said in a statement posted on their official Twitter account. "The thoughts of everybody at Liverpool Football Club are with Roger's family and friends at this sad and difficult time. Rest in peace, Sir Roger Hunt 1938 - 2021."

Hunt joined Liverpool, then a tier-two team, as a 20-year-old in 1958 and played his last game for the club in 1969, before going on to play for Bolton Wanderers for three seasons. The forward's overall Liverpool record of 285 goals was broken by Ian Rush in 1992, but no-one has scored more league goals for the club.

Hunt, known as 'Sir Roger' to Liverpool fans despite the absence of an official knighthood, won two English top-flight titles and the FA Cup under celebrated manager Bill Shankly. He scored three goals in six appearances for Alf Ramsey's England team during the 1966 World Cup on home soil and 18 goals in 34 games overall for his country.

Current Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp said: "It's really sad news and our thoughts and our love go to his family. Unfortunately, it feels too frequent in this moment we are saying farewell to these giants of our club. Roger Hunt comes second to no one in his importance in the history of

Liverpool FC, that much is clear."

England acknowledged the integral role Hunt played in the nation's World Cup win in 1966, which remains their only major international trophy. The Three Lions tweeted: "We're extremely saddened to learn that Roger Hunt, who was a key member of our @FIFAWorldCup-winning side in 1966, has passed away at the age of 83. Our deepest condolences go to Roger's family, friends and former clubs."

'Football great'

Football Association Chief Executive Mark Bullingham said in a statement that England had "lost another great". "On behalf of the FA, our thoughts are with his family and friends today," he said. "Twice a league champion with Liverpool, either side of a memorable FA Cup success in 1965, Roger will always be treasured by fans across the country as one of our World Cup winners of 1966."

Jimmy Greaves, who played alongside Hunt in the group games in 1966, before suffering an injury, died earlier this month aged 81. Just three members of the England XI who played in the final are still alive — George Cohen, Bobby Charlton and Geoff Hurst, who scored a hat-trick at Wembley. Hunt's death comes six months after that of his long-time Liverpool strike partner Ian St John, who was 82.

Former Liverpool striker John Aldridge paid tribute to Hunt, writing on Twitter: "I'm absolutely gutted to hear of the passing away of one, if not THE BEST Lfc strikers SIR ROGER HUNT. What a striker and a true Gentleman, I had the great



LONDON: In this file photo taken on July 30, 1966, England's national soccer team captain Bobby Moore holds aloft the Jules Rimet trophy as he is carried by his teammates (from left) Gordon Banks, Alan Ball, Roger Hunt, Geoff Hurst, Ray Wilson, George Cohen and Bobby Charlton following England's victory over Germany (4-2 in extra time) in the World Cup final 30 July 1966 at Wembley stadium in London. —AFP

pleasure of being with him on many occasions. RIP My Nu 1 Legend and Hero." Robbie Fowler, sixth in Liverpool's all-time record goal-scorers list, tweeted: "Rest in peace, Sir Roger Hunt." —AFP

Nets Irving misses media day, declines to reveal vaccination status

LOS ANGELES: NBA star Kyrie Irving skipped the Brooklyn Nets media day on Monday because of COVID-19 protocols and declined to discuss his vaccination status, which could prevent him from playing home games this season. "I would like to keep that stuff private," Irving told reporters via a Zoom call.

"I know that I'll be there every day no matter what and just be present for my teammates as one of the leaders on the team," he said. "I know the focus has to be at an all-time high, no distractions. This is the last thing I wanted to create, was more distractions and more hoopla and more drama around this."

Irving joins a growing list of NBA players, which also includes Washington Wizards Bradley Beal, Orlando Magic Jonathan Isaac and Golden State Warriors forward Andrew Wiggins, who firmly said no, or have expressed great hesitancy, about getting the vaccine. Irvine did not attend media day due to New York City's new coronavirus protocols.

A new law passed in August requires pro athletes that play indoors to be vaccinated, meaning those who are not vaccinated could miss home games during the season. On Monday, Irving repeatedly requested privacy when asked about the situation. "I'm doing my best to maintain this with good intentions and a good heart," he said.

The Nets' first pre-season game at Barclays Center is on October 8. The regular season begins October 19, when the Nets are scheduled to play the Milwaukee Bucks on the road. Rolling Stone magazine has reported that roughly 50 to 60 NBA players have yet to receive the first dose of a coronavirus vaccine.

Last week, the NBA announced it declined an exemption request from Golden State's Wiggins. Wiggins, like Irving in New York City, faces regulations in San Francisco that would prevent him from practicing or playing in home Warriors games until he's vaccinated. It is anticipated that unvaccinated NBA players will face more testing and be asked to sit in separate areas of team meetings, in locker rooms and on the team plane.

Washington's Beal spoke at the Wizards media day on Monday and cited "personal reasons" for not getting vaccinated against the coronavirus. He hopes that his previous bout with COVID-19 will protect him. Beal contracted COVID-19 over the summer, preventing him from competing in the Tokyo Olympics.

"With the guidelines that the league makes and everything that the protocols are doing, they make it difficult on us to where they kind of force us to want to get it," Beal said. Orlando forward Isaac tweeted on the weekend, "I believe it is your God given right to decide if taking the vaccine is right for you! Period!" —AFP

Qadsiya into Amir Cup semi-final after beating arch rival Arabi



KUWAIT: Al-Qadsiya SC defender Ali Favez #5 heads the ball to score against Al-Arabi SC in the Kuwait Amir Cup semifinal match between the two teams at Jaber International Stadium Monday night.

By Abdullatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Al-Qadsiya SC qualified for the HH the Amir Cup final for the 2020/2021 season after defeating holders Al-Arabi SC 1-0 in the semifinal Monday night.

The first half of the match, which was played at Jaber International Stadium, saw Qadsiya's Ali Favez scoring the winning goal in the 16th minute. Qadsiya kept up the pressure and had several opportunities to add to the score. Arabi also had their chances but were thwarted by Qadsiya goalkeeper Khaled Al-Rashidi.

Arabi players did their best in the second half and had a few dangerous chances to score, but nothing materialized. Qadsiya kept exchanging attacks and also had numerous chances to score, but the match ended 1-0 in their favor. A large crowd turned out for the match between the two arch rivals of Kuwait's football, held with a 30 percent fan capacity due to COVID-19 restrictions. The final will be on Nov 23 against Kuwait SC, which qualified earlier.

Cannavaro leaves Guangzhou FC amid Evergrande troubles

SHANGHAI: Italian football legend Fabio Cannavaro is stepping down as manager of Chinese giants Guangzhou FC, the club announced yesterday, as it faces an uncertain future with its owner Evergrande Group on the brink of collapse.

Cannavaro's departure had already been widely rumored after he failed to guide Guangzhou FC to a ninth Chinese Super League (CSL) crown last season. But the troubles at Evergrande Group, whose potential demise has shaken world financial markets, may well have forced the issue with questions now swirling around the fate of the team.

A statement on the club's Weibo account said that "after friendly negotiations, Guangzhou Evergrande has decided to terminate Fabio Cannavaro's contract". "We whole-heartedly thank Fabio Cannavaro for his huge efforts and positive contribution to the club, and wish him all the best for the future!" the statement added.

The writing was already on the wall for the 48-year-old Cannavaro, who returned to Guangzhou in 2017 for a second stint, after being dismissed following a failed spell at the club in 2014-15. He coached the side to the league title in 2019, but last season ended with-

Crown Prince Shooting Championship to kick off in November



Al-Qadsiya SC fans cheer for their team during the match. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Crown Prince Shooting Championship to kick off in November

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Shooting Club's Chairman Duajj Al-Otaibi announced yesterday that His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's annual shooting tournament will take place between November 4-6. In a press release, Otaibi said that the championship that will be held at Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Olympic Shooting Complex with the participation of local shooters from the club, the Kuwaiti National Guard, the Military Sports Federation and the Police Sports Union. Shooters from the GCC will be allowed to participate as well.



Duajj Al-Otaibi

The club is fully prepared for the tournament which is considered the most important local championship, in which competitions will include pistol and rifle shooting at a distance of 10 meters, plus archery, said Otaibi. He expressed his gratitude towards His Highness the Crown Prince for his continuous support for Kuwait's athletes and shooting sport. —KUNA

out silverware.

Soon after, the club said it was changing its management structure in a way that appeared to leave Cannavaro with little power. Chinese media have speculated previously that a stumbling block to sacking Cannavaro outright was compensation. The 2006 World Cup-winning captain reportedly has two years left on his 12-million-euro-a-year deal.

Uncertainty at the most successful club in recent CSL history adds to turmoil in Chinese football and shines a further spotlight on the precarious finances undergirding the sport in the country. A perennial football underachiever, China has in recent years entertained dreams of some day hosting and winning a World Cup.

But these dreams took a hit earlier this year when Jiangsu FC folded just months after wrapping up their first championship due to financial problems at the club's backer, retail-based conglomerate Suning.

Severe COVID-19 restrictions have put a dampener on CSL play, with teams confined for the past two seasons to playing in just two cities and with fan interaction curtailed. Authorities have also cracked down on high salaries that previously lured many top foreign players.

A number of big-name foreigners have left since the end of last season, including Brazilians Hulk, Alex Teixeira and Paulinho, and Italians Graziano Pelle and Stephan El Shaarawy. The league still features some star power in Oscar, Marouane Fellaini and Mousa Dembele — but there have been no big-name arrivals for some time.



GUANGZHOU: This file photo taken on November 23, 2019 shows Guangzhou Evergrande's head coach Fabio Cannavaro waving after the team winning the Chinese Super League (CSL) football match against Shanghai SIPG in Guangzhou in China's southern Guangdong province. —AFP

Football authorities also upset fans by mandating that starting with the 2021 season, the league's 16 teams must drop the corporate part of their names and instead adopt more "neutral" names. Guangzhou Evergrande FC became Guangzhou FC, and other clubs have similarly re-branded. Guangzhou FC's fate remains unclear. Unconfirmed reports have circulated saying that discussions are under way that could see a government entity and state-owned company taking it over. —AFP

Sports

From scapegoat to award winner, Jorginho is now Chelsea's fulcrum

Jorginho thanks doubters: 'They motivated me to work harder'

LONDON: As he prepares for a significant milestone in Chelsea's Champions League clash with Juventus tonight, Italy midfielder Jorginho can reflect on the golden year that silenced his critics. Jorginho will make his 150th appearance for Chelsea if he plays in the Group H tie in Turin.

Underappreciated in England until the last few months, Jorginho has emerged as a key player for Chelsea and Italy after winning the Champions League and Euro 2020 in the space of just a few weeks. The 29-year-old was recently named the UEFA Men's Player of the Year for 2020/21 and has been mentioned as a leading candidate for the prestigious Ballon d'Or award.

It is a remarkable renaissance for a player who became public enemy number one among Chelsea fans after a turbulent first season with the Premier League club.

"All those who didn't believe in me, who criticized me, I have to thank them too. They gave me even more encouragement. They motivated me to work harder and harder to prove they were wrong," Jorginho told UEFA.com. "Everything that happened was thanks to the people that stood by me — family, friends, my agent, my team-mates, coaches, physios, kitmen."

Jorginho was such a scapegoat for the failed Maurizio Sarri reign that for him to be at Chelsea long enough to reach 150 appearances seemed unlikely just 18 months ago. In his maiden campaign with the Blues, he was relentlessly targeted by supporters frustrated with the team's unimaginative perform-

netic environment of the Premier League. And Jorginho's habit of passing sideways or backwards to ensure Chelsea kept the ball infuriated fans who demanded a more forward-thinking approach.

'In love with the game'

Unloved by both the fans and many of his players, Sarri ultimately departed at the end of his only season in charge. That campaign ended with Jorginho helping Chelsea win the Europa League, but Sarri's successor Frank Lampard never seemed completely satisfied with the midfielder either.

Jorginho was in and out of the team during Lampard's reign, with his value to Chelsea still a matter of impassioned debate among supporters and pundits when Thomas Tuchel took charge in January. His hop-step penalty-taking style aside, Jorginho often appears a reluctant star, happy to shun the spotlight off the pitch and employing a low-key approach on it.

But Tuchel had no doubts about Jorginho's value, appreciating that his astute reading of the game, tactical awareness and metronomic passing made him an ideal 'number six' capable of leading the transition from defense to attack.

Jorginho has grown in stature while

Star thrives on low-key approach

ances under Sarri.

Sarri had paid £50 million (\$68 million) to bring the Italy midfielder with him from Napoli amid intense interest from Manchester City. The pair were unveiled on the same day at Stamford Bridge in 2018, but there was no honeymoon period for either man in west London.

'Sarri-ball' — the manager's possession-based philosophy — failed to translate from Serie A to the more fre-

typical piece of skill and persistence, nutmegging Dimitrios Nikolaou before forcing home his only goal of the season so far.

However, he caused fury in Allegri on Sunday when he wasted a glorious chance to score with Juve a goal ahead in a tight 3-2 win over Sampdoria. The 23-year-old received a cute pass from Italy teammate Manuel Locatelli and then proceeded to dribble his way towards a shooting chance that never came in a packed penalty area at the Allianz Stadium.

Fortunately for the home side Locatelli was on hand seconds later to score the goal which ensured Juve won their second match on the bounce, but Allegri's annoyance was clear. It wasn't the first time Chiesa has annoyed Allegri, who returned to the Juve bench this summer after two years away and has had a rocky start with his team in mid-table.

He targeted Chiesa for criticism after Juve's 1-1 home draw against AC Milan,

when he came on four minutes before Ante Rebic scored the Rossoneri's equaliser and did little as Milan came close to snatching a win.

"He came on at a difficult moment and I needed him to bring the ball into the opposition's midfield," said Allegri. "He's a good player but he needs to grow up and realize what he is capable of doing we're Juventus."

The message was clear: Chiesa has everything he needs to become a great player but isn't doing it yet. The lack of trust in him from Allegri comes in stark contrast to the way he worked his way into Italian football history at the Euro, fighting for and winning a place in Roberto Mancini's first XI.

He didn't make his first start until the third group match against Wales with qualification for the knockouts already decided, and it wasn't until he came off the bench to open the scoring in extra-time against Austria in the last 16 that he cemented his place in Mancini's front three. — AFP



BELFAST: In this file photo taken on August 12, 2021, Chelsea's Italian midfielder Jorginho reacts after scoring his penalty in the penalty shootout during the UEFA Super Cup football match between Chelsea and Villarreal at Windsor Park in Belfast. — AFP

working for Tuchel, making him essential to Chelsea's hopes of retaining the Champions League and winning a first English title since 2017. For a player whose unselfish approach makes others shine, this is Jorginho's moment in the spotlight.

"He's a top guy. He's in love with this

game. He never stops transmitting this energy that he's really into thinking about tactics and loves to be involved and feel a true connection with the game," Tuchel said. "That makes him a very important player and a huge link in the middle of the pitch, not only for us but also for Italy." — AFP

Chiesa battling for Juve spot ahead of Chelsea visit

MILAN: Federico Chiesa has started his second season at Juventus with an uncertain position in coach Massimiliano Allegri's plans despite being one of the heroes of Italy's Euro 2020 triumph. Six matches into the Serie A season Chiesa has started in fewer games than he did helping Italy win this summer's European Championship, with Allegri focusing on Paulo Dybala and Alvaro Morata as theynchpins of his Juve attack.

However, with that pair injured and out of tonight's Champions League visit from defending champions Chelsea, Chiesa will be among those looking to profit with another decisive performance. He levelled the scores in Juve's 3-2 win at Spezia midweek with a



TURIN: Juventus' Italian forward Federico Chiesa reacts after missing a goal opportunity during the Italian Serie A football match between Juventus and Sampdoria on Sunday at the Juventus stadium in Turin. — AFP

Koeman seeks extra time as Barca get set for Benfica

MADRID: Ronald Koeman's future as Barcelona coach may already be decided but the outcome of the next two games, starting with Benfica in the Champions League tonight, could buy him some extra time.

Three matches without a win and a press conference in which Koeman cancelled questions and demanded support felt more like the final week of a tenure about to be brought to an end. A goalless draw away at Cadiz ended with Gerard Pique playing up front and while Pique called for calm after the game, the

club captain also shied away from backing his coach.

"The club has been on the crest of a wave for many years, and we are not used to this," Pique said. "We all need to make an effort to give stability. We can complain or pull in the right direction. Let's not look for friction because this doesn't help anyone."

After drawing with Granada, Koeman seemed both to dismiss Barcelona's possession mantra and denigrate his players in one breath. "If you look at our squad, what are you supposed to do? Play tiki-taka?" Koeman said, in a reference to tiki-taka, the name attributed to the style played under Pep Guardiola. But a 3-0 victory over Levante on Sunday has, at least briefly, lifted the mood ahead of a week that is likely to be taken as a litmus test for whether Koeman returns from the international break still in charge.

After facing Benfica, with the pressure on in Group E after the opening defeat by



SANT JOAN DESPI: Barcelona's Spanish midfielder Ansu Fati (second right) arrives with teammates for a training session at the Joan Gamper training ground in Sant Joan Despi yesterday on the eve of the UEFA Champions League first round group E football match between Benfica and Barcelona. — AFP

Bayern Munich, Barcelona play on Saturday away at Atletico Madrid, La Liga's reigning champions, who are

enduring a rocky start themselves.

A loss in either game, even at this early stage, would represent a damaging blow

to Barca's hopes in either competition and perhaps convince the board the need for change is now. Yet a better combination of results could also earn Koeman some breathing space, even if it appears clear the Dutchman is not the long-term choice of club president Joan Laporta.

A period of stability would suit Laporta, given he needs time not only to identify a successor but also persuade them to join a club still working off more than a billion euros of debt and too broke to make significant signings for at least another year. And while the two-week international break might seem the preferable moment to make a change, a new coach would then be plunged into three games against Valencia, Dynamo Kiev and Real Madrid, meaning a potentially turbulent start. The better scenario both for Koeman and the board would be that the team recovers, in a similar way to last season when an uncertain first few weeks gave way to a gradual gathering of momentum. — AFP

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The embassy preserves the right to accept or reject any proposal without showing any reason.

Counsellor (Labour) Bangladesh Embassy
Phone: 965-2390920
E-mail: labourwing.kuwaitemb.bd@gmail.com

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De Gea seeks redemption as Villarreal threaten Manchester United once more



LONDON: Manchester United's Spanish goalkeeper David de Gea (center) and Manchester United's English midfielder Jesse Lingard (right) celebrate on the pitch after the English Premier League football match between West Ham United and Manchester United at The London Stadium, in east London on September 19, 2021. — AFP

MANCHESTER: Manchester United cross paths with Villarreal once more tonight in desperate need of a win to avoid another European embarrassment and ease the rising pressure on Ole Gunnar Solskjaer. The Yellow Submarine emerged 11-10 winners from a marathon penalty shootout when the sides last met in the Europa League final in May to win their first ever major trophy.

Defeat extended Solskjaer's wait for silverware as United boss since taking charge in December 2019, but goalkeeper David de Gea was the fall guy in Gdansk. The Spanish international's failure to stop a single Villarreal penalty was compounded when he was the only player from the 22 on both sides to fail to score from the spot. At the time it looked like De Gea's days as United number one may be up, despite being one of the highest paid players in the Premier League.

Solskjaer had already handed the reins to Dean

Henderson towards the of the Premier League season and his decision not to at least bring on the England goalkeeper, who boasts a far better penalty record, became another stick with which to beat his management of the final.

But Henderson's health suffered badly after testing positive for coronavirus during pre-season, giving De Gea the gloves for the start of the campaign. Despite a mixed bag of results, United would be even worse off if it wasn't for the 30-year-old's return to form.

De Gea produced a series of miraculous saves as the Red Devils escaped with a 1-0 win at Wolves. And he ended his hoodoo of failing to save 41 pen-

alties on the trot for club and country when he denied Mark Noble in stoppage time of a dramatic 2-1 victory at West Ham.

"I try to train very well, to show that I'm ready and then go to the game with the same spirit, experience and quality for the team," said De Gea. "I feel well, I feel strong, I feel confident. I'm really happy and that's the most important thing."

However, those wins at Molineux and the London Stadium

papered over cracks that are beginning to show in United's unbalanced squad. Solskjaer's men have lost three of their past four games despite adding

Cristiano Ronaldo and Jadon Sancho to a squad already rich in attacking talent.

The English giants only dropped into the Europa League last season after crashing out at the group stages. And anything less than revenge against Villarreal would leave them in severe danger of doing the same again after losing their group opener to Swiss side Young Boys.

The excitement generated by Ronaldo's return to Old Trafford has only intensified the scrutiny on Solskjaer to deliver in his third full season in charge. But his Champions League record of seven defeats in 11 games does not make for pretty reading.

Solskjaer is yet to find the right midfield balance to carry the defensive burden for his array of attacking talent. And he may be even more reliant on De Gea for the visit of Unai Emery's men with defenders Harry Maguire and Luke Shaw major doubts due to injury. — AFP



Maguire, Shaw doubtful for key match

Prescott stars for Dallas in first home game since injury

LOS ANGELES: An emotional Dak Prescott threw three touchdowns in his first home game in almost a year as the Dallas Cowboys cruised past Philadelphia 41-21 in an NFL clash for first place in the NFC East. Prescott completed 21 of 26 passes for 238 yards on Monday night in his first game back at the Cowboys' stadium since severely breaking his right ankle in a contest against the New York Giants last October.

With tears running down his face, Prescott stood for the pre-game anthem and said that he had been thinking about all the hard work it took to get back to being a starting quarterback again. "A couple of times (got emotional). During the warmup, pre-game, and then the anthem. Then it was go time," Prescott said. "I am just thankful of everything I have been through to be back here doing what I am doing."

Ezekiel Elliott rushed for two scores to help the Cowboys improve to 2-1 on the season and move past the Eagles atop the division. "This offense is playing together,"



ARLINGTON: Dak Prescott #4 of the Dallas Cowboys looks for an open receiver in the first half while playing the Philadelphia Eagles at AT&T Stadium on Monday in Arlington, Texas. — AFP

Prescott said. "We got a great brotherhood. Everyone is holding each other accountable, it is fun to be part of."

Trevon Diggs returned an interception for a touchdown, Dalton Schultz had six catches for 80 yards and two touchdowns, and Cedrick Wilson caught one touchdown pass in the win. Quarterback Jalen Hurts was 25-of-39 passing for 326 yards,

two touchdowns and two interceptions for the Eagles, who dropped to 1-2.

The Cowboys moved ahead to stay late in the first quarter when Prescott connected with Schultz on a 19-yard touchdown pass. Elliott scored from the three to give Dallas a 20-7 lead with 7:10 left in the first half and there was no looking back. — KUNA

UEFA drops case against European Super League rebels

LAUSANNE: UEFA says that it is dropping its disciplinary case against Real Madrid, Barcelona and Juventus over their involvement in the controversial European Super League, to comply with a ruling from a Madrid court.

European football's governing body said late Monday that "the proceedings (are) null and void, as if the proceedings had never been opened". It is the latest chapter in an affair that sent shockwaves through football.

The three heavyweight clubs were among 12 "founders" who caused uproar in April with their proposal for the elite breakaway league. The nine others quickly backed down when fans and other clubs reacted with fury to the initiative, but Real Madrid, Barcelona and Juventus have refused to buckle.

UEFA, which had been pursuing the three clubs over what it called a potential violation of UEFA's legal framework, also said that it "will not

request payment" from the other nine clubs including English sides Arsenal, Chelsea, Liverpool, Manchester City, Manchester United and Tottenham Hotspur.

The Premier League clubs had agreed to pay a combined £22 million as a gesture of "goodwill" over the affair. The other three clubs among the 12 were Atletico Madrid, AC Milan and Inter Milan.

Experts say that the notion of a Super League is by no means dead in the water and Barcelona president Joan Laporta recently warned that the Super League was "still alive". He said that the Super League would mean "financial sustainability for the clubs and make for a more attractive competition".

UEFA on Monday signaled its intention to continue fighting its corner. "UEFA will continue to take all necessary steps, in strict accordance with national and EU law, in order to defend the interests of UEFA and of all football stakeholders," it said. — AFP