



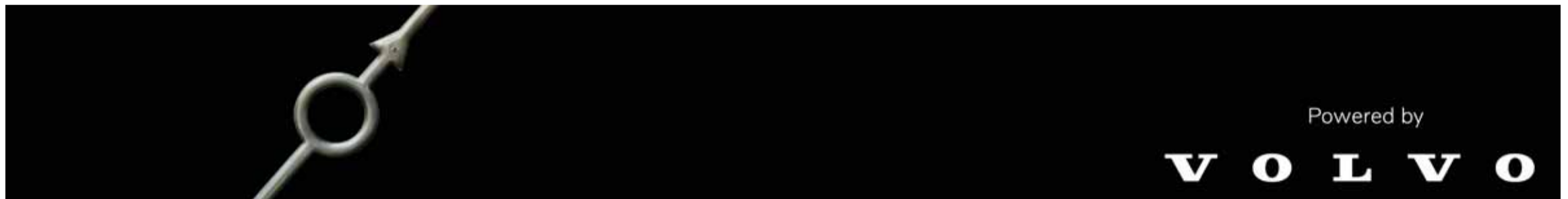
2 Kuwaiti artists remember late Amir with paintings



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Amir calls for dialogue to resolve all problems

National reconciliation talks aim to strengthen democracy

Health curbs, distancing to continue

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The health ministry yesterday urged the public to continue to observe health measures, including physical distancing at mosques, even as the coronavirus situation in the country has substantially improved. The call by the ministry came a day after Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah said life in the country has returned to normal after months of closures because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The ministry called on the public in a statement to continue following health and other precautionary measures currently for all activities, especially in closed places "including places of worship", and denied that such restrictions have been dropped. The statement said social distancing, covering the mouth and nose with a mask and sanitizing and cleaning hands do not obstruct people from carrying out their daily tasks and play a key role in returning to normal life. It said technical teams at the ministry will continue to assess the pandemic situation in the country.

KUWAIT has reported less than 100 new coronavirus cases for 25 days in a row and fewer than 50 daily cases in the past nine days. The number of patients in hospitals has dropped to only 39, including nine in intensive care units.

The fatwa - religious edict - department at the ministry of Islamic affairs issued a ruling yesterday saying that worshippers must continue to maintain distancing at mosques, which are attended by both vaccinated and unvaccinated worshippers, in order to safeguard public health against the coronavirus pandemic.

The fatwa said health authorities have insisted that physical distancing by worshippers will protect them against the disease, especially with the presence of a large number of elderly people in mosques who are at high risk of contracting the disease. The fatwa came after calls by MPs and religious scholars intensified to end distancing at mosques.

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday issued directives to start a national dialogue between the government and the National Assembly with the aim to resolve all problems. Amiri Diwan Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah said in a statement that the dialogue aims to unify efforts, strengthen cooperation and direct all capabilities to "serve the country, discard differences and resolve all problems".

He said HH the Amir expressed hope that the dialogue will pave the way to strengthening democracy in Kuwait. A number of opposition MPs had already expressed support for the dialogue and national reconciliation, but linked it to pardoning a number of former opposition MPs and activists who

have been living in exile in Turkey for over three years.

Sheikh Mohammad said HH the Amir urged both sides to pool their efforts and resources towards putting aside their differences and resolving all problems in serving the interests of citizens and the dear homeland. He added HH the Amir looks forward to the dialogue realizing its aspired objectives in pushing forward the march of democratic action, which is a source of pride for everybody, within the framework of the constitution and national principles.

Sheikh Mohammad prayed to Almighty Allah to protect the generous people of Kuwait and maintain the security, prosperity and welfare of the country under the wise leadership of HH the Amir and HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-



HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

Jaber Al-Sabah. The Amiri Diwan statement did not provide further details on who will participate in the dialogue and when it will be held.

News in brief

Driving license ban mullied

KUWAIT: Interior Ministry Undersecretary Lt Gen Sheikh Faisal Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah yesterday called for a study to stop issuing driving licenses to foreign residents of Kuwait in a bid to limit traffic jams. Sheikh Faisal made the statement during a tour of Ahmadi traffic department to review preparations for the new academic year. — MOI

No speeding on green

KUWAIT: The interior ministry yesterday warned drivers must follow the road speed limit even while crossing the green traffic light at intersections. For instance, if the speed limit of the road is 45km/h, then the driver must not exceed that speed limit while crossing the green signal. Traffic cameras will take photos of speeding cars crossing the green signal as well as cars running the red light. — MOI

Ban on fans in stadiums

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Sports announced yesterday that a ban on fans attending football matches in stadiums has been reinstated until authorities come up with a comprehensive plan that guarantees their safety as per health protocols. The decision came following events witnessed during the Amir Cup semifinal match between Qadisiya and Arabi on Monday, during which fans failed to observe social distancing, the authority explained.

Grilling delay 'dangerous'

KUWAIT: Opposition MP Hasan Jowhar yesterday said the decision by the National Assembly to delay grillings against the prime minister until the end of 2022 represents "the most dangerous political crime in Kuwait's history". Speaking at a conference organized by the "Bloc of Six MPs", Jowhar said it is not possible to accept shielding the premier against political questioning, adding such a measure is even worse than the suspension of the Assembly in 1976 and 1986 in violation of the constitution.

Bouden named Tunisia's first female PM

TUNIS: Tunisia's president yesterday named geologist Najla Bouden as the country's first ever female prime minister-designate, to form a government with limited executive clout after the president seized wide-ranging powers two months ago. Bouden, a university lecturer and political unknown, will take office after President Kais Saied on July 25 sacked the government of Hichem Mechichi, suspended parliament, lifted MPs' immunity and took over the judiciary.

His moves followed months of political deadlock in the face of a pressing economic crisis and mounting coronavirus deaths. While some Tunisians have supported his decisions against a reviled political class, he has faced repeated calls to name a government. Yesterday, German Chancellor Angela Merkel spoke to Saied, where she stressed that "a return to parliamentary democracy in dialogue with all political actors is essential", her office said in a statement.

Last week, Saied extended the suspension of parliament and moved to rule by decree, suspending parts of the country's post-revolution constitution. Saied's office yesterday published a video of him meeting Bouden, and charging her with presenting a cabinet "in the coming hours or days". The president, who will head the

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TUNIS: Tunisian President Kais Saied meets newly-appointed Prime Minister Najla Bouden yesterday. — AFP

Iran, Saudi Arabia hold new round of talks in Iraq

BAGHDAD: Regional rivals Saudi Arabia and Iran have met again in Iraq, several local sources said yesterday, as talks aiming to ease tensions have continued under Iran's ultraconservative President Ebrahim Raisi. Iran and Saudi Arabia, on opposing sides in multiple Middle East conflicts, have been engaged in talks since April at the highest level since

cutting ties in 2016.

The discussions, hosted by Iraq as it seeks to act as a regional mediator, were launched under Iran's former, moderate president Hassan Rouhani, who was replaced in August by Raisi. The talks have led to "serious progress" regarding Gulf security, Tehran's foreign ministry spokesperson Saeed Khatibzadeh said on Sept 23.

The latest round of talks was confirmed by three Iraqi sources, all speaking on condition they not be named. "An Iranian official met with a Saudi official in Baghdad, following previous meetings between the two countries," one source told AFP, confirming the talks took place in recent days. A government official and a source close to the government confirmed the

meeting, without providing more details. US ally Saudi Arabia and Washington's arch-foe Iran are at odds over many regional issues, including the wars in Yemen and Syria.

Riyadh also has concerns about Iran's nuclear program, despite the Islamic republic's insistence it is pursuing only "peaceful" nuclear technology. Saudi King Salman said in his recent speech by video conference to the UN General Assembly that "we hope that our talks will lead to tangible results that would build trust" and revive bilateral "cooperation". He again called on Tehran to "cease all forms of support" for armed groups in the region and reaffirmed the kingdom's support for "international efforts to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons". — AFP

Smuggler hides 1 kg gold paste inside body

NEW DELHI: A smuggler who stashed nearly one kilo of gold paste in his rectum to get the precious metal past Indian customs has been arrested, officials said yesterday. India is the world's second-largest gold consumer and experts say smuggling has increased in recent years, including by converting

the precious metal into paste form. The mule was detained on Monday after a security official noticed the "presence of metal in a body cavity" at Imphal airport in the northeastern state of Manipur.

The man, who was bound for New Delhi, was taken for questioning but "could not reply satisfactorily", the Central Industrial Security Force said in a news release. Officials then took him to the medical examination room where an X-ray of his lower body revealed four capsules filled with gold paste weighing over 900 gm. The value of the haul is around 4.2 million rupees (around \$57,000), the statement added.

Demand for gold peaks in the final months of the year in India as the wedding season gets going and preparations are made for the major Hindu festivals of Diwali and Dussehra. Manipur borders Bangladesh, which experts say has emerged as a major route for smuggled bullion into India. Smugglers have become more creative of late, with authorities discovering gold bars sewn in clothes or hidden in oral cavities, and some using wheelchairs to conceal their illicit cargo. In August, the Indian Gold Policy Centre said 300 tons of gold is estimated to be smuggled every year into the country, leading to huge revenue losses for the government. — AFP



The recovered gold paste packs.

Local

Kuwait's Amir receives Crown Prince, Speaker, Prime Minister

Sheikh Nawaf receives congratulations from Oman Sultan



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. — Amiri Diwan photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. His Highness the Amir received National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem. Furthermore, His Highness the Amir received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir received a cable from Sultan of Oman Haitham Bin Tariq, expressing sincere congratulations on the occasion of the first anniversary of assumption of power, praying to Allah Almighty to bestow His Highness the Amir with everlasting health and further progress and prosperity to Kuwait and its people, under His Highness the Amir's wise leadership. His

Highness the Amir replied to Sultan Haitham with a cable of thanks, expressing his deepest appreciation to the Sultan for his sincere congratulations on this occasion, praying to Allah Almighty to bestow him with everlasting health and wellness, and further progress and prosperity to Kuwait and its people, under his wise leadership.

Moreover, His Highness the Amir received a con-

gratulatory cable from President of Mauritania Mohamed Ould Ghazouani on the first anniversary of His Highness the Amir in office, wishing him long healthy life and further development to Kuwait. His Highness the Amir sent a cable to president Ghazouani, thanking him for his kind wishes, praising the strong Kuwaiti-Mauritanian relations and wishing him a long healthy life. — KUNA

British Ambassador congratulates Amir on coronation anniversary

KUWAIT: The United Kingdom's Ambassador to Kuwait Belinda Lewis released the following statement on the occasion of the first anniversary of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah's assumption of office:

"I would like to send my warmest congratulations to HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-



Belinda Lewis

Jaber Al-Sabah on the first anniversary of his coronation. It was a pleasure to meet His Highness the Amir when I submitted my credentials in May. Kuwait, under the leadership of HH the Amir, is a strong and important ally for the UK and I look forward to strengthen further this relationship between our two countries."

Japan's Ambassador congratulates Amir on first anniversary

KUWAIT: Japan's Ambassador to Kuwait Takaoka Masato released the following statement on the occasion of the first anniversary of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah's assumption of office:

"On behalf of the Government and people of Japan, I would like to extend our sincere congratulations to His Highness Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Amir of the State of Kuwait, on the first anniversary of the enthronement. I wish His Highness good health and all the best. I would also like to extend my congratulations and best wishes to His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on the first anniversary of the assumption of office as Crown Prince of the State of Kuwait.

"We are all aware that the past one year has been full of challenges in the world, particularly

that of COVID-19. Yet, I would like to note that the State of Kuwait, under the wisdom of the new leadership, has remained stable, prosperous and peaceful. The State of Kuwait has also continued to play an important role for regional stability and for world humanitarian causes, as during the reign of His Highness the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. As a friend, Japan values Kuwait as a force of peace and stability.

"This year, Japan and the State of Kuwait celebrate the 60th anniversary of the establishment of our diplomatic relations. We have developed close ties of friendship and partnership over those years. I earnestly hope and expect that with the guidance of the new leadership we will further promote our cooperation bilaterally, regionally and globally."



Takaoka Masato

DPRK Embassy congratulates Amir on first anniversary

KUWAIT: Charge d'Affaires of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in the State of Kuwait Ju Myong Chol released the following statement on the occasion of the first anniversary of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah's assumption of office:

"It is my pleasure to celebrate with the friendly Kuwaiti people the first anniversary of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's assumption of the reins of government. I have the honor to express my sincere congratulations to His Highness the Amir over the first anniversary of His Highness taking the reins of power.

"During the reign of His Highness, Kuwait began a historical stage in the process of building and giving to complete the stages started by its honorable predecessors, and many achievements were made in various fields, including society and economy, as well



Ju Myong Chol

as taking quarantine measures to prevent the spread of the pandemic and preparing a firm prospect for returning to normal life.

"His Highness the Amir's efforts culminated in the Gulf-Arab reconciliation, with the signing of the Al-Ula Agreement in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and continued the approach that Kuwait followed with regards to its relations with its Arab brothers. He was keen to solve the problems facing the Arab nation, with a focus on the Palestinian issue as the first Arab issue.

"On this auspicious occasion, I sincerely wish His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah everlasting good health, success in leading the country, greater progress and prosperity for the friendly Kuwaiti people and I am sure that the friendly and cooperative relationship between the two countries will further develop in accordance with the interest of the peoples of the two countries."

Kuwaiti artists remember late Amir



KUWAIT: The union of artists and journalists in Kuwait held yesterday an exhibition entitled 'In Memory of Humanitarian Amir', which displayed contributions of the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. Sixty artists recognized in paintings the late Amir's endeavors to address disputes among Arab brothers. — KUNA



Bouden named Tunisia's first...

Continued from Page 1

cabinet, repeatedly emphasized the "historic" nature of the nomination of a woman, calling it "an honor for Tunisia and a homage to Tunisian women". Saied, who was the only person to speak in the video, said Bouden's main mission would be to "put an end to the corruption and chaos that have spread throughout many state institutions".

Political scientist Slaheddine Jouchi welcomed the nomination of a female premier, but warned that Tunisia faces daunting economic and political challenges. "When we look at the CV of this lady, who is a geologist without other specializations or experience in sensitive

roles, I don't know how well she will be able to tackle these enormous, complex issues," he told AFP.

Jouchi said that by appointing Bouden, Saied "has avoided nominating a politician or anyone with a minimum of political experience. He doesn't want a rival or anyone with political opinions, who could enter discussions with him over the important decisions to come".

Some women in Tunis welcome Bouden's appointment, but media student Yasmine Benhassen said "that doesn't mean that we will support her whatever happens". "We'll pay attention to who she is, and what she does," the 21-year-old told AFP. Raoua Gorab, a jobseeker in her 30s, said the key issue was "improves the situation in the job market. After the coronavirus pandemic, there's nothing left, everything has closed."

With debt approaching 100 percent

of GDP as it negotiates with international lenders for a bailout, Tunisia has faced years of runaway inflation and high unemployment, exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic. Bouden will be Tunisia's tenth prime minister since a 2011 uprising overthrew longtime dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, sparking the Arab Spring revolts.

The country has won international plaudits for its democratic transition, but many Tunisians have seen little improvement in their lives and have become disillusioned with a political process they say is dysfunctional and corrupt. Bouden, the same age as Saied at 63, is a former director at PromESSE, a higher education reform project, and has held senior positions at Tunisia's higher education ministry. The French-educated geologist with a PhD in geological engineering comes from the city of Kairouan, and is a lecturer at Tunisia's

national engineering school.

Tunisia has for decades been seen as a regional pioneer in women's rights, banning polygamy in 1956. The Tunisian Association for Democratic Women (ATFD) welcomed Saied's pick for prime minister, saying it had suggested Bouden for the role. Activist Bel Haj Hmida praised the symbolic nature of the appointment, but also pointed out Saied's previous positions on gender equality.

During the socially conservative constitutional law expert's 2019 presidential run, he was criticized for his opposition to an inheritance law enshrining equality between men and women. Also an academic and political outsider, Saied swept to power on a wave of anger against the political class, who have governed Tunisia since 2011 but failed to resolve pressing economic and social issues. While many



Najla Bouden

Tunisians praised his initial power grab, on Sunday more than 2,000 people demonstrated in central Tunis to demand a return to the constitution and Saied's resignation, accusing him of "stealing" the 2011 revolution. — AFP

Local

Kuwait reports zero COVID-19 deaths for first time since Feb

Nine patients in ICUs; 33 new cases lowest since April 2020

KUWAIT: Kuwait listed zero COVID-19 deaths yesterday for the first time since February 6, 2021, and 33 new COVID-19 cases; the lowest daily rate registered since April 2, 2020. Meanwhile, the number of patients in intensive care units has witnessed a significant drop, reaching only nine patients as of yesterday; the lowest number since March 26, 2020. The total number of hospitalized patients in COVID-19 wards reached 39, the Ministry of Health announced yesterday. The total number of infections increased to 411,605 while deaths remained unchanged at 2,448, the ministry said, adding that total recoveries reached 408,499 as 40 fresh recoveries were announced yesterday. Some 16,506 swab tests were conducted over the last 24 hours out of a total of 4,232,071, ministry spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad said.

The Health Ministry had meanwhile reaffirmed the need to continue following health restrictions and measures in different activities and facilities, especially closed places including mosques, to fight the spread of the coronavirus. In a press statement

yesterday, the ministry noted that the coronavirus situation had improved in Kuwait recently due to the public's compliance with health restrictions. It added that maintaining social distancing, washing hands



Only 39 patients in hospitals

and wearing masks do not get in the way of engaging in activities, and play a key role in returning to normal life. Kuwait fatwa authority announced earlier today that it will continue to follow the ministry of

health's restrictions by maintain social distancing in mosques. It added that it has agreed during an urgent meeting late Tuesday to call for maintaining physical distancing at mosques, which combine both vaccinated and unvaccinated worshippers.

Kuwait's Public Authority for Sport had decided in the meantime to deny football fans access to stadiums until a fleshed-out blueprint is put in place in line with relevant health guidelines. The move came in the aftermath of a recent local match between Qadsiya and Arabi in the Amir Cup's semifinals, during which fans had failed to follow health guidelines pertinent to physical distancing at the stadium, the authority said in a press statement. It warned that it would not be lenient in applying all health precautions and requirements in order to fend off the spreading of COVID-19 in the country. The authority noted that it will hold a meeting with the football association on Sunday to mull a clear-cut plan aiming at ensuring that all health guidelines would be respected at all stadiums.



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Defense Minister Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah (right) and his Canadian counterpart Singh Sajjan.

Canada thanks Kuwait for helping with evacuation

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah received on Wednesday a phone call from his Canadian counterpart Singh Sajjan, who expressed gratitude for supporting evacuation of Canadian citizens from Afghanistan. Meanwhile, the Kuwaiti minister expressed appreciation for this call which reflects the deep bilateral ties between the two countries, said the Chief of Staff in a statement. In addition, several matters of common interests and latest regional and international developments were discussed. —KUNA

China lauds Kuwait's 'balanced' foreign policy

BEIJING: A senior Chinese official said yesterday the State of Kuwait maintains "a wise and balanced" policy vis-a-vis regional and international issues, as shown in its relations with all countries. Kuwait plays a great role in preserving peace and security inside and outside the region, Deputy Minister of Central Foreign Affairs Commission of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Zhu Rui said during his meeting with Kuwait's Ambassador in Beijing Sameh Jowhar Hayat.

The Chinese official reaffirmed the significance of the bilateral strategic relationship with Kuwait and the need to push forward the relations in all areas, according to a statement from Kuwait Embassy.

Meanwhile, Ambassador Hayat said the meeting explored ways to further enhance the bilateral strategic relations and strengthen the partnership in all fields. "The cordial meeting took place in the framework of the exemplary relations both countries maintained over the past five decades," he said, noting that both sides aspire for more progress in all domains. Ambassador Hayat congratulated the People's Republic of China on its 72nd National Day, to



BEIJING: Kuwait's Ambassador to China Sameh Jowhar Hayat meets Deputy Minister of Central Foreign Affairs Commission of the Communist Party of China Zhu Rui. —KUNA

be marked on October 1, saying, "this is an occasion to recall the great role China plays on the global scale in all domains." He noted that the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) offers promis-

ing chances to take the bilateral relations to a new height, adding that Kuwait has been among the first countries that worked with China to revive the ancient Silk Road. —KUNA

Foreign Minister receives new ambassadors



KUWAIT: Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah meets the Czech Ambassador to Kuwait Jaroslav Siro. —KUNA photos



KUWAIT: Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah meets Belgium's Ambassador to Kuwait Marc Trenteseau.



KUWAIT: Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah meets Ghana's Ambassador to Kuwait Al-Haj Abubaker Sadeq Abdullah.

KUWAIT: Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah received yesterday a copy of credentials of the newly appointed Czech Ambassador to Kuwait Jaroslav Siro. Sheikh Dr Ahmad also received copies of credentials of the newly appointed Belgium's Ambassador to Kuwait Marc Trenteseau, as well as the new Ghana

Ambassador to Kuwait Al-Haj Abubaker Sadeq Abdullah.

The Foreign Minister wished the new ambassadors success during their tenures, and hoped that they would pursue means to further progress and strengthen bilateral relations.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Dr Ahmad also received copy of credentials of Romania's Ambassador to Kuwait. During the meeting, the minister reit-

erated Kuwait's demands to the Romanian government to exert further efforts on the file of missing Kuwaiti citizen Mohammad Al-Baghli, who has been unaccounted for since 2015. Baghli's issue is continuously discussed during every Kuwaiti-Romanian talks, while many Kuwaiti security delegations had visited the Romanian capital Bucharest to discuss the issue. — KUNA

The sources said the issue was sent to the ministerial economic committee to give urgent recommendations to resolve the fee issue to be as before or KD 500, and keep the condition of having private health insurance.

Frontliners' rewards

In other news, Al-Rai Arabic daily reported yesterday quoting informed sources that a commerce and industry ministry move to distribute rations to workers on the frontlines of confronting the coronavirus pandemic at the health and interior ministries is not linked to cash rewards. They added the ministry has allocated a budget of KD 50 million and is waiting for some logistical work to be completed. The ministry has completed all requirements of distributing the free rations to all deserving recipients for six months, according to the number of family members, adding that concerned authorities are waiting for ration distribution centers to be ready to serve deserving residents. They said citizens will receive their rations from their regular centers.

Two arrested with 13 kg of hashish

KUWAIT: The Drugs Control General Department arrested two people with 13 kg of hashish. The department received information the two, a bedoon and a Gulf national, were dealing in drugs, so investigations were carried out and confirmed. A warrant was obtained and a farm in Jahra was raided, where the drugs were found along with a sensitive scale and cutting tools. The suspects and drugs were sent to concerned authorities.

In other news, the criminal court sentenced a man who claimed insanity to 15 years in jail after convicting him of attempting to rape a woman in Salwa. The public prosecution charged the Kuwaiti citizen with attempting to have sex with the victim, Russian, against her will, as he beat and restricted her movement, causing her several injuries, Al-Anbaa Arabic daily reported yesterday. The prosecution said the suspect was handed a final jail sentence of five years on Feb 12, 2017 in a different case.

Prime Minister meets authority chief on 60+ visas

KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah received Director General of Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) Ahmad Al-Mousa to discuss the issue of not renewing residency permits of residents without a university degree who reach 60 years of age, Al-Anbaa Arabic daily reported yesterday, quoting informed sources. The decision does not ban residency renewal for this category of workers, but stipulates a payment of KD 2,000 if employers wish to renew their employees' residencies, the source said. They added that there are several reasons behind PAM's insistence on going ahead with the decision, including amending the population structure and earning revenue for the state treasury.

Stop food loss and waste, for the people, for the planet

KUWAIT: The International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste is an opportunity to call to action both the public (national or local authorities) and the private sector (businesses and individuals), to prioritize actions and move ahead with innovation to reduce food loss and waste towards restoring and building back better and resilient-ready, food systems. Dr Tarek Elsheikh, Representative of the UN Secretary-General and United Nations Coordinator in State of Kuwait said: "Reducing food losses and waste is essential in a world where the number of people affected by hunger has been slowly on the rise since 2014, and tons of edible food is lost and/or wasted every day. Globally, around 14 percent of food produced is lost between harvest and retail, while an estimated 17 percent of total global food production is wasted (11 percent in households, five percent in the food service and two percent in retail)."

Dr Elsheikh added, "Kuwait government, private sector, activists, and NGOs voiced their challenges and suggested solutions regarding the food loss and waste in the recent United Nations Food Systems Summit talk series in Kuwait - many of the participants have their own initiatives in managing food waste to elevate their lifestyle and livelihood. The local farmers in Kuwait grow their organic foods and vegetables throughout the year and created agricultural studies in which they have an expectation of their crop volume throughout the year. This act falls under the core of the SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production) and the responsibility for the sustainability for future generation. The United Nations look into ways of merging positive impact on people to have full awareness of the importance of production, consumption, and managing the food waste. In Kuwait, a growing interest amongst many individuals, companies, and even governmental organizations started initiatives such as recycling food waste to use as fertilizers and filtering sewage water and these small actions have a significant impact on the whole words, and Kuwait's efforts have been visible through the series of national dialogues in collaboration with the public, private sectors and youth groups who are invested in improving the food chain supplies leading to their involvement in the United Nations Food Systems Summit 2021".

Food loss and waste undermine the sustainability of our food systems. When food is lost or wasted, all the resources that were used to produce this food - including water, land, energy, labor and capital - go to waste. In addition, the disposal of food loss and waste in landfills, leads to greenhouse gas emissions, contributing to climate change. Food loss and waste can also negatively impact food security and food availability and contribute to increasing the cost of food.

"We are committed to supporting countries in scaling up initiatives related to food waste, especially after our office launched State of Food Waste in West Asia report on the 21st of July this year which shed light on Food Waste in West Asia. And today is a significant day to raise awareness on this crucial matter and its possible solutions at all levels, where everyone could play a role in addressing Food Waste at home, at school, at work, far and wide to help in achieving SDG 12 collectively," said, Sami Dimassi, UNEP Representative and Regional Director for West Asia.



72nd Anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China



Xi Jinping, General Secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, delivers an important speech at the ceremony marking the centenary of the CPC.

On July 1, 2021, a historic moment that marked the centennial of the founding of the Communist Party of China (CPC), General Secretary Xi Jinping declared to the whole world on the Tian'anmen Rostrum that through the continued efforts of the whole Party and the entire nation, we have realized the first centenary goal of building a moderately prosperous society in all respects. This means that we have brought about a historic resolution to the problem of absolute poverty in China, and we are now marching in confident strides toward the second centenary goal of building China into a great modern socialist country in all respects.

•China has established the world's largest social security system, under which basic medical insurance has covered more than 1.3 billion people while basic elderly care insurance has covered more than one billion people.

•The average life expectancy of the

Chinese people has increased to 77.3 years in 2019, double the figure of 1949 and closer to the level of developed countries.

•China's gross domestic product (GDP) has soared from 67.91 billion yuan in 1952 to 101.6 trillion yuan in 2020, a 189-fold increase in real terms.

•In 2020, Chinese economy accounted for more than 17 percent of the world's economy, ranking second globally. And the annual GDP per capita has surpassed 10,000 USD for two consecutive years, higher than the average figure of middle-income countries.

•China is now the only country that has developed all the industrial categories of the UN's industrial classification. It also has built modern infrastructure networks in the areas of railways, highways, ports, aviation, electricity and telecommunications. As of the end of 2020, China had 38,000 kilometers of high-speed railways in operation

and 161,000 kilometers of highways, both the most in the world; China's 5G terminal connections exceeded 200 million, ranking the first globally.

•Since 2006, China has been the largest contributor to global growth for 15 consecutive years, contributing around 30 percent to global GDP growth for years in a row. China remains as the world's largest manufacturing power for 11 consecutive years, as the manufacturing value-added reached 26.59 trillion yuan in 2020. Last year, the import and export of goods totaled 32.16 trillion yuan, the highest in the world; China's foreign exchange reserves and utilized foreign investment totaled 3.22 trillion USD and one trillion USD respectively. As of June 23, 2021, China has signed 206 documents on Belt and Road cooperation with 140 countries and 32 international organizations.

China's Diplomacy in the New Era

• Work Together to Build a Community of Shared Future for Mankind and a better world for all

• The human race is an integral community and the planet Earth its homeland. In the face of common challenges, no person or country can remain isolated. The only way out is to work together in harmony with one accord.

• The Chinese people have always celebrated and striven to pursue the vision of peace, amity and harmony. China has never and will never invade or bully others, or seek hegemony.

• More than 2.2 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines have been administered across China as of 26 Sep 2021.

• China will strive to provide a total of two

billion doses of vaccines to the world by the end of this year. In addition to donating 100 million US dollars to COVAX, China will donate 100 million doses of vaccines to other developing countries in the course of this year.

• China has pledged an additional three billion US dollars of international assistance in the next three years to support developing countries in responding to COVID-19 and promoting economic and social recovery.

• China will strive to peak carbon dioxide emissions before 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality before 2060.

• China will step up support for other developing countries in developing green and low-carbon energy, and will not build new coal-fired power projects abroad.



The art performance "The Great Journey" in celebration of the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China.

Work Together for a Brighter Future

National Day Message
by Ambassador LI Minggang

On the occasion of the 72nd anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, I wish to express heartfelt thanks to the leaders and people of Kuwait that have given care and support for China and for the development of China-Kuwait relations.

Over the past 72 years since the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC), the Chinese nation has realized, under the strong leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC), a great transformation from standing up, growing rich to becoming strong. The year 2021 is of special importance for China, as the CPC celebrated its centenary and China realized its first centenary goal of building a moderately prosperous society in all aspects. This means that China has brought about a historic resolution to the problem of absolute poverty, and is now marching in confident strides toward the second centenary goal of building China into a great modern socialist country in all respects. Last year, China was the only major economy registering positive growth, with its gross domestic product passing the 100 trillion yuan mark. China has also achieved a complete victory in the battle against poverty, with the 98.99 million rural residents formerly living below the current poverty line successfully lifted out of poverty. This makes China realize its poverty reduction goal from the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development 10 years

ahead of schedule, representing a significant contribution to global poverty reduction. Moreover, China's efforts at scientific and technological innovation have yielded fruitful results, including the successful conclusion of the first crewed mission at the country's space station building stage. To help overseas Chinese get vaccinated, China has launched the "Spring Sprout" vaccine program which has benefited millions of overseas Chinese including over a thousand of Chinese people in Kuwait. This is the action by China to honor its commitment to "putting people and their life first". Here, I would like to thank the Government of Kuwait for its great assistance with the vaccination.

The year 2021 also marks a milestone in the history of China-Kuwait relations. Five decades ago, Kuwait was the first among Gulf states to establish diplomatic relations with China. In the ensuing years, China-Kuwait relations have advanced in a stable and healthy manner, despite changes in the international environment. Especially since the establishment of the strategic partnership in 2018, China and Kuwait have focused on the synergy of their development strategy to boost practical cooperation on various fronts. Faced with the sudden onslaught of COVID-19, the two nations pulled together and looked out for each other, seeing remarkable resilience of bilateral relations. Chinese companies in Kuwait remained actively engaged in over 70 major projects such as the South Al Mutlaa housing infrastructure, the Sabah Al-Salem Kuwait University City and the new runway of the Kuwait



Ambassador LI Minggang

International Airport, despite the lack of manpower and other difficulties amid the pandemic. The ultra-large crude carrier Al-Siddiq designed and built by the Chinese side was successfully delivered to the Kuwaiti side. China has remained the largest exporter and the biggest non-oil trading partner of Kuwait. The first half of 2021 saw a 32.3-percent year-on-year growth in bilateral trade volume to 9.43 billion USD, while the crude oil imported by China from Kuwait reached 14.18 million tons during the same period, up 5.71% from a year ago. In addition, people-to-people exchanges between the two countries remained rich and diverse. The direct

flight between China and Kuwait has carried on board more than 10,000 passengers since its launch last year. A variety of activities, including the "Stories behind the Photos" Column launched on the local newspaper, the Virtual Exhibition of Intangible Cultural Heritage of China and Kuwait, the virtual forum on China-Kuwait cooperation in digital economy and the art contest, were warmly received by our Kuwaiti friends, which attests to the long-lasting friendship between the two sides and the vitality of bilateral exchanges in the new era. On the day that marked the 50th anniversary of China-Kuwait diplomatic relations, the magnificent Kuwait Towers were illuminated with Chinese and Kuwaiti flags and the logo for the anniversary, impressing themselves on the minds of the two peoples.

As an old Chinese saying goes, "It is the right time to set sail with the fair wind." In his congratulatory message to HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for the 50th anniversary of China-Kuwait diplomatic relations, Chinese President Xi Jinping pointed out that China attaches high importance to its relations with Kuwait and stands ready to work with Kuwait to carry forward our traditional friendship and deepen Belt and Road cooperation in various fields. Looking ahead to the new era, we look forward to working with friends from all sectors in Kuwait to draw the blueprint for future development of bilateral relations. We will translate our grand vision for shared development into reality by synergizing China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and Kuwait's 2035 Vision. Doing so will enable our two countries to lift the strategic partnership to a new height for a better future.



Bei Pan River Bridge in Guizhou Province, Southwest China -- The Highest Bridge in The World



Chinese athletes compete during the Men's 4x100m relay at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games



Chinese astronaut working inside the space station core module Tianhe.



Celebrating the 1st Anniversary of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's Office Assumption

Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between the People's Republic of China and the State of Kuwait

Celebrating the 3rd Anniversary of Strategic Partnership Between China and Kuwait

On the occasion of the first anniversary of Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah taking power as Amir of the State of Kuwait, I, as the Chinese Ambassador to Kuwait, express my sincere congratulations to His Highness. In the past year, under the brilliant leadership, the Government and people of Kuwait have scored great achievements in the battle against COVID-19, while maintaining social stability and a steady eco-

nomical recovery. In handling international and regional affairs, His Highness has played a key role in coordination and stabilization in these affairs with your great wisdom. As a member of the global cooperation against COVID-19, Kuwait, as always, carried forward the great humanitarian spirit. When His Highness took office, Chinese President Xi Jinping, Chinese President Xi Jinping, The two leaders remain committed to China-Kuwait friendship and call

for further efforts to enhance the strategic partnership between the two sides. In this important year with the 50th anniversary of China-Kuwait diplomatic relations, we are pleased to see that China-Kuwait cooperation has borne new fruits. At this meaningful moment, we wish His Highness the Amir full health and wellness. May the brotherly Kuwaiti people have happiness and safety. May China and Kuwait enjoy everlasting friendship.



The Official Twitter Account for Chinese Embassy in Kuwait
and Instagram Account for Chinese Cultural Center in Kuwait

International

Witchhunt murders surge in troubled DR Congo province

Eight women burned to death or lynched

News in brief

29 killed in prison violence

QUITO: Nearly 30 prisoners were killed in a battle between inmates equipped with firearms and grenades at a prison in Ecuador's largest city Tuesday, officials said. It was the latest in a series of deadly prison clashes between rival drug gangs that have killed over 100 inmates this year. Ecuador's attorney general's office said on Twitter it was investigating the deaths of 29 convicts at the Litoral Penitentiary in the city of Guayaquil, including six who were beheaded. Officials gave conflicting statements on how many inmates were wounded, with the attorney general's office saying 42 while the national prison bureau earlier put that number at 48. President Guillermo Lasso retweeted an announcement from the prison bureau saying order "has been restored at the Litoral Penitentiary after the Tuesday incidents." Ecuador's prison system has become a battleground between prisoners linked to Mexican drug gangs—mainly the Sinaloa and Jalisco New Generation cartels. —AFP

Russia reports record deaths

MOSCOW: Russia yesterday recorded its highest coronavirus death toll for a second day running, as infections are on the rise driven by the Delta variant and slow vaccination rates. A government tally reported 857 fatalities over the past 24 hours and 22,430 new cases. The new figure brings the country's total deaths from COVID-19 to 206,388 — the highest in Europe. Authorities have been accused of downplaying the severity of the outbreak. Under a broader definition for deaths linked to the coronavirus, statistics agency Rosstat reported in late August that Russia had seen more than 350,000 fatalities. The world's fifth worst-hit country with more than seven million infections, Russia has seen cases climb since last month as vaccinations stall. Moscow, the epicenter of the outbreak, has experienced a spike over the past week with authorities warning of rising hospital admissions. — AFP

At least 100 killed in Marib

DUBAI: At least 100 Yemeni rebels and pro-government troops have been killed in the past 48 hours as fighting intensifies for the key city of Marib, military and medical sources said yesterday. A string of air strikes from the Saudi-led coalition targeted the Iran-backed Houthi rebels, who have stepped up their assault on Marib, the government's last northern stronghold. Sixty-eight Houthis and 32 loyalists were killed in the latest clashes, military sources said. The tolls were confirmed by medical sources. The rebels rarely announce casualties among their own ranks, but their Al-Masirah channel reported around 60 coalition air strikes in Marib governorate in the past two days. Hundreds of fighters have been killed this month after the Houthis renewed their campaign for the capital city of the oil-rich province. — AFP

Texas executes man

WASHINGTON: A man condemned to death for the 1991 murder of two brothers in their home was executed by the state of Texas on Tuesday, after the US Supreme Court rejected an appeal that could have seen his case thrown out on grounds of racial bias in jury selection. Rick Rhoades, 57, received a lethal injection at the Huntsville penitentiary, according to Texas authorities, becoming the sixth person to be executed in the United States this year. A recidivist burglar, Rhoades was out of prison on conditional release when, on September 13, 1991, he entered the home of Charles Allen, who lived with his brother Bradley in the Houston suburbs. He then killed them in their sleep before robbing them, authorities said. He was not apprehended until a month later, when he was arrested during a school burglary and confessed to the double murder, claiming to have acted during a fight with Charles Allen outside his home. — AFP

UK officer 'murdered' woman

LONDON: A serving British police officer kidnapped a woman as she walked home, handcuffing her in a false arrest for breaking coronavirus restrictions, before raping and murdering her, a court was told yesterday. The disappearance of Sarah Everard during a national lockdown in March was one of Britain's most high-profile missing person investigations and sparked protests and a debate about women's safety on the streets. Wayne Couzens, 48, who served with the elite diplomatic protection unit of London's Metropolitan Police, admitted her kidnapping, rape and murder in July. Everard, who had been visiting a friend in Clapham, south London, was strangled then set on fire, with her remains found in woodland. At a two-day sentencing hearing, prosecutor Tom Little said Couzens targeted the 33-year-old marketing executive on March 3, and accused her of breaking coronavirus rules. — AFP

BUKAVU: Murders of women accused of witchcraft are surging in a troubled eastern province of the Democratic Republic of Congo, say officials and campaigners. Since early September, eight women have been burned to death or lynched in three districts of South Kivu province, local officials say. "We recorded 324 accusations of witchcraft for the June to September period," says Nelly Adidja of a provincial NGO called the Association of Women in the Media.

In the district of Kalehe alone, 114 cases have been recorded, including five women who were burned alive and four who were hauled away to unknown destinations by so-called self-defense militias. South Kivu lies in an arc of three provinces that for years have been in the grip of armed groups, many of them the legacy of regional wars that were fought a quarter of a century ago. Bosco Mchukiwa, director and professor of sociology at the Higher Institute of Rural Development in the provincial capital Bukavu, says the surge in witch-hunt attacks stems from a vacuum in governance.

"There is a resurgence of the phenomenon because the state has been failing in its core missions—the police and justice system are not doing their job," he said. The attacks, he added, are being whipped by "bajakazi"—bogus preachers or self-described psychics, mostly women, who live locally and claim to be able to detect witches. "It's false—they don't have any powers, but they play on the

gullibility of the people they manipulate in order to attract more followers, pump up their reputation and gain more clout in the village."

Little action

Muhindo Cikwanine, a lawyer and expert in parliamentary law, said the solution was to "outlaw these charlatans' prayer rooms". "In 2014, provincial lawmakers approved an edict forbidding use of mob justice in

and jailed for six months, he said. "They were released after promising to change profession, but some of them are secretly carrying on as before," Miderho said. Prosecutors say that it is virtually impossible to track down individuals who carry out the killings, he added. "Whenever there's a case of mob justice, village chiefs say it was done 'by the public', and don't provide any names."

Children join hunt

Shasha Rubenga, a young teacher and rights activist, said he saw a witchhunt on August 16 in Cifunzi, a village of around 2,000 people on the edge of DRC's Kahuzi-Biega National Park. "It was about five in morning—a Monday. Young men were going around the village with a list that had the names of 19 women over the age of 65 who had been designated as witches by a prophetess," he said.

Most of the women were able to flee from their homes, which were then destroyed. Others were saved by troops who fired shots into the air to disperse the mob. "But then I saw these youths grab hold of a neighbor whose name was Nyabadeux," an elderly woman who had seven children. "She was beaten up, doused in petrol and then set alight with a match," he said. The awful scene took place in the heart of the village, and children younger than 10 years old took part, Rubenga said. "I saw a five-year-old child who had a big stick and was using it to turn over Nyabadeux's charred body." — AFP



Congo Bajakazi 'detect' witches

South Kivu," he said. However, the law was never applied, "and it hasn't been followed up with a proper awareness campaign among the public," he said.

Thadee Miderho, administrative chief for Kabare territory, said that six killings had been recorded since the start of the year, "mainly women aged over 60," who had been designated as witches by "bajakazi". Two years ago, 11 accusers were arrested

Taleban's fighters hit the fairground

QARGHAH: "This is Afghanistan!" a Taleban fighter shouts on a pirate ship ride at a fairground in western Kabul, as his armed comrades cackle and whoop onboard the rickety attraction. With AK-47 and M4 assault rifles strapped to their chests, the soldiers cling to colorful steel benches as they are flung back and forth, their scarves and headresses flapping in the wind. It was decided a rocket launcher one of them was earlier cradling was better left on solid ground. The group—ranging in age from 18 to 52 — is relaxing at a small amusement park next to Qarghah Reservoir on the outskirts of the Afghan capital, where families and children normally ride the Ferris Wheel and carousel.

The scene is an incongruous one: the Taleban fighters were in a playful mood in the capital they seized less than six weeks ago. Since then, Afghans have feared a return to the group's brutally oppressive rule of the 1990s, when they banned music, photography, television—and even children's games such as kite-flying. The Taleban promised a more moderate rule this time, but have already curtailed Afghans' freedoms, including excluding girls from school and sports.



QARGHAH: A Taleban fighter carrying a rocket propelled grenade (RPG) launcher stands on a dock for leisure boats at Qargha Lake on the outskirts of Kabul. — AFP

Fighters from around the country flocked to Kabul after the Islamist hardliners swept to power in mid-August and many had never been to a funfair. Once the three-minute ride is over the battle-hardened fighters clap, grin and giggle amongst themselves—and the RPG launcher is reunited with its owner. On the shores of the picturesque reservoir, other Taleban members hop into swan-shaped pedalos as the sun begins to set behind the hills in the distance.

Still brandishing their weapons, they set off in pairs across the water in the pink, blue, green, yellow and blue boats, laughing as the vessels bump together. Dressed in camouflaged military uniforms and traditional Afghan clothes, they pose with their assault rifles as friends take pictures on the pebbly shore. Nearby, a few of the more senior Taleban members take the opportunity to pray, setting down their shawls between two boats on a jetty. — AFP

In COVID's shadow, HIV on march in Eastern Europe

BUCHAREST: In a Bucharest back street, drug addicts rush towards an ambulance handing out free syringes. While the eyes of the world focus on the COVID-19 pandemic, the fight against HIV has slowed down in Eastern Europe. Three times a week, Alina Schiau and colleagues from the Romanian anti-AIDS Association (ARAS) go out to the rougher parts of the city to hand out syringes and bandages to injecting drug users, and condoms to sex workers.

But their funds are running low and stocks dwindling. Come November, their ambulance might have to stay in the garage. "What's cheaper? To buy a syringe and thus focus on prevention? Or to treat a patient for years?" says social worker Ada Luca, indignant at government inaction. Bulgaria and Romania are both former Eastern bloc countries, and in 2019, 76 percent of AIDS cases diagnosed in Europe were in the East, according to the European Centre for Disease Prevention and

Control (ECDC).

"It is obvious that the number of contaminations has increased since the start of the pandemic", Schiau told AFP. As coronavirus took hold, hospitals closed to non-COVID patients, says Davron Mukhamadiev, Regional Health and Care Coordinator for Red Cross Europe (IFRC). Quarantine requirements, travel restrictions and reduced access to rapid testing and diagnostic services all undermined efforts to roll back HIV/AIDS, he said.

'We are abandoned'

UNAIDS data shows 140,000 new infections in Eastern Europe and Central Asia in 2020, compared with 170,000 in 2019, which experts attribute to a dramatic slowdown in screening, not a drop in cases. In 2020, for example, Romania managed to screen only 234,420 people for HIV/AIDS — down nearly a third from 334,410 the previous year. It is a similar story in neighboring Bulgaria.

Regional health centers were "overwhelmed and hardly ever did any HIV testing during COVID," said Alexander Milanov, program director at the country's National Patients' Organization. The pandemic has disrupted supply chains and the transport of medicines, exacerbating historic shortages in countries such as Romania despite huge scientific strides that have dra-



BUCHAREST: Drug users hold syringes and other medical supplies they received from an ambulance of the Romanian anti-AIDS Association (ARAS) in Bucharest. —AFP

matically improved outcomes for HIV patients in rich nations.

Alexandru Tantu, a 28-year-old, HIV-positive IT specialist, has seen firsthand how other European countries treat patients better, and how in Romania, it is a daily struggle to get the required drugs. "We came to realize that we are abandoned," he said. "Hence all the anger and the fear that tomorrow we might not have our treatment." Still, with his stable job, he

regards himself as relatively "privileged". In his advocacy work, he says, he receives calls from patients who are considering suicide.

The HIV/AIDS crisis in Romania dates back to the communist years. Around 11,000 children born in the 1980s under the communist regime of Nicolae Ceausescu were infected as a result of contaminated or unsterilized syringes or transfusions with untested blood. — AFP

From mines to virus: Cambodia dogs train to sniff out COVID

KAMPONG CHHNANG: Cambodian anti-landmine authorities are training dogs to sniff out COVID-19, hoping the sharp-nosed canines normally used to detect underground explosives can keep the virus on a tight leash. Cambodia has won praise for a swift vaccine drive, with the health ministry saying over 98 percent of the adult population has received at least one dose.

Now they are embarking on a new strategy to spot COVID cases. Joining the fight will be 12 Belgian Malinois dogs the Cambodian Mine Action Centre (CMAC) has trained to nose out unsuspect-

ing patients who might be carrying the virus. In the longer term, the centre hopes to use the dogs at major events, including sports matches, director general Heng Ratana said. "Dogs are more efficient than other tools," he said.

The University of Health Sciences provided samples of volatile organic compounds—organic chemicals that emit odors—from COVID-19 patients to the demining agency's facility in Kampong Chhnang province. The dogs, bred in Cambodia, have so far proven to be very good boys. "After two and a half months, our dogs are in an early stage of success (so) they could sniff out the scent of COVID-19," dog trainer Khom Sokly said.

Four are now able to detect COVID-19 placed in a one-meter tube in less than a minute, he said, while the other eight are training to root out the scents in an open space "at any location". "In the future, I hope the dogs could take part in prevent-

ing or reducing COVID-19 because they are fast," Khom Sokly said. CMAC staff said the budding virus-hunters have a few months left in their training regime. Nearly three decades of civil war and US bombing starting in the 1960s left Cambodia one of the most heavily bombed and mined countries in the world.

The kingdom has vowed to clear all mines and unexploded ordnance by 2025, with several organizations working with veteran deminers, sniffer dogs and even rats to reach the goal. Other countries deploying dogs in the fight against COVID include Ecuador and Italy, where there is a program in a Rome hospital for training canines to detect the virus in human sweat. Cambodia largely avoided a mass outbreak during the pandemic last year, but cases surged from the 20,000 mark in May to a total of 110,000 cases in late September and more than 2,200 deaths. — AFP



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International

Japan ruling party elects Kishida as leader, next PM

Soft-spoken centrist defeat popular vaccine chief Kono

TOKYO: Japan's ruling party elected former foreign minister Fumio Kishida its new leader yesterday, setting him on course to become the next prime minister of the world's third-largest economy. The soft-spoken centrist defeated popular vaccine chief Taro Kono in an unusually close race to succeed Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, who is stepping down after just a year in office. Kishida, 64, will be confirmed as the new premier in a vote in parliament on October 4 and will then lead the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) into general elections that must happen by November.



An unusually close race to succeed Suga



TOKYO: Fumio Kishida, former foreign minister, speaks during a press conference after being elected as the new leader of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), at the LDP headquarters yesterday. — AFP

Speaking after his win, he called on members to "show the public that the LDP has been reborn, and appeal for their support." The scion of a political family from Hiroshima, Kishida has long targeted the prime minister's office and ran unsuccessfully for party leader last year, losing out to Suga. He became the first candidate to step into the race this time around and ran on a platform of pandemic stimulus while carrying a suggestion box to events to receive proposals from citizens.

"My skill is to really listen to people," he said after his win yesterday, promising to work for "a bright future for Japan". The race was a tight one, with Kishida edging Kono by just a single vote in the first round before taking the second with 257 votes to Kono's 170. Two other candidates, hawkish right-winger Sanae Takaichi and feminist former gender equality minister Seiko

Noda, did not advance beyond the first-round vote.

A former LDP policy chief, Kishida sought to capitalize on public discontent over Suga's response to the pandemic, which has seen his government's approval ratings slump to record lows. "We need to keep seriously pursuing coronavirus measures by all means. I need to create an atmosphere in which we can address the crisis together," he told reporters. On foreign policy, he pledged to "protect basic values led by democracy" and "show our presence by contributing to global challenges, led by the environment issue."

Pelosi is always quick to frame vehement internal disagreement as "family discussion" that ultimately fosters togetherness. But progressives have been emboldened since the election to state in increasingly stark terms their frustration over centrists they see as beholden to special interests and too keen to subjugate Democratic values to bipartisanship. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, the most-high profile emissary of progressives in Washington, has urged centrist colleagues to view them as allies, not the enemy.

'Divide, divide, divide'

But trying telling that to Joe Manchin, the West Virginia centrist Ocasio-Cortez recently lambasted over his record on climate change after he refused to support the \$3.5 trillion spending bill. Ocasio-Cortez said Manchin had allowed oil industry lobbyists to dictate his climate positions and accused him of "bipartisan" corruption that masquerades as clear-eyed moderation. Manchin in turn castigated the congresswoman for "just awful" rhetoric that he said had only one purpose—"divide, divide, divide." When top Senate Democrat Elizabeth Warren came out against Jerome Powell's reappointment as chair of the US Federal Reserve on Tuesday she pulled no punches, calling him a "dangerous man to head up the Fed."

And the internecine mudslinging shows no sign of cooling. Ilhan Omar, another progressive, suggested Monday in an interview that is sure to ruffle feathers that Manchin and other centrists balking at the high price of Build Back Better, were in the wrong party. "It is saddening to see them use Republican talking points, we obviously didn't envision having Republicans as part of our party," she told CNN. If Democratic infighting sometimes feels like one of life's inevitabilities, it is because the party's ethos places as much value on diversity as unity.—AFP

Civil war: Democratic infighting threatening Biden's legacy

WASHINGTON: Eight months after Joe Biden swept to victory on a pledge to make America more livable, equitable and environmentally-friendly, a Democratic civil war is threatening to shred his domestic agenda. Internal squabbles are nothing new in Washington but twin proposals to spend up to \$5 trillion rebuilding the post-COVID economy have laid bare the extent of the eyewatering divisions confounding the party in Congress.

So profound are the disagreements between the party's left and centrist factions that they could easily leave Biden with no legacy to speak of and torpedo Democrats' chances in next year's midterm elections. By Friday morning, it is possible that Biden's bipartisan \$1.2 trillion infrastructure bill will have failed, imperiling a larger, \$3.5 trillion "Build Back Better" package of investments in child care, education, family leave and climate mitigation.

Moderates want the House to wave through the Senate-passed infrastructure bill without delay, giving Biden an easy win while negotiations play out on the larger package. But as many as 50 House progressives are expected to tank the bipartisan bill if they have no clear commitment on the larger-ticket legislation, known as the Build Back Better Act. They argue that they've already compromised on the price—which started at \$6 trillion—as well as demonstrating unity on a \$1.9 trillion COVID relief package that passed earlier this year.



WASHINGTON: Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) leaves the House Democratic caucus meeting at the US Capitol in Washington, DC. — AFP

Want to live forever? Theoretically, you could, study says

TOKYO: Humans can probably live to at least 130, and possibly well beyond, though the chances of reaching such super old age remain vanishingly small, according to new research. The outer limit of the human lifespan has long been hotly debated, with recent studies making the case we could live up to 150 years, or arguing that there is no maximum theoretical age for humans.

The new research, published yesterday in the Royal Society Open Science journal, wades into the debate by analyzing new data on supercentenarians - people aged 110 or more - and semi-supercentenarians, aged 105 or more. While the risk of death generally increases throughout our lifetime, the researchers' analysis shows that risk eventually plateaus and remains constant at approximately 50-50.

"Beyond age 110 one can think of living another year as being almost like flipping a fair coin," said

Anthony Davison, a professor of statistics at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne (EPFL), who led the research. "If it comes up heads, then you live to your next birthday, and if not, then you will die at some point within the next year," he said. Based on the data available so far, it seems likely that humans can live until at least 130, but extrapolating from the findings "would imply that there is no limit to the human lifespan," the research concludes.

The conclusions match similar statistical analyses done on datasets of the very elderly. "But this study strengthens those conclusions and makes them more precise because more data are now available," Davison said. The first dataset the team studied is newly released material from the International Database on Longevity, which covers more than 1,100 supercentenarians from 13 countries. The second is from Italy on every person who was at least 105 between January 2009 and December 2015.

The work involves extrapolating from existing data, but Davison said that was a logical approach. "Any study of extreme old age, whether statistical or biological, will involve extrapolation," he said. "We were able to show that if a limit below 130 years exists, we should have been able to detect it by now using the data now available," he added.—AFP

'A bet for stability'

Kishida's low-key persona has at times been described as a lack of charisma, and his policy ideas suggest more continuity than change. But in the end, that won more support within the party, who shied away from Kono's reforming and direct style. "The powers within Jiminto (LDP) have decided for a variety of reasons that Kishida is a better bet for stability, longevity, etcetera. They've made this bet before," said Brad Glosserman, a senior advisor to the Pacific Forum. For Kishida, "the expectations are low, which could be good... because if you expect little of someone it is easy to surprise," he told AFP. In his victory speech, Kishida pledged to unleash economic relief measures worth tens of trillions of yen (billions of dollars), which will be key to shoring up support before the general election.

The party is expected to retain its parliamentary majority, but could lose some seats over public discontent with the government's handling of the pandemic. Generally, Kishida is expected to hew to Japan's existing path on defense, foreign and economic policy. "Kishida shares the same policy core as Suga and (predecessor Shinzo) Abe," said Corey Wallace, an assistant professor at Kanagawa University who focuses on Japanese politics. "What he really, really stands for is a little bit unclear... nothing really stands out as Kishida's personal hobbyhorse issue," he said. Kishida has called for greater economic equality, urging a "politics of generosity", but stopped short of suggesting hiking taxes. And despite his liberal reputation, he was more reticent than Kono on hot-button issues like legalizing gay marriage or allowing married couples to have different surnames. He faces a series of immediate challenges, including post-pandemic economic recovery and confronting threats from North Korea and China, as well as questions about longevity - with Suga's one-year term reviving memories of a period where Japan shuffled through new premiers almost annually.—AFP



This picture released from North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency shows the Academy of Defense Science of the DPRK test-firing a hypersonic missile Hwasong-8 newly developed by it in Toyang-ri, Ryongrim County of Jagang Province, North Korea. — AFP

Fire power: North Korea's nuclear weapons program

SEOUL: In the latest provocation by "rocket man" Kim Jong Un, North Korea said it successfully tested a new hypersonic gliding missile, in its latest advance in weapons technology. Here we look back at the development of the regime's banned nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs:

The beginnings, 1970s

North Korea starts working in the late 1970s on a version of the Soviet Scud-B missile with a range of around 300 kilometers, carrying out its first test in 1984. Between 1987 and 1992, it begins developing longer-range missiles, including the Taepodong-1 (2,500 km/1,500 miles) and Taepodong-2 (6,700 km/4,200 miles). The Taepodong-1 is test-fired over Japan in 1998 but the following year, Pyongyang declares a moratorium on such tests as ties with the United States improve.

First nuclear test in 2006

It ends the moratorium in 2005, blaming the Bush administration's "hostile" policy, and carries out its first nuclear test on October 9, 2006. In May 2009, there is a second underground nuclear test, several times more powerful than the first. Kim Jong Un succeeds his father Kim Jong Il - who dies in December 2011 - and oversees a third nuclear test in 2013.

2016, Japanese waters reached

There is a fourth underground nuclear test in January 2016, which Pyongyang claims is a hydrogen bomb. In March, Kim Jong Un claims the North has successfully miniaturized a thermonuclear warhead, and in April it test-fires a submarine-launched ballistic missile. On August 3, it fires, for the first time, a ballistic missile directly into Japanese-controlled waters. Later that month, it successfully test-fires another submarine-launched ballistic missile. There is a fifth nuclear test on September 9.

2017, Japan and Guam under threat

Between February and May, the North tests a series of ballistic missiles that fall into the Sea of Japan. Pyongyang claims these are exercises to hit US bases in Japan. A test on May 14 is of a "newly developed mid/long-range strategic ballistic rocket, Hwasong-12", Pyongyang says. It flies 700 kilometers before landing in the Sea of Japan. Two months later, North Korea announces it successfully tested on July 4 - the US independence day - an ICBM capable of reaching Alaska, a gift for the "American bastards". There is a second successful ICBM test on July 28. Hours after US President Donald Trump threatens Pyongyang on August 8 with "fire and fury" over its missile program, the North says it is considering strikes near US strategic military installations in Guam.—AFP

News in brief

Nepal introduces 'third gender'

KATHMANDU: Nepal has introduced a third gender category in its census for the first time, a move the Himalayan nation's LGBTQ community hopes will bring them greater rights. Officials from the Central Bureau of Statistics have been visiting homes across the country of 30 million people since Saturday, giving respondents the option of choosing "others" as their gender, alongside male and female. Nepal already has some of South Asia's most progressive laws on homosexuality and transgender rights, with landmark reforms passed in 2007 prohibiting gender or sexual orientation discrimination. A third gender category for citizenship documents was introduced in 2013 and Nepal began issuing passports with the "others" category two years later. — AFP

Earthquake rattles Japan

TOKYO: A 6.1-magnitude earthquake struck off Japan's northwestern coast yesterday but no tsunami warning was issued, Japanese and US authorities said. The quake produced shaking across a large swath of the northeastern coast and was also felt in Tokyo, but there were no immediate reports of damage. The United States Geological Survey (USGS) said the quake hit at a depth of 368 kilometers in the Sea of Japan, known as the East Sea in Korea. Japan's meteorological agency said there was no tsunami risk following the jolt. Japan sits on the Pacific "Ring of Fire", an arc of intense seismic activity that stretches through Southeast Asia and across the Pacific basin. — AFP

Iran to resume issuing visas

TEHRAN: Iran will resume issuing visas to foreign tourists from next month, officials said, after suspending services for 19 months due to the coronavirus pandemic. "The issuance of tourist visas from land and air borders will resume" from October 23, Tourism Minister Ezzatollah Zarghami said, quoted Tuesday by the government-run Iran newspaper. Except for medical and business reasons, Iran banned the entry of foreign nationals in March last year, a few weeks after the Islamic republic detected its first cases of COVID-19 infection. The decision to restart visa services was taken on Saturday at a meeting of Iran's anti-coronavirus taskforce that was attended by President Ebrahim Raisi, local media reported. — AFP

Lebanese families protest

BEIRUT: Hundreds of outraged Lebanese, mostly relatives of people killed in last year's deadly Beirut port explosion, protested yesterday against the suspension of the investigation. Tarek Bitar, the judge leading the probe into Lebanon's deadliest peacetime disaster, had to suspend his work on Monday after what the victims' families and human rights groups said was another blatant case of political obstruction. The protesters gathered at the palace of justice in Beirut under close surveillance from a heavy police deployment and unfurled a large banner that read: "You won't kill us twice." Carrying portraits of their lost relatives and placards calling for justice, the protesters voiced their support for Bitar, whose summonses targeting senior officials have earned him a series of thinly veiled threats. — AFP

Bangkok on flood alert

BANGKOK: Thai authorities on Tuesday rushed to protect parts of Bangkok from floodwaters that have already inundated 70,000 homes and killed six people in the country's northern and central provinces. Tropical storm Dianmu has caused flooding in 30 provinces, with the kingdom's central region the worst hit, the Thai Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Department said. The level of the Chao Phraya River - which snakes through Bangkok after winding almost 400 kilometers from the north - is steadily rising as authorities release water from dams further upstream. Soldiers on Tuesday set up barriers and sandbags to protect ancient archaeological ruins and landmarks as well as neighborhoods in the old royal capital Ayutthaya, some 60 km north of Bangkok. "Most of the banana trees that I planted have been submerged. It's all gone," Ayutthaya flood victim Somporn, 52 said.—AFP

Thousands march for abortion rights

MONTEVIDEO: Thousands of women took to the streets across Latin America Tuesday to demand abortion rights, a practice largely prohibited in the region where hundreds of women are serving prison time under draconian laws. With banners that read "Legal Abortion Now" and "Right to Decide," and wearing green scarves that are characteristic of the global movement for decriminalizing abortion, protesters rallied in El Salvador, Chile, Peru, Mexico and Colombia. In El Salvador, where abortion is banned in all cases, women seeking the procedure can face up to eight years in prison for "aggravated homicide." Seventeen women currently remain in detention after having experienced obstetric emergencies, women's rights advocates say. — AFP

Business

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 2021

Vietnam's lockdown ensnares world's clothing manufacturers

Country's economy suffers record contraction in Q3

HANOI: From shoes and sweaters to car parts and coffee, Vietnam's strict and lengthy coronavirus lockdown has sparked product shortages among world-wide brands such as Nike and Gap which have grown increasingly dependent on the Southeast Asian nation's manufacturers.

The snarl-ups at Vietnam's factories are part of a broader crisis around the planet that is sending inflation surging and raising concerns about the pace of recovery in the global economy. At a fabric mill east of Hanoi, Claudia Anselmi—the Italian director of Hung Yen Knitting & Dyeing, a key cog in the supply chain of several European and US clothing giants — worries daily if the factory can keep the lights on.

Its output plunged by 50 percent when Vietnam's latest devastating virus wave first struck in spring, and it faces perpetual problems securing the yarn it needs for its synthetic material.

"At first we were lacking people (to work) because everyone was stuck at home," said Anselmi, whose company's fabric is later used in swimwear and sportswear for customers including Nike, Adidas and Gap. Now, "travel restrictions have jeopardized all logistics in and out... this has created long, long delays," she told AFP. "We only survive if we have the stock." While lockdowns are gradually loosening across the country as infections steadily decline, millions of Vietnamese have been under stay-at-home orders for months.

And a complex web of checkpoints and confusing travel permit regulations have made life impossible for truck drivers and businesses trying to move goods across, as well in and out of the country.

Hamza Harti, managing director at FM Logistic Vietnam, said several drivers in the Mekong Delta

had been forced to wait three days and nights in their vehicle to enter the city of Can Tho. "They were without food, without anything," he told a French Chamber of Commerce panel discussion in Hanoi.

Shifting production

The delays and restrictions are a major headache for foreign businesses, many of which have pivoted to Southeast Asia from China in recent years—a trend accelerated by the bruising trade war between Washington and Beijing. In the south—the epicenter of Vietnam's fight against COVID-19 — up to 90 percent of supply chains in the garment sector were broken, the Vietnam Textile and Apparel Association (Vitas) said in August, according to state media.

Nike—which warned last week it was struggling with shortages of its athletic gear and cut its sales forecasts—pointed the finger at Vietnam, among others, saying 80 percent of its factories in the south and nearly half of its apparel plants in the country had shut their doors. The sports colossus sources around half of its footwear from the communist country.

Although some factories were able to set up a system where staff could eat, work and sleep on site to get around lockdown restrictions, Vitas said that the cost was prohibitive for many. Japan's Fast retailing, which owns the popular Uniqlo brand, also blamed the situation in Vietnam for hold-ups on sweaters, sweatpants, hoodies and dresses, while Adidas said supply chain issues—including in the country—could cost it as much as 500 million euros (\$585 million) in sales by the end of the year.

Even with the prospect of lockdowns easing, many are fretting over the long-term impact on Vietnamese manufacturing, with Nike and Adidas



HANOI, Vietnam: This photograph taken on September 21, 2021 shows workers working at the Maxport factory, which makes activewear for various textile clothing brands, in Hanoi. —AFP

admitting they were looking to temporarily produce elsewhere. In a letter to Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh, leading business associations representing the United States, the European Union, South Korea and Southeast Asian nations sounded the alarm over production shifting away from Vietnam, warning 20 percent of its manufacturing members had already left.

"Once production shifts, it is difficult to return," they wrote. Nguyen Thi Anh Tuyet, deputy general director of Maxport Vietnam, whose 6,000 workers churn out activewear for the likes of Lululemon, Asics and Nike, told AFP the firm had "been very worried" about clients withdrawing orders—even though it was

one of the lucky few to have navigated recent brutal months largely unscathed. Without foreign customers "our workers would become jobless", she said.

The pandemic has not only hit the country's textile industry but is also threatening global coffee supplies, with Vietnam the world's largest producer of robusta beans—the variety used in instant coffee. Prices for the commodity are now sitting at a four-year high. Car companies have not escaped either—Toyota slashed production for September and October owing partly to virus issues, telling AFP "the impact has been big in Vietnam", as well as Malaysia. —AFP

Amazon unveils 'science fiction' robot that can patrol homes

SEATTLE: Amazon revealed a camera-equipped home robot Tuesday that users can deploy to patrol their homes, a device that one of the project's developers said was making science fiction a reality.

The tech giant cheered the "Astro" robot as a breakthrough for security and convenience, but digital watchdogs raised concerns for potential risks to people's most private moments at home. Astro is a roughly two-foot (60 centimeters) tall and 20-pound (nine kilograms) device that can map out a house floor plan and obey commands to go to a specific place to take a closer look with its telescoping camera.

"Now when you are away, you can use it to proactively patrol your home and investigate activity," Amazon executive Dave Limp said in a product launch clip. The device, which can work with Amazon's digital home assistant Alexa, can be taught to recognize faces and learn the habits of

household members.

Digital privacy trade-off?

Amazon said Astro could also be useful to help remotely check on elderly relatives or deliver reminders for certain activities. "It's taking science fiction and making it a reality," Suri Maddhula, who worked on the project, said in a video. Matthew Guariglia, a policy analyst at digital watchdog group Electronic Frontier Foundation, raised concerns about the device potentially allowing hackers to see into a user's home or police seeking access to it via a search warrant.

"There are some scenarios in which (Astro) could be useful; there are some scenarios in which a surveillance camera on your house could be useful, too," he said. "But the problem is that you need to know that it comes off with a trade-off of vulnerability," he added. Limp, the Amazon senior vice president for devices and services, in a call with



SEATTLE: This handout image courtesy of Amazon.com, Inc released Tuesday shows the camera-equipped home robot "Astro" following a person at home. —AFP

journalists said Astro has built-in features to guard against abuses.

He said users can shut down Astro's cameras and microphones, also noting that the device issues a warning sound and message on its display when someone is trying to access the cameras remotely. "If somebody hacked your account or

something, and that could be a bad person obviously, we want to notify anyone that might be at home," he said. He went on to say that Amazon does not have remote access to the cameras on its machines, and thus "would never allow a police department or a first responder to have access to that device." —AFP

\$80 oil sparks mixed fortunes for world economy

LONDON: Oil prices jumped above \$80 this week for the first time in almost three years, handing a major boost to producers—but fuelling more inflationary pain for consumers, analysts say. The price of European benchmark Brent North Sea crude for delivery in November hit \$80.75 per barrel on Tuesday, attaining the highest level since October 2018, but edged lower yesterday.

The market has surged on expectations for strong demand and concerns about tight supplies as the world slowly emerges from the pandemic crisis. Global supplies have been disrupted because US production remains hampered by ongoing fall-out from Hurricane Ida in the Gulf of Mexico and Louisiana. The United States is both the world's largest consumer and producer of crude oil. Oil demand has also leapt in recent weeks due to soaring natural gas prices around the world, and coal supply disruption in China.

Winners and losers

"Higher oil prices will benefit the net producers of petroleum products by boosting their export and tax revenues," Capital Economics analyst Simon MacAdam told AFP. "Net consuming economies will lose out, since higher fuel costs will eat into the real value of disposable incomes and could impinge on production just at a time when businesses are facing a plethora of mounting cost pressures."

Crude oil greases the wheels of the world econo-



ELLESMERE PORT, UK: A general view of Essar Oil UK's Stanlow oil refinery near Ellesmere Port, north west England, yesterday. —AFP

my, boosting the coffers of major producer nations both inside and outside the OPEC exporters' cartel. The soaring market also lifts the profits of energy majors like BP, ExxonMobil, Shell and Total. However, runaway oil prices threaten the global recovery and stoke inflationary pressures because they lift manufacturing costs—which translates into higher consumer prices.

Inflation is already soaring higher on the back of a worldwide supply crunch, record-high natural gas prices and reopening economies. Markets have wobbled this year over concerns that central banks will withdraw stimulus measures and hike record-low interest rates to tame rising prices.

Inflation threat

"Rising oil prices add yet further upwards

pressure on inflation," noted Josie Dent, economist at UK-based research group the Centre for Economics and Business Research (CEBR). "Businesses and households in Europe and the United States (are) set to experience rising costs associated with using oil and energy." Many businesses had already been hit hard by lockdown-related closures and ongoing supply-chain disruption.

"This comes at a time that most countries are still early in the recovery phase from the coronavirus pandemic, with many households in a vulnerable financial position due to higher unemployment rates over the past 18-months," Dent added. Oil has rebounded strongly since April 2020 when prices collapsed at the outset of the pandemic as economic activity was disrupted by lockdown measures. —AFP

British soldiers to deliver fuel to ease supply crisis

LONDON: British troops are expected to be deployed within days to help ease a fuel supply crisis, the government said yesterday as the retail and hospitality sectors called for foreign workers to be allowed to fill post-Brexit vacancies. The week-long crisis has triggered panic-buying and sparked violence at forecourts as critics blame Britain's exit from the European Union, the coronavirus pandemic and a lack of foresight in replacing thousands of foreign drivers leaving the country.

Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng told Sky News that soldiers could be delivering fuel supplies to forecourts "in the next couple of days", to cut long queues that have clogged up filling stations. The government's reserve tanker fleet, driven by civilians, was also due to be sent out to deliver fuel yesterday afternoon, he added on Twitter.

A total of 150 military drivers have been put in a "state of readiness", with another 150 to deploy "in the coming days", a source told Britain's domestic Press Association news agency. Officials from Kwarteng's department and the Ministry of Defense are reportedly working with the petrol industry on where best to send resources.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Tuesday sought to reassure the public there was enough fuel in stock and the situation was returning to normal. The shortage of tanker drivers last week sparked fears of pumps running dry, triggering panic-buying and some desperate motorists filling plastic bottles with fuel. Frustrations even spilled over into threats and violence on some forecourts, while frontline healthcare and public sector personnel pleaded for priority access to get to work. The government campaigned for an end to free movement across Europe during Brexit, promising to "take back control" of what it saw as unchecked immigration.

But last weekend it reversed entry rules to offer foreign truckers a three-month visa waiver, hoping to ease a wider shortage of drivers that has hit supply chains. Some supermarkets have had empty shelves for several weeks and fears are growing about the effect on the upcoming Christmas period.

Gordon Balmer, executive director of the Petrol Retailers Association, said only 27 percent of its members were still out of fuel compared to 37 percent on Tuesday. The PRA represents independent forecourts which make up 65 percent of Britain's 8,380 total. —AFP

Business

Biden cancels trip with agenda under threat; debt crisis looming

\$1.2tn infrastructure bill and social spending package risk failing in divided legislature

WASHINGTON: President Joe Biden postponed yesterday a trip to Chicago to stay in Washington and fight for his domestic agenda, which hangs from a thread in Congress, the White House said.

Biden had been meant to address his COVID-19 vaccination policy in the Midwestern city, but his two signature legislative policies—a \$1.2 trillion infrastructure bill and an even bigger social spending package—risk failing in the divided legislature. “He will now remain at the White House tomorrow to continue working on advancing these two pieces of legislation to create jobs,” an administration official said late Tuesday.

Lawmakers were also scrambling to break a deadlock over the prospect of a first-ever US debt default that would plunge the economy into a downwards spiral, alarming investors as the cliff edge draws closer. The government is likely to run out of cash on October 18, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen warned, unless Congress raises the federal borrowing cap.

After that date, Treasury’s funds “would be depleted quickly” and “it is uncertain whether we could continue to meet all the nation’s commitments after that date,” she said in a letter to congressional leaders. The impasse fueled a selloff on Wall Street, with the benchmark Dow Jones Industrial Average closing 1.6 percent lower after Yellen warned of dire consequences including debt default if lawmakers fail to act quickly.

But Republicans say they won’t help raise or suspend the debt limit, despite having pressed for it under Donald Trump, because they want no part in Democrats’ spending plans, including a historically large \$3.5 trillion package of social reforms. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, whose Democrats occupy half

the 100 seats in the upper chamber, attempted to raise the borrowing cap until December 2022 without any Republican votes. He asked for the unanimous consent of the Senate to bypass the usual 60-vote threshold required for most bills to be debated and instead move straight to a vote.

‘Partisan socialism’

“Republicans said they want to get it done with only Democratic votes. Democrats are ready to do it and let’s have that vote today,” Schumer said. But Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell refused, insisting there was “no chance the Republican conference will go out of our way to help Democrats conserve their time and energy so they can resume ramming through partisan socialism as fast as possible.” The cap was reinstated on August 1 with the country’s debt at \$28.4 trillion.

McConnell has repeatedly argued that the political burden of raising or suspending it again should fall to Democrats because they control the House, Senate and White House. But Yellen told the Senate Banking Committee the debt limit increase was a “shared responsibility” that both parties should support.

Without an increase, the government would be unable to pay salaries of public workers or service the nation’s debt while confidence in the dollar as a reserve currency would be undermined, she said. With no sign of a way out of the impasse, the debt crisis may now be kicked into next week, with lawmakers facing a more immediate deadline on funding the government past today, when the fiscal year ends.

Failure would shut down the government, which typically leads to hundreds of thousands of workers being



WASHINGTON, US: US Senator John Barrasso, Republican of Wyoming, with Senators Mitch McConnell (right) and John Thune (left, rear), holds a copy of the reconciliation bill as he speaks after the Republican policy luncheon at the US Capitol in Washington, DC Tuesday. — AFP

sent home as public services are closed.

‘Serious harm’

The House has passed a “continuing resolution” to keep the lights on until December 3. But the Senate shot down the plan on Monday, with Republicans objecting to a debt ceiling hike that was included in the wording. Raising the debt limit does not increase spending, but simply allows Treasury to finance projects already approved by Congress, including trillions of dollars in

aid rolled out during the pandemic. In her latest letter to lawmakers, Yellen said prompt approval is critical since “waiting until the last minute can cause serious harm to business and consumer confidence, raise borrowing costs for taxpayers and negatively impact the credit rating of the United States for years to come.”

Raising the debt ceiling has been a contentious issue in Congress for the past several years, and a 2011 stand-off caused S&P Global Ratings to downgrade US sovereign debt from its coveted AAA rating. — AFP



SHANGHAI: A general view of the Evergrande Center building in Shanghai. — AFP

Evergrande to sell \$1.5bn stake in Chinese bank

BEIJING: Embattled property developer Evergrande yesterday said it will sell a \$1.5 billion stake in a regional Chinese bank to raise much-needed capital, as it struggles to make interest payments while being choked by debts and ratings downgrades.

The stake sale to a state-owned group is Evergrande’s first major asset disposal as it attempts to claw its way back from the brink of collapse. Experts fear a chaotic implosion of the company, which is saddled with more than \$300 billion in debts, could reverberate through China’s banking and property sectors, and possibly into the global economy.

The Shenzhen-based conglomerate agreed to sell 1.7 billion non-public shares in northeastern China’s Shengjing Bank to Shenyang Shengjing Finance Investment Group, Evergrande said in a Hong Kong exchange filing. “The Company’s liquidity issue has adversely affected Shengjing Bank in a material way,” the filing said, adding that the agreement would still need to be approved by the bank’s board of directors.

Evergrande shares jumped more than 14 percent in Hong Kong yesterday. A \$47.5 million interest payment on a US dollar bond was also due yesterday, less than

a week after it was meant to pay up for another note. It is not known if the firm has met its obligations, though it has a 30-day grace period before it is considered to be in default. I did reach a deal to pay interest on a yuan-denominated note last week.

Fitch Ratings downgraded China Evergrande Group’s credit score to C from CC, just above the equivalent default level, as the latest payment loomed. “The downgrades reflect that Evergrande is likely to have missed interest payment on senior unsecured notes” and entered the grace period, Fitch analysts wrote in a report.

Some creditors claim that Evergrande is responsible for a further \$260 million bond payment due Sunday and will press their claims if the firm defaults, Bloomberg News reported Tuesday. Beijing has stayed silent on the travails of the property empire, but state media has trailed various responses in a nod to the mood towards a private company that grew on a debt binge in the boom years of Chinese real estate.

State newspaper Economic Daily said rules around China’s property sector could be loosened purely because of Evergrande’s woes. “We cannot simply relax regulations just because of the emergence of some new situations in individual housing companies,” it said in a commentary yesterday. “We cannot return to the old path of using real estate as a short-term economic stimulus tool.” The group’s high-flying EV unit scrapped a planned Shanghai listing over the weekend, warning of the parent company’s “serious shortage of funds”, which forced it to suspend payments to staff and suppliers. — AFP

we tested the fertilizer samples sent by the Chinese supplier, we found in them bacteria that is harmful to the soil,” it quoted the minister as saying.

The ministry said it would “focus on somehow providing fertilizer requirements of farmers”. Officials said the cargo was ready to be shipped to Sri Lanka when the government decided to cancel the order, worth an estimated \$42 million. The government had offered subsidies to local farmers to produce their own compost, but they failed to meet demand—hence the Chinese imports, officials said.

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa came to power in 2019 promising subsidized foreign fertilizer, but did a U-turn arguing that agro chemicals were poisoning people. His administration has denied that the ban on chemical fertilizer, herbicides and pesticides is because of a foreign exchange shortage, maintaining that it is committed to healthier agriculture. As it battles the acute shortage, it has halted other imports, including vehicles and spare parts.

Farmers of rice—the main foreign exchange-earning export commodity, along with tea—have warned crops could be halved without chemicals. Former central bank deputy governor and economic analyst W A Wijewardena called the organic project “a dream with

China’s foreign projects trap poor nations with ‘hidden debt’: Study

BEIJING: China’s ambitious foreign infrastructure push has saddled poor nations with “hidden debt” worth \$385 billion, and more than a third of the projects have been hit by alleged corruption scandals and protests, a study said yesterday.

Research from international development research lab AidData said that opaque deals with state banks and companies under President Xi Jinping’s flagship investment drive—the Belt and Road Initiative—has left dozens of lower income governments strapped with debt that isn’t on their balance sheets. China has invested more than \$843 billion to build roads, bridges, ports and hospitals in some 163 nations since the program was announced in 2013, including many countries across Africa and Central Asia.

Nearly 70 percent of this money has been lent to state banks or joint ventures between Chinese businesses and local partners in countries that were already deeply indebted to Beijing, AidData executive director Brad Parks said. “Many poor governments could not take on any more loans,” Parks said. “So (China) got creative.” He said loans were given to a “constellation of actors other than central governments” but often backed by a government guarantee to pay up if the other party couldn’t.

“The contracts are murky, and governments themselves don’t know the exact monetary values they owe to China,” he said. These under-reported debts are worth about \$385 billion, the study found.

AidData, which is based at the College of William and Mary in Virginia, listed 45 lower and middle income countries which now have levels of debt exposure to China higher than 10 percent of their national gross domestic product. Resentment has been fuelled about high levels of Chinese money flowing into places such as Balochistan in southwest Pakistan, where locals say they get little benefit and militants have launched a string of attacks aimed at undermining Chinese investment. “What we’re seeing right now with the Belt and Road Initiative is buyers’ remorse,” Parks said.

“Many foreign leaders who were initially eager to jump on the BRI bandwagon are now suspending or cancelling Chinese infrastructure projects because of debt sustainability concerns.” Beijing’s lending spree has slowed over the past two years due to push-back from borrowers, the study said. The Group of Seven wealthy nations also announced a rival scheme to counter Beijing’s dominance in global lending this year. Beijing’s loans demanded higher interest rates with shorter repayment periods, AidData found. — AFP

unimaginable social, political and economic costs”. He said Sri Lanka’s food security had been “compromised” and that without foreign currency it was “worsening day by day”. — AFP



COLOMBO: A worker tends to a tea plantation in Sri Lanka’s southern district of Ratnapura. — AFP

Zimbabwe freezes 30 bank accounts over forex peddling

HARARE: Zimbabwe’s central bank has frozen the bank accounts of 30 individuals accused of illicitly exchanging foreign currency through mobile phones and social media, it said Tuesday.

The government has been struggling to promote local currency since it was temporarily ditched in 2009 favor of the US dollar and others due to hyperinflation. But greenbacks fell short, prompting the central bank to introduce new bank notes in 2016.

Local money has continued to devalue, however, and highly-demanded foreign currency is traded more on the black market at better rates than the official. The Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe on Tuesday said its intelligence unit (FIU) had identified 30 individuals “abusing mobile telecommunications services and other social media platforms” for “illegal foreign exchange transactions and money laundering”. “The FIU has instructed banks... and other financial service providers to identify and freeze accounts operated by these individuals,” it said in a statement.

The accused have also been barred from accessing financial services for two years, and risk being blocked by mobile operators. Zimbabwe is still reeling from decades of financial mismanagement under its late former president Robert Mugabe. The southern African country has been in severe economic crisis for years, during which many have helplessly watched their savings evaporate and prices soar. Manufacturing and exports have shrunk, and foreign currency is continuously in short supply. — AFP

Malawi fines India’s Airtel unit for duping customers

LILONGWE: Malawian regulators yesterday fined the local unit of India’s Bharti Airtel the equivalent of around \$2.6 million for skimming on airtime owed to consumers in one of the world’s poorest countries. The Competition and Fair Trade Commission imposed a 2.1-billion-kwacha (\$2.6 million) fine on mobile operator Airtel Malawi for engaging in “unconscionable conduct” in withholding airtime owed as part of a loyalty program.

Airtel Malawi is part of Bharti Airtel Limited, an Indian multinational that operates in 18 countries across Asia and Africa. The company describes itself as the largest mobile operator in Africa. The commission’s acting executive director Apoche Itimu told a news briefing that the director launched an investigation into Airtel Malawi on September 16, following several complaints from consumers.

“It was alleged that the Airtel Malawi stopped automatically crediting customer accounts with monthly bonuses” of airtime, she said.

Instead, consumers had to request their free airtime on the 14th of every month. Those who failed to do so lost their bonus. Itimu said the company made a financial gain of about 2.1 billion kwacha by “engaging in unconscionable conduct in the trade of goods and services”. The commission fined Airtel Malawi the same amount. Bharti Airtel’s annual revenue of \$14 billion is almost double the size Malawi’s entire economy. Airtel Malawi did not immediately respond to AFP requests for comment. — AFP

Sri Lanka stops ‘tainted’ fertilizer import from China

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka halted a 96,000-tonne shipment of fertilizer from China yesterday citing quality issues, undermining the island’s plans for the world’s first fully organic farming sector. Agriculture minister Mahindananda Aluthgamage stopped the cargo of organic fertilizer as samples showed harmful bacteria, his office said in a statement.

In May, the government banned the import of chemical fertilizer, part of an ambitious drive to go fully organic. The organic plant nutrients from China were meant to replace the phased-out chemicals during the main rice cultivation season, starting early October.

“The minister decided not to import the organic nitrogen fertilizer from China to be used in the ‘Maha’ (big) cultivation season,” the statement said. “When

Business

DHAMAN starts go-live of first phase of unified EMR system

EMR will help DHAMAN meet needs of healthcare network, medical staff and patients

KUWAIT: Continuing its integrated strategy to develop the digital healthcare infrastructure in order to provide the best services, Health Assurance Hospitals Company (DHAMAN) announced the go-live operations of the first phase of the unified Electronic Medical Records (EMR) system.

This stage is part of a comprehensive strategy to develop the unified EMR to provide the various centers of DHAMAN with the latest technologies and applications to meet the needs of the healthcare network, medical staff and patients. This phase includes an integrated system for linking health, administrative and financial services.

During March 2021, DHAMAN signed the EMR agreement with InterSystems, one of the world's leading companies in the field of health systems technology. DHAMAN is implementing and developing the EMR system in two phases. The first, which is currently operational, includes DHAMAN Primary Healthcare Centers (EMR) in the areas of Hawally, Farwaniya, Dhajeej and other centers. As for the second phase, DHAMAN healthcare network will be implemented consecutively at DHAMAN hospitals in Ahmadi and Jahra.

During a celebration with the attendance of several employees, DHAMAN Acting CEO Dr Mohammad Al-Qenai, said that operating the first phase of the EMR represents a notable achievement for the Company in alignment with achieving its medical and operational goals. As this stage was completed in a record time of less than six months, that was due to the collaboration between



various sectors in DHAMAN as they worked as one team to achieve "Healthcare... for a New Kuwait" as one of the strategic projects in the National Development Plan (New Kuwait 2035). This system is considered among the initiatives of DHAMAN to implement the best international healthcare standards based on the requirements of the Joint Commission International (JCI) as the 1st Healthcare Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) in the Middle East and the 1st Health Maintenance Organization (HMO) in Gulf.

On his part, DHAMAN Corporate Information Technology Director Eng Abdullah Al-Najjar, said that DHAMAN's implementation of state-of-the-art technical systems with best practices and interna-



tional standards are essential elements in the pursuit of comprehensive digital healthcare. This is in preparation for receiving the main target group of DHAMAN's patients of residents working in Kuwait's private sector and their families, who number approximately 2 million individuals.

The unified EMR system is distinctive by its compliance with the standards of the Healthcare Information & Management Systems Society (HIMSS) for applications of information technology in the field of global healthcare. In the future, this system allows patients to access their files at any time and from anywhere through multiple electronic channels. It also provides the medical team with the ability to know and analyze the health status of

each patient individually. The operation of the first phase of the system is considered a pivotal point in the digital readiness of DHAMAN's hospitals. Through this system and other digital initiatives, DHAMAN aims to achieve the 6th level of the standards of HIMSS when opening DHAMAN hospitals during 2022, and later to reach the 7th level of HIMSS, which is the highest level. This achievement is a result of the active contribution of all DHAMAN staff, especially from Information Technology. This project is the first of its kind to be built and established remotely in the Kuwait as it was done during the repercussions of COVID-19 pandemic and the accompanying restrictions on travel between countries along with other factors.

Trillion-dollar coin? US eyes solution to budget impasse

NEW YORK: Talk of a trillion-dollar US coin has returned to Washington now that Congress is mired in another political impasse over raising the debt ceiling. The idea for the pricey platinum—which would be unprecedented but not necessarily illegal—was originally floated in 2011 as a run-around in the recurring war between Democrats and Republicans over lifting the debt limit to enable the government to pay its bills.

Champions of the idea point to a 1997 law, which in theory would allow the Treasury Secretary to authorize a platinum coin at the value of his or her discretion. The president could direct the Treasury Secretary to mint a \$1 trillion piece that could be deposited in the Federal Reserve and used to cover a big portion of Washington's bills.

Such a maneuver would bypass Congress, which is again flirting with disaster. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen warned on Tuesday that the government would run out of cash unless the federal borrowing cap is lifted.

Accounting 'gimmick'?

Though it may seem far-fetched, the idea got far enough during the 2013 impasse that the Treasury Department explicitly ruled out minting the coin. Former president Barack Obama alluded to the

internal talks over the concept in a January 2017 podcast, just as he was leaving office.

"There were all kinds of wacky ideas," Obama said on "Pod Save America" of the 2013 discussions with staff. But the solution has hardly been embraced by mainstream economists.

Critics include economist Paul Krugman, who wrote in March 2020 that the idea was "an accounting gimmick" that "wouldn't even fool anyone." Laurence Kotlikoff, an economics professor at Boston University, said it was "the kind of thinking of a third world country."

"The essence of the issue here is printing money to pay the government's bills," Kotlikoff said. "And when you print enough money, you get inflation." Policy makers are already grappling with pricing pressure in the wake of heavy fiscal spending during the pandemic. That marks a break from the anemic inflation seen over most of the last two decades.

Congressional Republicans have opposed raising the debt ceiling, arguing that President Joe Biden's enormous proposed investments in infrastructure and social programs are fiscally irresponsible.

For now, there is no obvious solution to the impasse, raising the possibility that the United States could default for the first time in its history. But if the trillion-dollar coin draws eye rolls from economist, it is a source of curiosity on social media.

Quadrillion-dollar coin

On Tuesday, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said senior Democratic Representative Jerry Nadler "wants to have a trillion-dollar coin that doesn't require congressional approval." Economics professor L. Randall Wray, a Bard College professor who



has championed Modern Money Theory, which de-emphasizes the drawbacks of debt, said the special coin is no wackier than other expansionary financial maneuvers enacted by the Federal Reserve during the pandemic that have involved hundreds of billions of dollars of public and private debt. "It is a work around," Wray said. "It sort of makes it obvious that the debt limit itself is a pretty stupid idea."

Wray and others note that massive infusions of liquidity by the Federal Reserve in the wake of the 2008 crisis did not spur inflation. For Matthew Gertz of Media Matters for America, the question is not whether the trillion-dollar coin is too big, but whether it is big enough.

"A trillion-dollar coin isn't cool," Gertz wrote on Twitter. "You know what's cool? A quadrillion-dollar coin." — AFP

Chinese suppliers consolidate in global aviation industry

BEIJING: The Aviation Industry Corporation of China (AVIC) said yesterday that it has delivered the first unit of A320 fuselage equipping and the 500th unit of A320 wing equipment to European aircraft manufacturer Airbus, in another example of cooperation between China and European countries in the aviation sector.

"It is another symbol of strengthening international cooperation, and it shows we are actively integrating into the global aviation supply chain," Lu Guangshan, chief engineer of AVIC, said at a delivery ceremony at the sidelines of the ongoing Zhuhai airshow in South China's Guangzhou Province.

The fuselage equipping project was witnessed by Chinese and European leaders in September of 2019, and the project was started in June of 2021 in North China's Tianjin Municipality. The delivery is the result of ongoing collaboration between the two parties, which have overcome the negative effect caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, according to Airbus. "Our cooperation with Chinese suppliers has covered all life cycles," Airbus China COO Michel Tran Van said yesterday, noting that China is an integral part of the global aviation ecosystem and an important part of the Airbus global supply chain.

Chinese suppliers in particular are willing to invest in advanced technology, which contributes to their competitiveness, he said. In July, Airbus received the 100th mid-fuselage for its A220 aircraft from a key supplier in Northeast China's Liaoning Province, following a A320 fuselage project undertaken by the Xi'an Aircraft International (Tianjin) Corp commenced operations in Tianjin in June. Market watchers attributed these kinds of success stories to the recovery of the Chinese industry, which ultimately benefits Chinese suppliers and boosts confidence among global aviation giants. — AFP

ABK congratulates 'Experience the Change' campaign winners

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) announced the four winners of the 7th salary transfer campaign "Experience the Change" for Al-Raed, Prestige and Elite Salary account holders. The draw took place on 23rd September 2021, under the supervision of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

The winners were:

- Mohammad Marzouq Motlaq Al-Rukhaimi Al-Mutairi
 - Saad Hamdan Zaid Al-Daihani
 - Reem Mohammad Sudani
 - Abdulkareem Salem Ali Mehaidi
- The 8th draw will be held on 19th October 2021. Every month four winners can win back their salary (two Kuwaitis and two residents). To be eligible to enter the draw, customers need to have one salary credited into their account one month prior to the draw date.
- Furthermore, upon opening a salary account with ABK, customers can choose one of the following rewards:
- Up to KD1,000 cash gift for Kuwaitis
 - Up to KD10,000 interest free loan for Kuwaitis
 - Up to KD5,000 interest free loan for residents. The offer is open to new salary clients only.

Burgan Bank offers its customers free coffee in partnership with Syra Coffee

KUWAIT: In celebration of International Coffee Day on the 1st of October, Burgan Bank is offering free coffee to all its cardholders in an exclusive one-day campaign in collaboration with Syra Coffee.

This International Coffee Day offer is aligned with the Bank's strategy which is aimed at getting closer to its customers and developing sustainable relationships with them, through a wide selection of valuable best-in-class offers and promotions that suit their lifestyle. Burgan customers can enjoy for free the taste of delicious coffee made by one of Kuwait's best brewers at Syra Coffee, in City Tower in Kuwait City upon presenting any of their Burgan Bank cards. This offer is available throughout the day, or until sell out, with the applicable terms and conditions.

Burgan Bank collaborates with the best brands across various fields to provide a wider range of benefits and offers to its customer base. The Bank will continue to develop and vary its products and services along with special promotions and offers to deliver its promise of excellence to customers through a rewarding banking experience. To learn more about Burgan Bank's latest offers, products and services, you can visit any of the bank's branches or Burgan's Instagram account @BurganBankKuwait, or contact the Call Center or the WhatsApp service at 1804080.



MIAMI: A consumer shops in a Target store Tuesday in Miami. The Conference Board's Consumer Confidence Index released yesterday indicated that consumer confidence fell for the third consecutive month in September. —AFP

US consumer confidence suffers as Delta variant spreads

WASHINGTON: US consumer confidence fell for the third consecutive month in September as the fast-spreading Delta variant of COVID-19 made more Americans feel gloomy, an industry survey said Tuesday. The Conference Board reported its consumer confidence index declined this month to 109.3, against expectations for a slight increase from August's upwardly revised level.

"The spread of the Delta variant continued to dampen optimism," Lynn Franco, senior director of economic indicators at The Conference Board said. "Concerns about the state of the economy and short-term growth prospects deepened, while spending intentions for homes, autos, and major appliances all retreated again."

The index has now fallen decisively from its peak of 128.9 hit in June as the US economic reopening was proceeding full speed ahead, until the outbreak

of the Delta variant again plunged the economy into uncertainty. The survey showed shifts to the negative in consumers' views of business conditions, with those describing them as "bad" climbing just over one percent to 25.4 percent, and those describing them as "good" falling to 19.3 percent.

More people believed jobs were "hard to get" at 13.4 percent, up from 11.2 percent last month, however those who said jobs were "plentiful" rose very slightly to 55.9 percent.

Expectations six months out all deteriorated to varying degrees in September, with more people expecting business conditions to worsen, jobs to grow scarce and incomes to decrease.

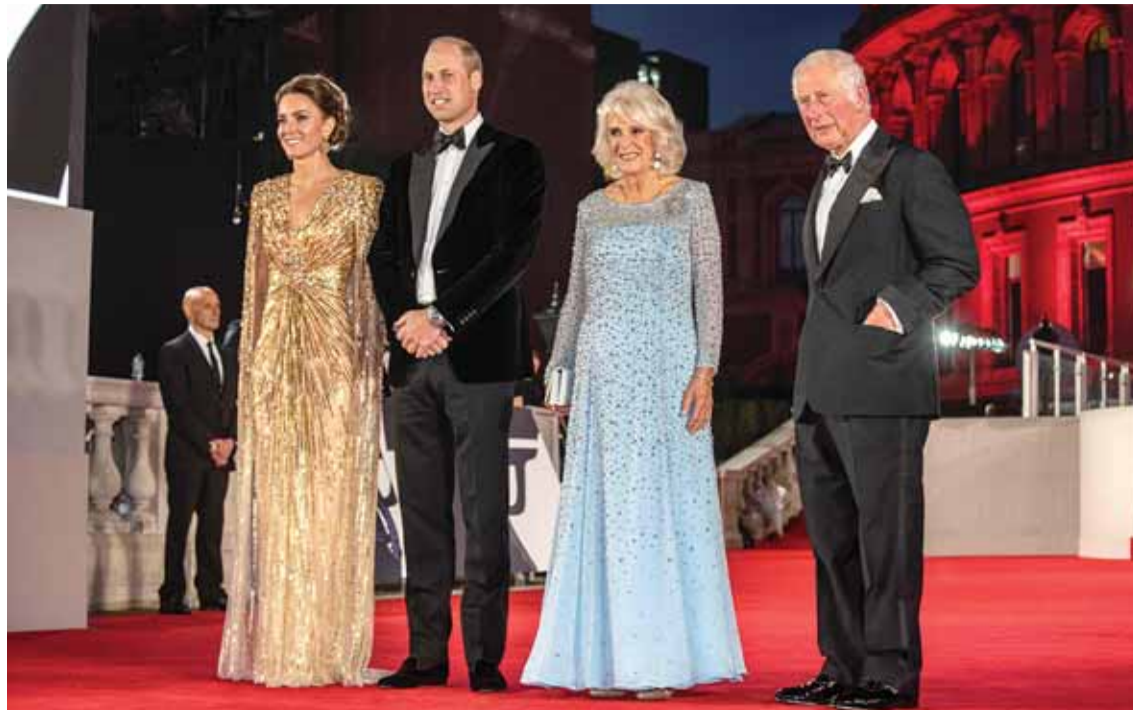
Ian Shepherdson of Pantheon Macroeconomics saw brighter days ahead for consumers, pointing to the decline in virus cases. "We expect a clear rebound in all the consumer sentiment numbers over the next couple months. Buying plans ought to rebound too, after falling in recent months," he wrote in an analysis. However inflation expectations appeared to have moderated slightly, amid an ongoing price spike that's made consumers nervous and challenged both the Federal Reserve's easy money policies and President Joe Biden's spending plans.

The data showed consumers expecting an inflation rate of 6.5 percent in the next 12 months, down from 6.7 percent in August. — AFP

Lifestyle | Features



Britain's Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge reacts as she arrives ahead of the World Premiere of the James Bond 007 film "No Time to Die".



Britain's Prince William, Duke of Cambridge (second left) and Britain's Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge (left) stand with Britain's Prince Charles, Prince of Wales (right) and Britain's Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall as they arrive for the World Premiere of the James Bond 007 film 'No Time to Die' at the Royal Albert Hall in west London. — AFP photos



Britain's Prince William, Duke of Cambridge (left) meets with English actor Daniel Craig ahead of the World Premiere.

IT IS A ROYAL AFFAIR AT WORLD PREMIERE OF NEW BOND MOVIE

'No Time To Die' may have faced delays since last year due to the pandemic, but makers pulled out a starry world premiere on Tuesday in London to make up for all the lost time. Along with the film's impressive star cast, in attendance was British royalty as Duke and Duchess of Cambridge joined Duke and Duchess of Cornwall on the red carpet of the premiere that took place in

London's Royal Albert Hall. The royal couples were the guest of honor at the event.

All eyes were though on Kate Middleton who pulled out all the sartorial stops. The Duchess of Cambridge hit the red carpet in a glittering gold cape gown by Jenny Packham adorned with sequins and beadwork. Matching metallic pumps, gold circular statement earrings and an elegant updo completed Middleton's look

for the night.

Craig could serve in the Royal Navy following his appointment as honorary commander. The 53-year-old James Bond star said he was "honored" to receive the title, but now fears he could actually be called up. He said: "The trouble is, I think now I've enlisted. There was a piece of paper with something written on it and I think there might be some small print there." The award-winning actor - who has played the iconic spy character since 2006 - was bestowed with the honorary title ahead of the premiere of his final Bond film 'No Time to Die.'

First Sea Lord Admiral Sir Tony Radakin, the head of the Royal Navy, confirmed the news in a statement. He said: "I am delighted to welcome honorary Commander Daniel Craig to the Royal Navy. Daniel Craig is well known for being Commander Bond for the last 15 years - a naval officer who keeps Britain safe through missions across the globe. That's what the real Royal Navy does every day, using technology and skill the same way as Bond himself." — Agencies



Britain's Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge (left) meets US singer-songwriter Finneas O'Connell (center) and US singer-songwriter Billie Eilish ahead of the World Premiere.

Eilish suffered 'intense writer's block' before penning 'No Time To Die'

Billie Eilish suffered "an intense amount of writer's block" when she tried to pen the 'No Time To Die' theme song. The 19-year-old singer wrote the song with the help of her brother Finneas O'Connell, but she admits that it wasn't a straightforward process. Billie said: "We had an intense amount of writer's block as soon as we were called to action." Finneas added: "We rented out a studio to go and try to write it - and we didn't write anything good." Billie and Finneas, 24, eventually ended up penning the song on a tour bus in Texas.

Billie explained: "Finneas came up with this piano motif and immediately we were like, 'Ohhhhhh', and we wrote the whole song." Billie and Finneas had both dreamed of creating a Bond theme song long before they were offered the opportunity. The 'Bad Guy' hitmaker told the BBC: "We'd always wanted to write a Bond song - even before it was an option." And her sibling added: "We'd been writing motifs and thinking of melodies for a couple years, just as far as like, 'Wouldn't it be cool if one day we got to do a Bond song?' And when we got wind that they were making the 25th, we immediately set out to meet with Barbara [Broccoli, producer] and plead our case." Meanwhile, Finneas previously admitted that they were "lucky" with the name of the new movie. — Bang Showbiz



Britain's Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge (left) meets with English actor Daniel Craig ahead of the World Premiere.

DIOR goes sporty in post-pandemic burst of color

The coronavirus pandemic has triggered a radical change at one of France's oldest brands, with Dior tapping a 1960s vibe for a sporty, vividly colorful return to the Paris catwalk on Tuesday. Dior's 2022 spring-summer women's collection reflected a world that had learned the value of the exercise and yearned for a bit of playful "joie-de-vivre" over the last 18 months. Full of fluorescent greens and oranges, neon blues and big butterfly

fits. And there were lots of scuba-fabric rigid shapes echoing Dior's famous sports and ski looks of the 1960s. "We understood the importance of sport during the pandemic, not just as a performance, but with the idea of feeling good. We were locked up, we had the need to maintain ourselves physically," said Chiuri. It was a marked shift for the designer, with far fewer of the airy, floaty evening dresses that have been her trademark since joining Dior in 2016.

As the first woman to lead the brand, Chiuri has often sought to rework the iconic Dior Bar jacket, moving away from the ultra-feminised hourglass shape that defined the brand's early, postwar years. It was entirely absent on Tuesday as she opted for boxier, less figure-hugging shapes.

'It's very different'

"I wanted to show that there's more than just the Bar jacket," Chiuri told AFP. The new collection came as a surprise to Dior's artisans. "It's minimalist, very geometric with rigid fabric. There's very little embroidery. Compared to our usual work, it's very different," said Pascal Coppin, head of one of Dior's dress workshops. "I like it a lot, it's a radical change. It's cool, it's youthful, it's optimistic," he added. "We need that-the colors-to get away from the black and dark blue, to see prints that are almost a bit Brazilian."

There was a sense of release in the show itself, too, with no more social distancing and a relaxed attitude to masks among many of the spectators. The stage was playful, too, with the models rotating around a huge circular, stepped platform like something out of a game show. "People use fashion to express themselves, to play," said Chiuri. "In the end, fashion is a big performance." — AFP



prints, it was a far cry from the subtle chic with which Dior is typically associated. "There is a change in way we feel-we feel more vulnerable, and everyone reacts in their own way," designer Maria Grazia Chiuri told AFP ahead of the show.

"Some want to shut themselves away, others want to live to the full. For me, I want to live well every day," she said. Sportswear was prominent, with looks based on jazzed-up boxing and judo out-



Models present creations for Dior Womenswear Spring Summer 2022 collection in Paris on September 28, 2021 during the Paris Fashion Week. — AFP photos

Lifestyle | Features



This picture shows Takao Saito, Japanese manga artist whose work includes 'Golgo 13', one of longest-running comic series, has died of pancreatic cancer at the age of 84, a publisher said yesterday. — AFP

Japan manga artist Takao Saito, 'Golgo 13' creator, dies aged 84

Manga artist Takao Saito, who created the most prolific Japanese comic-book series of all time "Golgo 13", has died aged 84, his publisher said yesterday. "Golgo 13", the tale of a legendary professional hitman, was first printed in 1968 and has been adapted into anime series, video

games and two live-action films. The assassin Golgo, also known as Duke Togo, is of unknown nationality and carries out his hits around the world, with current affairs often inspiring its plotlines. Its 201st edition came out in July this year, breaking the Guinness world record for the most volumes ever

published of a single manga series. Saito, who wrote and illustrated the series, died on Friday of pancreatic cancer, according to Shogakukan, the publisher of the anthology magazine "Big Comic" in which "Golgo 13" is serialized. "We offer our heartfelt respect to Mr Saito's achievement and offer our

deep condolences," Shogakukan said. "We plan to continue Golgo 13 in cooperation with his staff, in accordance with his wishes," it added. Saito was born in Japan's western Wakayama prefecture in 1936, and made his manga debut in 1955 with the title "Baron Air". The success of another of his

works called "Typhoon Goro" in 1960 led him to move from Osaka to Tokyo to establish his own production company. He was also one of the founders of "gekiga", a realistic genre of manga aimed at adults which began in the 1950s. — AFP

New lizard species discovered in Peru

Scientists have discovered a new lizard species in Peru, the national conservation agency said Tuesday. The new species, called *Liolaemus warjantay*, was found in the Peruvian Andes at an altitude of 4,500 meters (14,700 feet), according to

a statement from the National Service of Natural Areas Protected by the State. "A valuable contribution of Peru's protected natural areas to the world is the recent discovery of a new species of lizard," the statement said.

The lizard's head is dark gray, and females have pale yellow eyelids. The discovery was registered a few weeks ago in cooperation with scientists from Argentina, Chile and Bolivia. The Cotahuasi Subbasin Landscape Reserve, where the lizard was found, is a protected area in the Arequipa region in southwestern Peru, with an area of 490,550 hectares (1,900 square miles). — AFP



In this file photo domestic cattle stand next to a dwarf cow named Rani, whose owners applied to the Guinness Book of Records claiming it to be the smallest cow in the world.



In this file photo people take pictures of a dwarf cow named Rani. — AFP photos

World's shortest cow gets posthumous recognition

A knee-high celebrity cow that became a sensation in Bangladesh has won posthumous recognition as the shortest on the planet just weeks after its untimely demise. Rani, just 50.8 centimeters (20 inches) high, became an instant internet celebrity with tens of thousands of people rushing to the farm she lived on outside Dhaka for a glimpse of the miniature cow. But just after its

owners applied to Guinness World Records, tragedy struck on August 19 when the beloved bovine suddenly died due to a sudden internal build-up of gas. The cow's owner Kazi Mohammad Abu Sufian said he received an email on Monday from Guinness World Records saying that Rani's application had been accepted. A statement on the Guinness website confirmed the miniature Bhutti world-record cow's

status, beating the previous holder, an Indian cow named Manikyam that stood 61 centimeters from hoof to withers.

"We sent several video of Rani in line with Guinness World Records prescriptions. We have also sent the post-mortem report to the Guinness authorities to see that there was nothing unusual about her death," Sufian told AFP. Sufian said he had also sent Guinness

Rani's medical records after they asked whether she had received hormone injections. "We have a mixed feelings after Rani got the recognition. We are happy that she got her due honors. But we are at the same very sad because she is no more with us," Sufian said. "Her carer burst out crying as soon as we told him the news." — AFP



Undated picture distributed by the Peruvian National Service of Natural Areas Protected by the State (SERANAP) of a *Liolaemus warjantay*, a new species of lizard discovered in the Cotahuasi Reserve, in Arequipa, Peru. — AFP

Unheard Lennon tape sells for nearly 50,000 euros at Danish auction

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 sold for nearly 50,000 euros on Tuesday at an auction 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.

The buyer, who remains

unknown, made a telephone bid for 49,760 euros (\$58,000) for the cassette as well as accompanying Polaroid photographs of the schoolboys with Lennon and a copy of a school newspaper. Back in 1970, 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 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.

'Give Peace a Chance'

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 head-

master 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. Labeled with the name "Skyrum Bjerger", the hamlet where it was made, the recording is of decent quality.

The tape also includes the song "Give Peace a Chance" but with different words. The buyer will not have the right to use the tape for profit. 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



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, is being auctioned at Bruun Rasmussen Auction House in Copenhagen. — AFP photos



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

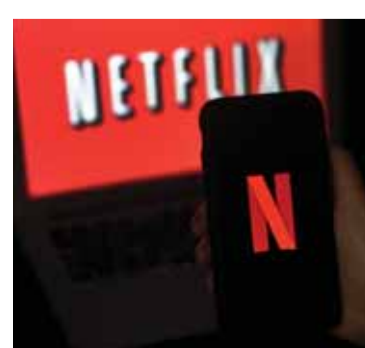
Netflix acquires first video game studio

Netflix has announced the acquisition of its first video game studio, as the streaming giant bids to expand its entertainment empire with a push into the lucrative gaming sector. The company announced Tuesday that it has bought the California-based Night School Studio, best known as the creators of paranormal thriller game Oxenfree. Netflix had indicated its intention to venture into video games in July, eyeing potential hits based on the storylines of popular TV series.

The company said Night School's "artistic excellence and proven track record make them invaluable partners as we build out the creative capabilities and library of Netflix games together". Night School co-founder Sean Krankel said in a blog post that it was "a surreal honor" to be the first games

developer to join Netflix. "Netflix gives film, TV, and now game makers an unprecedented canvas to create and deliver excellent entertainment to millions of people," he wrote. "There's a kaleidoscope of butterflies in our team's collective stomachs."

Netflix has already signaled that access to the games it develops will be included in customers' membership. The streaming giant said in August that it was starting limited testing of its gaming capabilities, with Android users in Poland able to try two games based on its "Stranger Things" horror series.



In this file photo illustration a computer screen and mobile phone display the Netflix logo in Arlington, Virginia. — AFP

Along with its interest in games inspired by television, Netflix has previously developed various TV shows and movies based on games. This week it announced it has commissioned a third season of "The Witcher", which is based on a series of fantasy novels and video games.

A kids' TV show based on "Sonic the Hedgehog" is due to be released next year, while a series based on multiplayer battle epic "League of Legends" is out in November. Netflix's expansion into video games comes as it appears to be reaching a saturation point in the United States in terms of the number of households it can reach. The company has openly said it competes with hit games such as Fortnite for people's online entertainment time, and analysts suggest offering games could help attract new subscribers. The global gaming market now exceeds \$300 billion, according to an April study by consulting firm Accenture. Netflix has recruited a video game veteran, Facebook's Mike Verdu, to lead its gaming team. — AFP

Barrymore keeps her kids off social media

Drew Barrymore keeps her kids off social media so they can enjoy being young. The "Charlie's Angels" star - who has Olive, nine, and Frankie, seven, with her ex-husband Will Kopelman - prefers to keep her kids' faces off her Instagram account, even though they love social media, because she wants them to be able to enjoy being kids and joked they "get in a bad mood" when they aren't in front of the camera. Speaking on the Armchair Expert podcast, she said: "I want them to be kids. And I don't put my kids on social media, I'm like a

Doberman about them. They watch TikTok, they love social media. They get in a bad mood when they realize they won't be put on camera, but they know good goddamn well why, because I'm like, 'I want you to be kids!'" Meanwhile, Drew recently revealed she "will never lie" to her children about her past.

The 46-year-old actress has been open about her battles with drug and alcohol abuse which she faced after being thrust into the spotlight as a child when she starred in "E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial" in 1982. And Drew has now insisted she won't hold back on telling her two daughters about her previous experiences, because she thinks it's important to show her children how much she has "grown". She explained: "I will never lie to my daughters, and I think it will give me ammunition to say, 'This is why I am this way'. I have come full circle to say being classy, treating people with kindness, trying to embrace who we really are and grow every single day, those are the life lessons I've really come to value ... "My 20-year-old self, I'm like, 'I totally embrace you,' and my 46-year-old self is who I want to be right now. I don't have one regret. I've just loved every minute that led me to this point."

— Bang Showbiz



Sports

Saudi 'racing against time' to complete Formula One track

The floodlit circuit will run over 6.175km

JEDDAH: Saudi Arabia is working overtime to prepare for its Formula One debut, an official said, with the track still under construction ahead of the race in early December. The official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said organizers were "racing against time" and working "round the clock" in the Red Sea city of Jeddah. A visit to the track this week showed there was still much work to be done, with buildings under construction and cranes and diggers on site.

The floodlit circuit will run over 6.175km (3.8 miles), the second longest on the calendar, and will feature 27 corners. The race weekend is from December 3-5. Prince Khalid bin Sultan Al-Faisal, president of the Saudi Automobile and Motorcycle Federation, said there was a "huge demand" for tickets, even at a time when travel remains difficult because of the pandemic.

Tickets are also not cheap, ranging between 2,000 Saudi riyals (\$533) and 35,000 Saudi

riyals (\$9,333). "We're expecting a huge turnout, especially from Europe and the United States," he told reporters. "The Formula One project has cost a lot, and it is standard that cost is compensated by the sale of tickets as well as other sources, including advertisements and local sponsors."

The conservative kingdom has frequently been accused of 'sportswashing' after it began hosting a series of high-profile competitions. Saudi Arabia already hosts the Dakar Rally, the all-electric Formula E series, in addition to top boxing, golf and tennis events. Formula One has come under close scrutiny over the staging of a race in Bahrain, and the addition of Saudi Arabia is sure to escalate criticism from human rights watchers. The Saudi Arabian Grand Prix will be the penultimate event of the 22-race calendar for 2021 which concludes in Abu Dhabi, in Gulf neighbor the United Arab Emirates. —AFP



JEDDAH: Photo shows a view of the Jeddah Street Circuit in the Red Sea Port city, ahead of the penultimate Saudi Arabian Grand Prix. —AFP

News in brief

Ballon d'Or in Nov

PARIS: Football's prestigious Ballon d'Or will be awarded on November 29 in Paris, event organizer France Football magazine announced yesterday. The nominees for the awards, which include men's and women's player of the year, best young player and best goalkeeper, will be announced on October 8. Six-time winner Lionel Messi and Megan Rapinoe won the awards the last time they were held in 2019. Last year's event was cancelled because of the coronavirus pandemic. While upstaged recently by FIFA's own awards, the Ballon d'Or, whose first recipient was Stanley Matthews in 1956, remains one of the most coveted individual awards in football. —AFP

Spain lifts stadium ban

MADRID: Spanish football clubs will be allowed to open their stadiums up to 100 percent capacity from this weekend after national restrictions brought in to combat the COVID-19 pandemic were lifted yesterday. Local restrictions, however, remain in place which is likely to prevent cash-strapped Barcelona from throwing their doors fully open just yet. The measures will run until the end of October when they will be re-assessed. However, other measures, such as the obligation to wear a mask and to respect a distance of 1.5 meters (five feet) between each person, have been kept in place which logically compromises the notion of matches taking place in full stadiums. —AFP

Arsenal's Xhaka out

LONDON: Arsenal said yesterday midfielder Granit Xhaka has been ruled out for up to three months after suffering a knee injury during the weekend's north London derby win against Tottenham. Xhaka was injured in a collision with Lucas Moura after the Tottenham forward had been challenged by Thomas Partey. The Swiss international limped off and could now miss the rest of 2021 after a specialist examined the injury. Sunday was Xhaka's first game back following a three-match ban for a red card in the 5-0 thrashing at Manchester City before the international break. As well as being suspended, Xhaka has only recently recovered after testing positive for the coronavirus. —AFP

Cardinals book wild card spot

LOS ANGELES: The St Louis Cardinals beat the Milwaukee Brewers 6-2 on Tuesday in front of a crowd of 35,700 at Busch Stadium in downtown St Louis, to clinch a spot in the National League wild card game and extend their team-record winning streak to 17 games. Pitcher Adam Wainwright recorded his 17th win of the season for St Louis, whose streak is the longest in Major League Baseball since Cleveland won 22 consecutive games in 2017. The Cardinals will play in the wild-card game against either the Los Angeles Dodgers or the San Francisco Giants. —AFP

Pakistan's cricket chief quits weeks after tour chaos

KARACHI: The chief executive of the Pakistan Cricket Board resigned yesterday, two weeks after New Zealand and England abandoned tours of the South Asian nation over security concerns. Wasim Khan - who has been credited for reviving Pakistan's international cricket after a 2009 terror attack on the Sri Lankan team

sent the country into isolation for years - gave no reason for quitting.

"When I arrived in 2019, there was a real need to build relationships and restore and enhance the global image and reputation of the PCB and Pakistan cricket," he said at an emergency meeting according to a statement released by the PCB yesterday. "With decisive and strategic decision-making, we succeeded in earning the goodwill and respect of the global cricketing family, which I am hopeful will lead to increased international cricket being hosted in Pakistan in future."

Khan added it was "hugely satisfying" to see the resumption of Test cricket, which has includ-

Holdings Palmeiras into Copa Libertadores final

BELO HORIZONTE, Brazil: Defending champions Palmeiras booked their place in the final of the Copa Libertadores on Tuesday, securing a battling 1-1 against Brazilian rivals Atletico Mineiro to advance on away goals. A second-half equaliser from winger Dudu cancelled out Atletico Mineiro's opener from Chilean international Eduardo Silva to send Palmeiras through to the November 27 final of South American club football's showpiece tournament.

After the first leg in Sao Paulo ended 0-0 last week, Atletico Mineiro appeared poised to make home advantage count in Tuesday's return leg at Belo Horizonte's Mineirao Stadium. But it was Palmeiras who came closest to scoring in a dour first half, the striker springing the offside trap in the second minute to test Atletico goalkeeper Everson with a fierce strike. Atletico's best chance came on 25 minutes when Joaquin Piquerez latched on to a long ball forward and sent a shot whistling past the post.

The encounter exploded into life in the second half however with Atletico's former Brazil international striker Hulk forcing a fine save from Weverton. At the other end, a swift Palmeiras counter-attack saw Everson rescue Atletico once again from Rony's well-struck effort. The opening goal came on 52 minutes, when Jair found space down the right flank and crossed into the six-yard area for Vargas to head home for 1-0.

The goal heralded a period of dominance for Atletico, and Vargas missed a golden opportunity



BELO HORIZONTE: Palmeiras' goalkeeper stops a ball during the all-Brazilian Copa Libertadores semifinal second leg football match against Atletico Mineiro, at the Mineirao stadium in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, on September 28, 2021. —AFP

to make it 2-0 on 56 minutes, playing a deft 1-2 to split the Palmeiras defense only to shoot wide. Three minutes later Palmeiras almost grabbed an equalizer, with Rony capitalizing on a defensive lapse by Nathan Da Silva only to drag his shot past the upright. That was Rony's final contribution of the game, with the striker departing for 19-year-old Gabriel Veron.

The teenaged substitute made an instant impact, using his pace and athleticism to reach

the byline and squaring for Dudu to make it 1-1 on 68 minutes. That goal proved decisive and Atletico were unable to find the winner against a resolute Palmeiras. Palmeiras - bidding to become the first back-to-back winners of the Copa Libertadores since Boca Juniors in 2000-2001 - will play either Brazilian club Flamengo or Ecuador's Barcelona SC in the final. Flamengo lead that semi-final tie 3-1 heading into Wednesday's second leg. —AFP

Spurs bid to bounce back as free-scoring Roma head to Ukraine

LONDON: Tottenham host Slovenians Mura in the Europa Conference League today looking for a confidence boost after a worrying slump in form, while their former manager Jose Mourinho takes his free-scoring Roma side to Zorya Luhansk. Spurs kicked off the Premier League season under Nuno Espirito Santo with three straight 1-0 wins, but have since suffered three successive defeats, shipping nine goals in the process. Their tame defeats by London rivals Crystal Palace, Chelsea and Arsenal have raised questions about new manager Nuno.

Harry Kane is yet to score in five league games since failing to force through a close-season move to Manchester City. "The performance was not good. The game plan was not good. The decisions were not good," former Wolves boss Nuno admitted after the chastening 3-1 derby loss to Arsenal on Sunday. Spurs are also in need of points in the inaugural Conference League after opening the group stage with a 2-2 draw at Rennes.

Anything other than victory against Mura, who sit fifth in the Slovenian top flight, would see Nuno and his side come under more scrutiny before this weekend's game against Aston Villa. Spurs, without a trophy since 2008, parted ways with Mourinho shortly before last season's League Cup final loss to Manchester City. But the Portuguese has enjoyed a strong start to life with Roma, despite suffering a 3-2 loss to Lazio in last week's derby clash.

Often criticized by Spurs fans for his perceived negative style of play, Mourinho has seen his Roma team score 24 goals in only nine matches this term. He will be looking for a reaction from his side against Luhansk, though, after



LONDON: Tottenham Hotspur's Portuguese head coach Nuno Espirito Santo gestures on the touchline during the English Premier League football match in London. —AFP

railing against refereeing decisions in the Lazio loss. "The referee and VAR weren't up to the standards of a match of this level," he said. Mourinho, a two-time Champions League-winning coach, now finds himself managing in the far less glamorous third-tier Conference League. But Roma sent out a statement of intent last time out in Europe as a strong side thumped CSKA Sofia 5-1.

Celtic seek consistency
Scottish giants Celtic have endured a difficult campaign so far despite some sparkling home displays under Ange Postecoglou. They welcome Bayern Leverkusen to Parkhead after slipping to a 4-3 loss to Real Betis in their Europa League group-stage opener. A strong start to the

season at home has provided respite, but Celtic were held by Dundee United at the weekend in Glasgow to fall six points behind reigning Scottish Premiership champions Rangers.

A win over Bundesliga side Leverkusen would lift some of the gloom over the Hoops, after they were booed off by their own fans on Sunday. Steven Gerrard's Rangers need a positive result at Sparta Prague to boost their hopes of reaching the knockout stage for the third consecutive season after losing to Lyon. Lyon play Brondby at the Groupama Stadium in the other Group A encounter. Elsewhere, in-form West Ham host Rapid Vienna and Leicester visit Legia Warsaw. —AFP

ed recent tours by South Africa, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Zimbabwe. But Pakistan is again facing cricketing isolation after New Zealand called off their first tour of the country in 18 years earlier this month over security concerns.

Their decision was swiftly followed by England's cancellation of a planned tour in October. "(The) Pakistan Cricket Board today confirmed Wasim Khan has tendered his resignation as chief executive," the PCB said in the statement. The PCB's board of governors later met by videoconference during which they unanimously accepted the resignation. Khan, who is British with Pakistani heritage, was hired on a three-year contract in 2019 and had organized Pakistan's

tours of England and then New Zealand amid severe COVID-19 restrictions last year.

The first British Muslim to play county cricket in England, he had reported run-ins with former PCB chairman Ehsan Mani, who he accused of stopping him from working freely. Pakistan was forced to play its home matches at neutral venues in the United Arab Emirates after the terrorist attacks on the Sri Lankan team bus in 2009. Security in the country has improved dramatically over the past few years, but militant groups still operate along the border with Afghanistan. Pakistan has only hosted South Africa, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Zimbabwe since the 2009 attacks. —AFP

Sports

Messi makes PSG statement as 'crazy' Sheriff shock Madrid

Atletico edge Milan; Inter still searching for first win

PARIS: Lionel Messi opened his Paris Saint-Germain account as the French side beat Manchester City while new boys Sheriff Tiraspol shocked Real Madrid in the Champions League on Tuesday. Messi's top-corner finish added to Idrissa Gueye's first half goal as PSG moved top of Group A with the 2-0 win over last year's runners up.

Pep Guardiola's side hit the bar twice in the first half with Portugal playmaker Bernardo Silva failing to score two meters out with PSG goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma helplessly on the ground. "The important thing was to win, against an immense opponent, one of the contenders for the trophy," Messi told broadcaster Canal+. "I had only played here (Parc des Princes) once, but little by little I'm adapting and integrating to the team," he added.

In Group D, Sheriff, playing in just their second ever game in the group stage of the competition, upset record 13-time winners Real Madrid 2-1 in the Spanish capital. Uzbekistan winger Jasur Jakhshibaev put the Moldovans in the lead before the half hour mark as Karim Benzema equalized after 65 minutes to score for a 17th different season in the competition, a feat only also achieved by 34-year-old Messi.

But the hero for Sheriff, who are based in the region of Transnistria on the Moldovan-Ukrainian border, was Luxembourg attacking midfielder Sebastian Thill. The 27-year-old Thill fired home a sublime half volley with 62 seconds of regular time remaining at the Santiago Bernabeu two week after Sheriff had beaten Shakhtar Donetsk earlier in the month in their opening group game.

"After this match we all went crazy. There are a lot of foreigners in the club, we come from all types of

countries. It's our strength," Thill told Canal+. "We played both matches to 100 percent. We're all happy now," he added.

Madrid's Casemiro rued his side's lack of efficiency in front of Sheriff's Greek goalkeeper Georgios Athanasiadis. "It's football, we had 20 shots or more and we scored one, they had two shots scored both," he told Movistar+. "We have to pay more



Liverpool put on 5-1 clinic

attention, especially defensively. We started well, we had total control of the game, we had opportunities to get ahead, but they scored a great goal at the end," he added. Earlier in the group, Serie A champions Inter Milan remain winless in Europe this season following the 0-0 draw at Shakhtar. Ukrainian Oleksandr Usyk was a spectator in Kiev days after beating Anthony Joshua on points to become just the third boxer to win both the cruiserweight and heavyweight world titles.

Salah, Firmino doubles

In Group B, Mohamed Salah and Roberto Firmino scored twice as Liverpool hammered Porto 5-1 and Luis Suarez claimed a 97th-minute winner



PARIS: (From left) Paris Saint-Germain's forwards Lionel Messi, Neymar and Kylian Mbappe celebrate at the end of their team's UEFA Champions League first round group A football match against Manchester City at The Parc des Princes stadium in Paris on Tuesday. — AFP

as Atletico Madrid edged AC Milan 2-1 in Italy. Jurgen Klopp's side wore black armbands after former Liverpool striker Roger Hunt died earlier in the day aged 83.

Milan played an hour with 10-man after Franck Kessie's red card, and the seven-time European champions were unable to claim a first win in the competition since 2013. Earlier, Ivory Coast striker Sebastien Haller took his tally to 10 goals in as many games this season as Ajax beat Besiktas 2-0

to stay top of Group C in the Champions League on Tuesday.

Netherlands winger Donyell Malen also scored for his new club as Borussia Dortmund overcame Sporting Lisbon 1-0 and trail the Dutch champions on goal difference. American Jesse Marsch lost his fifth game in nine matches in charge of RB Leipzig in the 2-1 home defeat to Club Brugge. Leipzig face a tough ask to reach the last 16 in a group alongside PSG and City. — AFP

Sheriff fire shot for less 'Super' clubs at Madrid

MADRID: Sheriff Tiraspol said they had not been overawed on their first trip to the mighty Real Madrid — and proved it by winning 2-1 late on in one of the biggest upsets in Champions League history. With all the talk of a European Super League for the elite, the minnows from the Moldovan league gave a timely reminder of the appeal of open competition.

"We came here to win," said Frank Castaneda, the Sheriff captain. "We didn't just come here to sit around. We know how good our players are and luckily for us Madrid weren't able to take their chances — and we took ours."

For Sheriff this was only a second match in the Champions League group stage and the estimated value of their entire squad is 12 million euros, about the same as the annual salary of Madrid defender David Alaba. Real dominated but Sheriff scored two excellent goals and had a third disallowed for offside, and now

have six points out of six.

Sebastian Thill, who has a tattoo of himself dreaming of playing in the Champions League, smashed in the winner in the 89th minute. "It's the best and most important goal of my career, that's for sure," Thill said. "The side were so brave with how we played and luckily enough I was able to score a bit of a stunner."

Florentino Perez, the Real Madrid president, has said he struggles to get interested in Champions League group games and he might have wished he had missed this one. Perez is one of the staunchest advocates of the aborted European Super League. But on the same day UEFA agreed to drop sanctions against the 12 clubs involved in the project, Sheriff reminded everyone that it's not just about the perceived big boys.

The Super League was intended to put an end to seemingly unbalanced matchups like these — and the occasional shock that comes with them — leaving a competition only for a self-selected elite. "It's football, we had 20 shots or more and we scored one, they had two shots, scored both," Real's Casemiro told Movistar+. "We have to pay more attention, especially defensively. We started well, we had

total control of the game, we had opportunities to get ahead, but they scored a great goal at the end."

'We all went crazy'

The romance of Sheriff's success is questionable given the club is owned by a conglomerate, called Sheriff, which effectively runs the pro-Russian separatist state of Transnistria, where the football club is based. Yet it is hard to begrudge players like Thill their moment of glory.

"After this match we all went crazy. There are a lot of foreigners in the club, we come from all types of countries. It's our strength," said Thill, who last season was playing on loan at FC Tambov in Russia, a club that was dissolved in May and had to declare itself bankrupt.

For Real Madrid, the path to the last 16 is still open, which points to the real weakness of the current Champions League: the format, not the teams involved. The biggest clubs rarely fail to get through to the last 16 and a few shock results can easily be absorbed. "We've missed out on three points and the group is wide open. We need to win our next game," said Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti, adding: "It's small details that cost us this game." Real have been scoring plenty of goals and



MADRID: Sheriff's players celebrate their second goal during their team's UEFA Champions League first round group D football match against Real Madrid at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid on Tuesday. — AFP

playing an exciting style of football since Ancelotti's return but he has complained about the defense, which was again caught napping.

For Sheriff, up next in the Champions League are Inter Milan, with qualification

now very achievable in Group D, where they sit top. "We aren't thinking about the last 16 yet as we still haven't done anything extraordinary, we're just going forward step by step," said Sheriff coach Yuriy Vemydub. — AFP

Klopp expects goal spree to end against Manchester City

LONDON: Jurgen Klopp admits he fears Liverpool's goal spree will come to an end in Sunday's Premier League showdown with Manchester City. Klopp's side crushed Porto 5-1 in the Champions League on Tuesday as Mohamed Salah and Roberto Firmino each netted twice in Portugal and Sadio Mane also scored.

It was the sixth successive match that Liverpool had scored three or more goals, only the third time in the club's history the feat has been achieved. They have scored 20 times in 17 days and have 26 goals in their first nine fixtures to equal a club record for a top-flight campaign set in 1922 and replicated only one other time in the 2016-2017 season. But Reds boss Klopp knows it will not be so easy to run riot when Pep Guardiola's Premier League champions visit Anfield this weekend.

"We play against Man City, I don't think now it makes too much sense to think too much about how many goals we can score against them," Klopp said. "We need a complex and complete

performance against them to have a chance only and that's it. But I'm really looking forward to it. I'm looking forward to playing at home again after a while. We have two days more (than the three Liverpool had between Brentford and Porto) to the City game, which will be helpful, and then we will be fresh again and then give it a go."

Liverpool are the Premier League's leading scorers with 15, but City, who have already scored five against Norwich and Arsenal, are not far behind and defensively they have conceded just once. City secured their first win at Anfield since 2003 last season with a 4-1 victory in front of an empty ground during Liverpool's run of six suc-

cessive home defeats.

But Liverpool are on an 18-match unbeaten run and Brazil midfielder Fabinho believes the win over Porto was just the confidence boost they needed before facing City, who lost to Paris Saint-Germain on Tuesday.

"A performance like this just gives us more confidence for the future," Fabinho said. "The next game is against Manchester City at Anfield, so we know Anfield will have a really nice atmosphere. These are the kind of games every player likes to play. We just have to play our football, to give everything and we know the fans will be with us." — AFP

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Sabah Hospital	24812000	Kaifan	24849807
Amiri Hospital	22450005	Shamiya	24848913
Maternity Hospital	24843100	Shuwaikh	24814507
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700	Abdullah Salem	22549134
Chest Hospital	24849400	Nuzha	22526804
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010	Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Adan Hospital	23940620	Qadsiya	22515088
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300		Dasmah
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000	22532265	
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9	Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
		Shaab	22518752
		Qibla	22459381
		Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
		Mirqab	22456536
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LAS VEGAS: This file photo taken on August 21, 2021 shows Manny Pacquiao of the Philippines waving and bowing at the crowd after losing against Yordenis Ugas of Cuba following the WBA Welterweight Championship boxing match at T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas, Nevada. —AFP

Pacquiao retires with presidency in sights

Boxing icon hangs up gloves after illustrious 26-year career

MANILA: Philippine boxing legend and 2022 presidential hopeful Manny Pacquiao said yesterday that he is hanging up his gloves after a glittering decades-long career in the ring. The multi-division world champion and senator, who has his sights set on a high-stakes rumble to replace President Rodrigo Duterte, said quitting the sport that lifted him out of poverty was the “hardest decision” of his life.

“It is difficult for me to accept that my time for me as a boxer is over,” the 42-year-old said in a video message on Twitter that quickly went viral. “Today I am announcing my retirement,” added Pacquiao, whose fights during his heyday stopped traffic in the Philippines — and even supposedly crime.

It comes weeks after Pacquiao, considered one of the best boxers of all time, lost what turned out to be his last professional fight, against Cuban Yordenis Ugas in Las Vegas. Pacquiao, who entered politics in 2010 as a congressman before being elected to the Senate, said last week that he will make a tilt for the country’s highest office.

Pacquiao, a married father of five, thanked his millions of fans around the world and paid special tribute to his long-time trainer Freddie Roach who he described as “my family, a brother and a friend”. The decision ends weeks of speculation that Pacquiao was planning to retire after 26 years as a professional boxer. He ended with a 62-8 win-loss record and two draws.

“He’s gonna go down as a legend of not just boxing but of the sporting world,” Ted Lerner, a US-born sports journalist in the Philippines, told AFP. “In the future... his name will be sort of synonymous with greatness, in the level of Michael Jordan or people who have transcended their sport and become like mythical legends.”

In the video message, Pacquiao said boxing had given him “the chance to fight my way out of poverty” and “the courage to change more lives”. “I will never forget what I have done and accomplished in my life. I can’t imagine I just heard the final bell,” said Pacquiao, who retired briefly in 2016 before reversing the decision.

Presidential ambitions

Pacquiao is idolized by many in the Philippines both for his punching power and rise from desperate street kid to the peak of boxing. He dropped out of high school at 14, sold doughnuts on the roadside and became a grocery store owner to help his mother support two younger siblings.

Within a few years, the diminutive southpaw was a pro boxer destined for the big time. News of his retirement was greeted with mixed feelings in his southern hometown of General Santos, where support for the boxer runs deep. “I am both happy and sad,” Anna Rodriguez, 24, told AFP. “I am happy because he will be able to spend more time with his family, but I’m also sad because he will no longer bring

pride to General Santos.”

Manila taxi driver Jerry Barilea told AFP it was the right time for Pacquiao to bow out. “He’s getting old, he really can’t do it anymore,” the 58-year-old said. As he prepares to register as a presidential candidate, Pacquiao has vowed to tackle poverty and corruption in a bid to win over voters with his rags-to-riches story.

After two terms as a congressman and one as a senator, Pacquiao’s ambition is not unrealistic in a country famed for its celebrity-obsessed politics. But victory is far from assured. Fans see Pacquiao as living proof that success is possible for anyone who works hard, no matter their origins.

But Pacquiao has stirred controversy as a politician, earning him plenty of detractors. Critics accuse the high-school dropout of lacking intellect and being a frequent no-show in the Senate, raising questions about his ability to run the country of 110 million people.

Less than a year out from the elections, Pacquiao has risked political capital in a public battle with Duterte, who rivals the boxer for the affections of many Filipinos and previously mentioned him as a possible successor.

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

Pacman: ‘The National Fist’ of Philippines

MANILA: Manny Pacquiao is idolized by many in the Philippines both for his punching power and rise from poverty to the peak of world sport. Now the man known at home as “The National Fist” wants to be his country’s next president, vowing to tackle corruption and help the poor as he seeks to win over voters with his rags-to-riches story.

After two terms as a congressman and one as a senator, his ambition is not unrealistic in a country famed for its celebrity-obsessed politics. Pacquiao dropped out of high school at 14, sold doughnuts on the roadside and became a grocery store owner to help his mother support two younger siblings. Within a few years, the diminutive southpaw was a pro boxer.

In the ring, he is a volume power puncher who uses lightning footwork to create angles with which to deliver flurries, the likes of which have felled Oscar de la Hoya, Ricky Hatton, Miguel Cotto, Erik Morales and Marco Antonio Barrera. He became an eight-division world champion and one of the best boxers ever, but age was catching up

with him. In what turned out to be his last professional fight, “Pacman” lost against Cuban Yordenis Ugas in Las Vegas last month — the eighth defeat of a glittering career spanning more than two decades.

Boxing bought him fame, power, influence and wealth, and with it, the vices: booze, gambling, cockfighting and romantic links to beautiful film stars that at one point nearly wrecked his marriage. But in 2012, Pacquiao, now a father of five, found religion and left his playboy lifestyle behind.

Pacquiao has also served as a celebrity endorser for products ranging from appliances to pizza and cars, hosted TV shows, starred in movies and had an improbable stint as a professional basketball player and coach. He launched a professional basketball league in 2017 and founded his own cryptocurrency, the “PAC Token”.

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

Next step: Presidency?

Victory in next year’s presidential election is far from assured. Fans see Pacquiao as living proof that success is possible for anyone who works hard, no matter their origins. But critics accuse



LAS VEGAS: This file photo taken on May 2, 2015 shows Floyd Mayweather Jr (left) exchanging punches with Manny Pacquiao during their welterweight unification championship bout, at MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas, Nevada. —AFP

the high-school dropout of lacking intellect and being a frequent no-show in the senate, raising questions about his ability to run the country of 110 million people.

Less than a year out from the elections, Pacquiao has risked political capital in a public joust with President Rodrigo Duterte, who rivals the boxer for the affections of many Filipinos and previously mentioned him as a possible successor.

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

A fervent evangelical Christian, Pacquiao has publicly opposed divorce, abortion and contraceptives, and has compared gay couples to animals — a slur that cost him a sponsorship deal with sportswear giant Nike. —AFP

Five great Manny Pacquiao fights

MANILA: Manny Pacquiao, the Philippine boxing icon who announced his retirement after 72 fights, was involved in some spectacular bouts during his sparkling career. AFP Sport highlights five of the best involving the boxing legend.

De La Hoya destroyed

Opponent: Oscar De La Hoya, December 6, 2008, Las Vegas

Pacquiao bulked up to step up to the welterweight class and utterly punished Oscar De La Hoya, the lightning-quick Filipino leaving the face of the golden boy of American boxing disfigured with ugly swelling. By the seventh round it was a one-way affair, and after one more round, De La Hoya’s corner signaled to the referee that he wanted no more of it.

Hatton humbled

Ricky Hatton, May 2, 2009, Las Vegas

The plucky Briton charged into Pacquiao from the opening bell, in the process walking into an ambush that led to two knockdowns in the first round alone of the International Boxing Organization super lightweight title showdown. Late in the second, a Pacquiao left hook rocked Hatton’s chin and sent him straight into dreamland in what was arguably the most spectacular of the Filipino’s 39 wins ended in knockout.

Cotto cut down

Miguel Cotto, November 14, 2009, Las Vegas

Pacquiao dropped Cotto with a right hook in the third and the bigger Puerto Rican would hit the canvas again in the fourth, but was saved by the bell. By the ninth round of the welterweight world title bout, blood spurted from Cotto’s face. The referee stopped the contest early in the 12th round to save Cotto from more punishment.

Mangled Margarito

Antonio Margarito, November 13, 2010, Arlington, Texas

The US-born Mexican towered over the Filipino but was utterly destroyed over 12 lopsided rounds in the fight for the vacant World Boxing Council super welterweight crown. In the end, his face bruised and bloodied, Margarito was taken to hospital and later had surgery for a broken right orbital bone.

Magical Marquez

Juan Manuel Marquez, December 8, 2012, Las Vegas

The fourth and final showdown against his great Mexican rival was a brutal slugfest that ended with Pacquiao falling like a log face-first onto the canvas just before the end of the sixth round. Knocked down in the third round, Pacquiao came back in the fifth, breaking the Mexican’s nose and sending him to the canvas in what was probably the best round of the Filipino’s career. But the bloodied Marquez had the last laugh with a sixth-round sucker punch to send Pacquiao to a stunning, second loss in a row. —AFP