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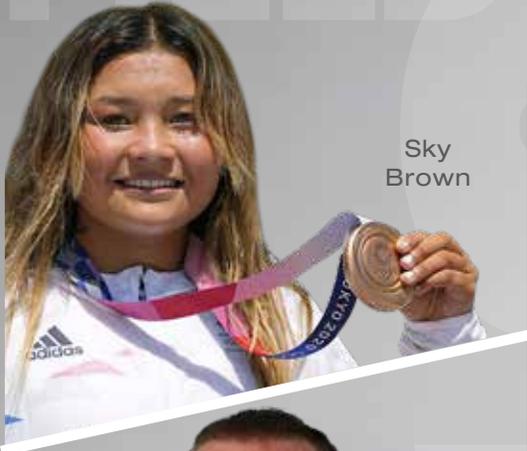


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exchange for moon mission contract

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through Barcelona

FIELD OF DREAMS



Sky
Brown

FIELD OF DREAMS



Wayne
Rooney



Tom
Daley



Kate
Haywood



Eleanor
Robinson



Phil
Foden



Kare
Adenegan



Claudia
Fragpane



Andrea
Spadolini



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Dubois



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Wind of Change

The year 2021 will be etched in history for several turbulent reasons. But amid all the dismay, the world would always remember the light shone by sportspersons. From braving the pandemic for participating in the Tokyo Olympics to standing up for oneself, sportspersons showed true grit. Sportsmanship found itself donning an entirely new meaning, a hugely surprising and undeniably shocking one this year. Elite sportspersons realised that it was about time they stood up for themselves and opened up about mental health like a 'true sport'. Constant scrutiny from the press and pressure to give their best all the time wears out most of them. Even greater is the pressure to keep their weaknesses out of the field, away from their opponents.

It was ace tennis player Naomi Osaka's decision to no longer participate in post-match press conferences that got the discussion fired up. While

the world applauded her gutsy move, she was fined for her actions which led her to withdraw from the French Open this year. Osaka's decision inspired yet another young and promising sports person, Simone Biles. As Biles opened up about her mental health, dropped out of her team and pulled out of the Olympics, the world watched in confusion. This was something yesteryear Olympians could not imagine pulling off from, something that they associated with lack of team spirit and even unpatriotic. Many registered their disappointment at young sportspersons, who according to them were openly "flaunting" their weaknesses, but others sat in awe as Biles said "I have to do what's right for me and focus on my mental health and not jeopardise my health and well-being. That's why I decided to take a step back."

English cricket player and all-rounder Ben Stokes, is yet another player who announced that he would be taking an indefinite and immediate break

from cricket. Stokes who was the player of the match when England won the World Cup in 2019 decided to give precedence to his mental wellbeing.

All these players could have easily cited physical reasons to step down; they, however, chose to remain true to themselves, their fans and did not shy away from speaking about the emotional turmoil that goes on behind the very disciplined and public life they are leading.

However, this is not the first time sportspersons opened up about their mental wellbeing or the lack of it that came with the life and career they chose, but this is the first time it was taken note of in such a manner. This was one of those rare occasions when the world agreed that it is alright for sportspersons to take breaks or give up. This is a much-needed wind of change.

EDITORIAL TEAM

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Weaving A Holistic Approach Of Growth Towards Child Prodigies In Sports

Sky is the limit - Sky Brown

Brown became the youngest participant from the Great Britain, who made every citizen's head high with pride by winning the bronze medal



Being a British-Japanese skateboarder, 13-year-old Sky Brown could have represented either one of the two countries at the Tokyo Olympics, but when Team Great Britain put forth a proposal to join and just dive in to have fun, she instantly chose to seize the moment. At the Olympics this year, Brown became the

youngest participant from the Great Britain, who made every citizen's head high with pride by winning the bronze medal.

When the first Olympic qualifier happened at California in the year 2019, she was just 10, and it was just a week before that a minor accident left her with a broken arm. However, that seldom became a stumbling block for Sky, and with a pink cast on

her arm, coupled with steadfastness that could leave anyone in awe of her dedication, rather than just making her participation, she made sure to come first too. That said, a mishap happened again in May last year, leaving multiple injuries to her skull, arm and hand, but for the tenacious player that she has been, Brown bounced back to the extent that she put her best foot forward at the Summer Olympics.

Here is a low-down on the British players, who made a mark, while still being the youngest among the lot at renowned sports events over the years →

'The Wonder Boy' - Wayne Rooney

Rooney's performances over time were so stellar that it overpowered Steven Gerrard as England Captain in the year 2014



When Wayne Rooney marked his debut as a football player at the age of 17 in 2003, it was as if he proclaimed through his performances that, 'He came, he saw, he conquered'. And staying true to these lines, he always made sure

he delivered, to eventually become England's record goalscorer.

He went on to showcase his verve at three World Cups and two European Championships. His performances over time were stellar to the extent that it overpowered Steven Gerrard as England Captain in the year 2014. He succeeded Sir Bobby Charlton as the

team's top scorer of all-time in 2015, coupled with and achievement of surpassing David Beckham as the most capped outfield player.

Rooney announced a much early retirement from international football on August 23, 2017. Today, he is the manager of the English Football League Championship club Derby County.

Diving Star – Tom Baley

Tom Daley has shown his brilliance through the gold medals he won for England at the 2010 Commonwealth Games



Tom Daley, a British diver and prominent LGBT icon, made headlines this year, after being spotted knitting in the stands at the women's 3m springboard final during this Olympics. While the world was trying to make sense of what and why he was knitting, it almost

seemed like he was prepping up to wear the Cardigan he would finish to celebrate his first gold medal he later clinched alongside Matty Lee in the synchronised 10m platform event final. However, his journey of diving goes back to the time when he developed an inclination towards the same at the age of seven.

He then represented Great Britain at the 2008 Summer Olympics, being the youngest participant at the age of 14. He also topped the divings ranking in the FINA World Aquatics Championships for the 10m platform. Daley also showed his brilliance through the gold medals he won for England at the 2010 Commonwealth Games.

Making Waves - Kate Haywood

With a finesse in breaststroke swimming, she was the youngest player at the age of 15, to represent England at the 2002 Commonwealth Games in Manchester



Kate Haywood, former elite British swimmer made her presence felt everywhere, be it FINA world championships, European championships, Commonwealth Games or the Summer Olympics. With a finesse in breaststroke swimming, she was the youngest player at the age

of 15, to represent England at the 2002 Commonwealth Games in Manchester. She went on to win a bronze medal in the 4*100m medley relay. She also clinched a gold medal in the 50m breaststroke at the European Junior Championships. Health issues prompted her to give her Olympic debut in Athens in 2004 a miss. She came back almost four years later at the Beijing Summer

Olympics in 2008, giving her best and finished fourth. Haywood returned with a banger winning a bronze medal at the 50- and 100-metre breaststroke at the 2010 Commonwealth Games held in India. After announcing retirement from swimming, she is now setting fitness goals to aspirants through her venture named Straightline Fitness.

The 'Gangsta Swagger' - Eleanor Robinson

After competing in SB6 and S6 classification events, she now holds the World record in the 100m butterfly and the Paralympic record in the S6 50m butterfly category



Eleanor Robinson, an English swimmer, has been defying stereotypes of age and body images through her effortless talent in swimming. And all of this grit and talent came at a very young age of 13 in Ellie as she is called. After competing in SB6 and S6 classification events, she now holds the World record in the

100m butterfly and the Paralympic record in the S6 50m butterfly. In 2016, she fetched four medals at the IPC Swimming European Championships. This winning streak remained intact at the Rio Paralympics in 2016, with a gold medal in the women's S6 50m butterfly event and a bronze medal in the women's S6 100m freestyle event. That said, she has been noted for her "gangsta swagger" image,

highlighting the dramatic entry she makes before belting it out, mostly wearing an oversized coat with its hood up. The 2018 Commonwealth Games saw Robinson striking gold at the women's S7 50m butterfly event, and at the World Para Swimming European Championships in Dublin. She also won the women's S6 50m butterfly gold surpassing Nicole Turner and Oksana Khrul.

'A Special Player' - Phil Foden

Phil Foden made his quantum leap in the domain of professional football in 2017, after leaving a strong imprint through the Under-17 World Cup performance



Phil Foden, English footballer and midfielder for Manchester City and the national team, has been a prodigy in the true sense of the word.

He made his quantum leap in the domain of professional football in 2017, after leaving a strong imprint through the Under-17 World Cup performance to later receive the

FIFA U-17 World Cup Golden Ball award. Foden has till now made more than 100 appearances for the club, at the same time won eight honours, which include being the youngest recipient of the winners' medal of a Premier League.

Ever since sashaying into international sports, aficionados were always treated with consistent spurts of his purple patch. After winning a second Premier League,

he was the club's youngest goalscorer in the UEFA Champions League.

It was on August 2020 that he was roped in by manager Gareth Southgate in the England senior team for the first time. After being withdrawn from the same for breaching COVID protocols on June this year, he was again included in the 26-man squad for the revamped UEFA EURO 2020.

Beyond Barriers - Kare Adenegan

Kare Adenegan got her first gold medal in senior competition and silver in the 80 metres category in Para World European Athletics Championships in Berlin.



British wheelchair Kare Adnegan took to wheelchair racing at the age of 11, deriving inspiration from the achievements of her icon Hannah Cockroft at the London 2012 Paralympics. As fate would have it, four years later at the age of 15, Kare was racing ahead of her role model Hannah Cockroft at

the Rio 2016 Paralympics. And, she won a silver and two bronze medals behind Hannah.

She set a new record in 2018, when she broke the T34, women's 100 metres world record at the London Mueller Anniversary Diamond League overpowering Cockroft for half a second. With this, she marked another milestone – a championship

record of 17.34 seconds. Adnegan got her first gold medal in senior competition and silver in the 80 metres category in Para World European Athletics Championships in Berlin. Adenegan, who is juggling between sports and studies for graduation in History, would be awaiting the Commonwealth Games in 2022, after proving her mettle in Paralympics 2022.

'Pocket Rocket' - Claudia Fragpane

Claudia Fragpane had her first moment of fame at the 2014 Commonwealth Games, becoming the first English woman to win four gold medals since 1930



At the young age of 17, Claudia Fragpane, a British artistic gymnast, had her first moment of fame at the 2014 Commonwealth Games, becoming the first English woman to win four gold medals since 1930. She was almost named the queen of British gymnastics at that time. She was on board the Great

Britain women's team, clinching the country's first ever team medal through a bronze at the World Artistic Gymnastics Championships. The year 2016 did not see any major feat at the Rio Olympics, leaving her to miss out on a place in final. Her next major accomplishment came in 2019, at the British Championships. She participated on uneven bars, balance beam and floor exercise.

She finished fourth at the finals on uneven bars and second on floor exercise, behind Ellie Downie. Her unique traits and skills have won her the nickname 'Pocket Rocket'. Fragpane had also worn her dancing shoes at the reality show *Strictly Come Dancing* in 2016, and finished fourth in the competition making her the first female Olympic gymnast to participate on such a show.

Shining 'Star'- Andrea Spendolini

With her steely attitude towards diving and relentless efforts, Andrea Spendolini could be the next big thing for Team Great Britain



Sixteen-year-old Andrea Spendolini- Serieix, the young British diver is also the proud daughter of French maître d'hôtel Fred Serieix of *First Dates* and *Million Pound Menu* fame.

She won a solo gold at the British Diving Championships in the

Women's 10m Platform competition in 2020. In a few days, she won another gold medal at the FINA Grand Prix. She won a score of 76.80 on her final dive to come up with a cumulative number of 330.50.

The young bundle of talent clinched a silver medal in May this year, along with Noah Williams in the 10m mixed

synchro event and a bronze in solo 10m platform at the 2020 European Aquatics Championships.

Spendolini made it to the semi-finals at the Olympics this year, however, fell short of a medal. That said, with her steely attitude towards diving and relentless efforts, she could be the next big thing for Team Great Britain. ●

Breaking Gender Stereotypes - Caroline Dubois

Bring the younger sister of champion Daniel Dubois, Caroline Dubois clearly indicates that boxing runs in her blood



Boxer Caroline Dubois, at 20, has already multiple titles to her credit, which includes Youth Olympic Champion, World Youth Champion and four-time European Youth Champion. Being the younger sister of champion Daniel Dubois, it clearly indicates that boxing runs in her blood. The vivid memory of her getting into

the robe of an imaginative identity called 'Collin' to get a taste of boxing in a gym filled with men shows her zest for the same. She defeated Nune Asatrian at the 2017 European Junior Championships.

The duo met for another duel in 2018, where Asatrian was meted out with the same fate by the dynamic Dubois as she became the country's first World Youth Champion. The

Summer Youth Olympics in 2018 saw her winning a gold medal in the Girls' lightweight competition.

The next year too fetched her win at the 2019 European Youth Championships before embarking on the Summer Olympics this year. She represented Team GB until the quarter final and put up a tough fight before losing out to Sudaporn Seesondee of Thailand.



Sunny Side

The fact that most players start off young in the sports arena catapults them to the fame, equipping themselves with learning, right resources and training from the masters. Though starting early on might expose them to a mix of triumphant and tumbling experiences, it gives them precision as to what they are good at and what they are not, where they want to channelise themselves and highlights their core strengths. This would provide the right hand-holding so that when they are at the prime, they would have already landed themselves at the echelons in sports. The experience helps set a paradigm in their career graph appropriately.

Flip Side

As most of the players set out on their journey in their teens, one is prompted to draw parallels with the shaky grounds of those stars in the entertainment industry who have been clothed in fame and glory as child artists. However, all the persistence, pressure and fame might come with a lot of baggages for a few, as it tends to unearth themselves from the simple joys of childhood or adolescence to place themselves on the boiling and testing ground of their mettle. It might take them on a trajectory, when it comes to not getting the chance to enjoy the bliss of each stage of their life and to be imposed with an early adulthood. When one takes off the personal leaf, the healthy nourishment of their mental health somehow gets pushed to the back seat, and the likes of singing icon Britney Spears is the best example of how the premature and constant race for stardom, pressure and dosh then on might leave them scarred for life.

Weaving A Holistic Approach Of Growth Towards Child Prodigies In Sports



The long awaited Tokyo Olympics, suspended for a year, finally saw the light of the day on July 23 this year fighting all odds, with equal pomp and fervour in the pandemic era. The sports spectacle treated aficionados with an array of moments of jubilation and the many heart-warming moments from the event triumphed in restoring faith in humanity, companionship, love and forging happiness in the times of uncertainties. From initiating a discussion on the importance of mental health after American

gymnast Simone Biles made a gracious exit from the events, New Zealand weightlifter Laurel Hubbard being the first openly transgender woman competing in Olympics, Jamaican sprinter Elaine Thompson-Herah putting years-long speculation and naysayers to rest, to Italy's Gianmarco Tamberi and Mutaz Barshim from Qatar setting new friendship goals by sharing the gold medal in the men's high jump, each day imparted the viewers with a heartening handful of life lessons.

LGBT icon and diving champion Tom Daley from the Great Britain

captured umpteen hearts, both on and off his performance platform, as he took to knitting a sweater and even completed, as a preparatory adornment for the gold medal he was to attain alongside Matty Lee. This year's Olympics was all about defying notions and stereotypes and with that would be added the names of 12-year-old Syrian table tennis player Hend Zaza, who became the youngest player to compete at the Tokyo Olympics and Sky Brown, aged 13, clinching the bronze medal for Team Great Britain in Skateboarding. While these young talents' achievements have



Representative image www.freepik.com

surely laid open an early platform for them to work harder and shine brighter in the years to come and has redefined that age is after all just a number. It also brings alive a fresh debate about whether the premature achievements pave the way to a sound road of personal evolution for every young achiever of the same age. It also makes one ponder about the pressures that they are likely to be imposed with in the name of glory and fame. Will this lead to young talented children, who have made a representation in major events as this, to be bogged down by societal pressure and succumb to this rat race, where only winning matters?

Most times, once a parent tends to identify the potential in a child, it gets them elated, following which their initial vision of refinement or betterment of the skills in their child

gradually becomes warped in the form of overzealous parenting. Taking every prominent Olympic athlete, who have made a mark, as example, each of their itineraries would have definitely started early on in their lives. And, the amount of pressure from coaches, parents and sports associations they might have been subjected to as a person and as a sports player would be immense. The strenuous training they often go through might push their personal mental growth and pursuit of equipoise to the backseat. The constant brouhaha revolving around success continue to constantly hover over their mind that it prompts one to brood about the importance of taking a pause for the sake of achieving a personal milestone, which is as important as a professional or academic achievement.

When it comes to amateur sport, what keeps most kids and the people they are surrounded with driven is the constant pressure to succeed. On the contrary, when it is the question of professional sports the aspirations are often clothed in commercial interest, the monetary gains and the fame. That is the clout that the arena of professional sports hold.

A young child with a potential is often being encouraged, keeping their idea of promoting them in mind at the young stage. For a few young players, it could be a reflection of the mirage that their parents or people close to them have delved on and were left with having their goals unachieved as sports players themselves. That is when it becomes a vicious pattern and the years of trauma, frustrations and



Representative image www.freepik.com

even obsession might be transferred from one generation to another, leaving the young sports player, who the society often fails to see as still a child, at loss on a personal note.

This makes a discourse on raising the age for competitions in such renowned sports events an imperative one. It was precisely one of the reasons gymnastics took raising the age of Olympic competition to 16 after being hit by allegations of gymnasts being forced upon with drugs that would propel their performance and rewards, in the light of a speedy success. What is being sidelined amid this clamour is the emotional, professional and mental baggages thrust upon them at an early age.

In this vision of showing the children a pathway to shine, the adults are often putting blinkers on their view of the world, with the make-

believe perspective that winning, competency and always being the best is the only thing that counts.

Most often, the fact that they are only kids are still on a developing stage, where the right nurturing has to come through fades into oblivion. The kids often subconsciously assume the persona of an adult as they are put on the same platforms of a well-versed and experienced person, in terms of life in general. One has to understand that there is a natural flow to things in life and each stage has to be savoured rather than rushing forward or leaping through childhood to attain an earlier adulthood. The songs of experience should always have its roots in the songs of innocence, as stated by British poet William Blake.

What has to be taught to the kids is that each experience in life is special for the better development

of their mind, body and soul, in the large scheme of things. And just like winning is an enriching aspect, not always having a feat to his or her credit also is. Failures are often required for one to grow as a person, and to get this sheen of being obsessed with winning is also enlightening and relieving. This would help one find a semblance of acceptance in another's win and to also develop the grace of cheering for them.

Intense pressure in youth athletics not just hampers a child's experience in sports, but it might also smear other aspects of his or her life, which is an inevitable part of growing as a person and to find contentment.

The video of the parents of American gymnast Aly Raisman's mother, who had an equally nervous string or perhaps more than the



Representative image www.freepik.com

Olympian herself from the 2012 Olympics, went on to become viral this year. While the world saw it in good stride, it is just an example, taken in isolation, to the amount of mental and physical investment that a parent makes for their offspring, when it comes to a majority of sports players. Sometimes it is good spirit and aimed at the true success and at times, the fine line of a healthy parenting or guidance tends to be blurred.

The constant parental pressure on the kids for being the 'achiever' might deprive the child of the sheer fun and love out of a game. That is when the turbulent lives of most star kids or icons, who shot to fame early on in their lives come into place. The idea of fame or success is likely to take them a step behind, in terms of self-worth and one forward, when it comes to a denial of their

self and emotions. A win often becomes a means of coercion or a need. It is utmost important parents engage themselves with constant conversations about how their kids are feeling from the inside and gauge their levels of contentment, happiness, anxiety, fear and insecurities so as to work on them in the days to come. Parents have to be their cheerleader, irrespective of a win or loss.

There might be moments when the child might outgrow his or her interest in a sport and might have developed an inclination towards a completely different extracurricular activity, which is totally alright. As long as it gives a colourful and happy streak in the canvas of a child's life, nothing else should be a stumbling block. There has to be a healthy analysis from the side of parents as to what borders between

obsessive parenting and extending relentless support to the child.

Human Rights Watch had released a report on the issue of harassment of kids in July, taking child rights into account. And soon, International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Thomas Bach had issued orders to the Japanese Olympic Committee (JOC) to stop the abuse and harassment of children in Japanese sports, as per a new report in January.

Sports psychologists and even the athletes themselves have often raised their concerns regarding the same and articulated the vital importance of having restraint from parents, otherwise it could lead to something that could be seen as a looming harassment on the child, waiting to bloom as a person.



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Your chance to be part of Expo 2020 Dubai's Opening Ceremony

Fifty people who will purchase a Season pass or a Family Package will enter into a raffle to win an invitation for themselves and be a guest to Expo's invite-only curtain-raiser



Tickets are on sale for Expo 2020 Dubai, the largest event ever to take place in the Arab World, and there is extra incentive to book now, with a chance to attend the much-anticipated Opening Ceremony on 30 September.

UAE residents ages 18 and above who purchase a Season Pass or Family Package before 14 August will have an entry into a raffle for the opportunity to win a prized place at a night that will go down in history.

The breath-taking culmination of almost 10 years of planning and preparation for Expo 2020, the Opening Ceremony at Al Wasl Plaza – an architectural marvel featuring the world's largest 360-degree projection surface – will star dazzling visuals and world-class acts.

Aside from the opportunity to attend this milestone event, a

Season Pass will also unlock 182 days filled with thousands of events and amazing exploratory experiences.

With up to 60 live events a day – including film nights, poetry readings, art activations, music concerts, cultural tours, parades and interactive journeys for all ages – as well as more than 200 food and beverage options, the site will be alive with sounds, sights, rhythms and flavours from across the globe.

Expo's stellar local and international entertainment line-up includes the likes of Oscar-winning composer AR Rahman's pioneering women's ensemble the Firdaus Orchestra, Bollywood sensation Sonam Kapoor, celebrated Emirati singer Ahlam, monthly music festival Expo Beats, and the famously evocative dance moves of the Russian Bolshoi. Many exciting additional names will be announced soon.

Tickets are on sale now at www.expo2020dubai.com and via more than 2,500 Authorised Ticket Resellers, with Mastercard debit and credit holders receiving a 25 per cent discount – and also doubling their chances of winning in the Opening Ceremony draw. Season Passes, offering unlimited entry during the entire six months of Expo 2020, are priced at AED 495 (USD 135); Family Packages are priced at AED 950 (USD 258), Multi-Day Passes, with unrestricted entry for 30 consecutive days, are priced at AED 195 (USD 53); and One-Day Tickets are priced at AED 95 (USD 26). The Family Package includes unlimited access for two parents plus a nanny, with additional benefits in the shape of food and beverage discounts, a 25 per cent discount on five additional tickets, and an advance purchase photograph voucher worth AED 125 to eternalise magical memories.

Dettol helps make hygiene a top priority at Expo 2020

Dettol, named Expo 2020's Official Hygiene Partner, will provide top-quality hygiene products to ensure safety of all visitors, participants and staff



Expo 2020 Dubai and Dettol have joined forces to ensure world-class hygiene across the mega-event, with Dettol announced as the next World Expo's Official Hygiene Partner.

Providing top-of-the-line products – including Dettol's no-touch hand-sanitiser stations at all entrance and departure gates, pavilions and restaurants

– the partnership supports Expo's number one priority of ensuring the safety of all visitors, participants and staff during the six-month mega-event.

Dettol experts will also showcase its initiatives as a pioneer in health and hygiene through innovation, engaging with visitors to educate them on the importance of hygiene, and sharing Expo's vision to work together towards a healthier, more sustainable future.

Dettol is part of the Reckitt Benckiser portfolio, which has a mission to protect, heal and nurture in pursuit of a cleaner, healthier world, and is known for its commitment to innovation.

Running from October 1, 2021 to March 31, 2022, Expo 2020 Dubai will invite visitors from across the planet to join the making of a new world during a six-month celebration of human ingenuity, innovation, progress and culture. ●



PepsiCo reveals refreshing take on Expo's subthemes

The Plus, The Bolt and The Drop Pavilions will bring a unique sense of fun to discovering more about Opportunity, Mobility and Sustainability

Exploring the future-facing ethos behind Expo 2020 Dubai just got tastier as PepsiCo, Expo 2020's Official Beverage and Snack Partner, revealed its three pavilions – The Plus, The Bolt and The Drop.

With one pavilion in each of Expo's Thematic Districts, they will offer refreshing perspectives on Expo 2020's subthemes of Opportunity, Mobility and Sustainability, through an exciting and engaging schedule of experiences, innovations and discussions.



Pepsi® + Lay's® Plus Pavilion (Opportunity)

With experiences inspired by two of PepsiCo's most-loved brands – Lay's and Pepsi – The Plus will ignite curiosity and entice discovery, encouraging visitors to look beyond their individual horizons towards a world of opportunity and possibility, and inspiring an ambition to create meaningful change.

Gatorade® Bolt Pavilion (Mobility)

Though interactive games, a re-creation of Gatorade's Sports Science Institute and a gallery of legendary Gatorade-fuelled athletes, The Bolt aims to make sport a global force for good that is accessible to all.

Aquafina® Drop Pavilion (Sustainability)

Taking the form of a giant water droplet constructed from recyclable cans, The Drop showcases Aquafina and PepsiCo's work to safeguard water. This includes everything from helping farmers worldwide with sustainable water practices, to smart use of water in manufacturing to PepsiCo's dedication to reducing, recycling and reinventing packaging.

Running from 1 October 2021 to 31 March 2022, Expo 2020 Dubai will bring a new surprise, a new innovation and a new breath-taking sight every day, as it invites millions of visitors to join the making of a new world.

Discover Salama's Secret as Expo 2020 Dubai mobile puzzle game is released

Inspired by Expo's mascots and their adventures with a wise ghaf tree, Salama's Secret: Hidden Objects stars unique puzzles and find-the-objects tasks



Salama's Secret: Hidden Objects, the new Expo 2020 Dubai mobile puzzle game, is now available in Android and iOS app stores.

Designed to be played by all ages, the game introduces the Expo 2020 mascots and builds on the story of the wise ghaf tree Salama, a symbol of peace and tolerance with a deep-rooted connection to the history and culture of the UAE.

Players will learn about Expo 2020 and engage with Rashid

and Latifa, and with the help of robot guardians Opti, Alif and Terra, tackle a range of challenges of different levels to suit everyone.

Reflecting the Expo 2020 theme of 'Connecting Minds, Creating the Future', the game features one-of-a-kind puzzles and hidden clues, as well as fun and exciting Expo characters and scenes.

Salama's Secret: Hidden Objects is the first of a series of Expo 2020 mobile games to be

released by Jordan-based SME Maysalward ahead of Expo's opening on 1 October, available from Google Play, Apple App Store, Huawei AppGallery and Amazon Appstore for Android and iOS devices.

You can download the game from the App Store or Google Play through the QR below.



On the same page: Expo's children's tales celebrate diversity and shared values

Read and explore an additional 25 new stories with the third edition of Children's Tales From Around The World



An updated collection of Expo 2020 Dubai's Children's Tales From Around The World has launched in perfect time for the school holiday season, now featuring 68 traditional children's stories and folktales from countries spanning six continents.

The third, and final, edition of poignant stories and colourful illustrations by talented

storytellers and artists – young and old – from all over the world, offers a much-needed dose of escapism.

Featuring words and phrases from almost 50 languages, and 25 new stories across two additional chapters, the updated collection offers an arresting snapshot of storytelling cultures from some of Expo 2020's 190-plus participant nations. The anthology provides a fun and accessible way for children to explore what makes

us different, while celebrating the values that we share. It will be followed by an exclusive print collection, which will be published ahead of Expo's opening on 1 October.

Children's Tales From Around The World is published as a PDF document, available for free download directly from the Expo School Programme website. It is also available through Apple Books.



Syria Pavilion to showcase replica of the world's oldest alphabet at Expo 2020

Visitors to the pavilion will also have the chance to discover the world's oldest musical notation



Visitors to the Syria Pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai will be able to see a replica of Ugaritic alphabet, widely believed to be the first alphabet in history, dating back to around 1,400 BC. The pavilion will reveal more about the development of writing and the alphabet in several areas across Syria, in addition to the alphabet's impact and the influence of the Arabic language on many other languages around the world.

The pavilion will showcase a rich civilisation that contributed towards laying the foundations

that connect the world as we know it. Syria was historically home to the very first crop yield, alphabet, poem and musical notation, making Syrian culture an embodiment of Expo 2020's theme 'Connecting Minds, Creating the Future'.

Visitors to the pavilion will learn more about words of Arabic origin that are now present in their other languages around the world, helping to highlight that what unites us is greater than what divides us. There will also be an audiovisual interactive experience in which visitors can take part in singing and playing mankind's oldest musical notation, which

was written in Ugarit more than 3,500 years ago. This experience aims to speak to visitors in the universal language of music.

Other attractions at the pavilion include a group exhibition for Syrian artists entitled 'I Am Syrian'. It will showcase artworks that each represent a portrait of a Syrian face, highlighting the similarities and connectedness that humans share and how, together, we can create a brighter future for Syria and the whole world. Each face displayed in the exhibition will tell an individual story, and all artworks will have a unified signature by the artists saying "I am Syrian".

Hop on a feel-good music journey with spectacular events at Expo 2020

Expo Beats festival and Late Nights @ Expo will transcend cultural barriers and bring people together



Visitors can join the party at Expo 2020 Dubai and be part of two live music series that will take place throughout the 182-day mega event, as they get to know local, regional and international talent via a variety of performances at Jubilee Stage.

Expo Beats is a unique monthly festival that takes visitors on a journey around the globe through music, dance and culture. It will present a feast of colour, creativity and culture throughout Expo 2020 Dubai, from the island

influences of the Caribbean, Hawaii and the Philippines to the tribal rhythms of Bangladesh and Tanzania. The monthly series will blend genres, create fusions and invite the world to experience traditional and contemporary sounds in new and exciting ways.

Late Nights @ Expo will connect artists and people from across the world every Thursday and Friday night during Expo 2020, breaking barriers between musical styles, generations and cultures. Performers include Jordanian singer-songwriter Dina Stars; funk-rock band Carl & The Reda Mafia;

Chilean musician, songwriter and singer Sergio Catalan; Serbian singer-songwriter Aleksandra Krstic; and Jaye & Foe, a six-piece multi-instrumentalist Dubai band known for brassy, jazzy tinged folk sounds with elements of reggae, ska and gypsy rhythms.

Expo 2020 Dubai invites visitors from every corner of the globe to join the making of a new world, including the chance to discover a wide range of cultural and artistic initiatives dedicated to broadening horizons and bringing together people, communities and nations.

Africa set to sizzle at Expo 2020's Alkebulan dining hall

Dining experience brings together some of world's top African Chefs to celebrate continent's vibrant, diverse cuisines



Visitors to Expo 2020 are set to enjoy the flavours and traditions of Africa at Alkebulan, a unique dining hall that will shine a spotlight on the wide array of contemporary food and music from across the colourful continent.

Alkebulan (pronounced al-kee-boulan) – translating to “Mother of Mankind” or “Garden of Eden” – is the brainchild of multi-talented chef Alexander Smalls, a classically trained opera singer-turned-restaurateur. The dining hall captures the essence of Africa, transporting visitors on a journey across its cultural diversities and gastronomy scenes, bringing together people, communities and nations. It will host 10 outlets created by seven [MOU] African

chefs, each with a unique design that honours the individuality of the continent and its cuisine. Offering a delicious odyssey of flavours and experiences, Alkebulan will give diners the chance to experience gourmet dishes, street bites and fusion fare, all in one destination.

Shoobox Bakery by pastry chef Mame Sow is a pan-African bakery experience that spans sweet and savoury treats, while Bar Cane by Coco will sate sweet cravings, serving what could be some of the world's finest doughnuts. Coco specialises in modern African cuisine: at his Afro Street Eatery, he delivers West African street food; Choma BBQ is inspired by the art of roasting, grilling and smoking meats. TV chef Kiran Jethwa's The Tasty Goat showcases

the complex flavours of the eponymous barbecued meat; he also celebrates the fish of Africa's East Coast at Seven Seafood.

Smalls' culinary talent is on show at both Sweet Ophelia's, an Afro-Asian wok bar, and Chicken Coop, featuring rotisserie and fried chicken.

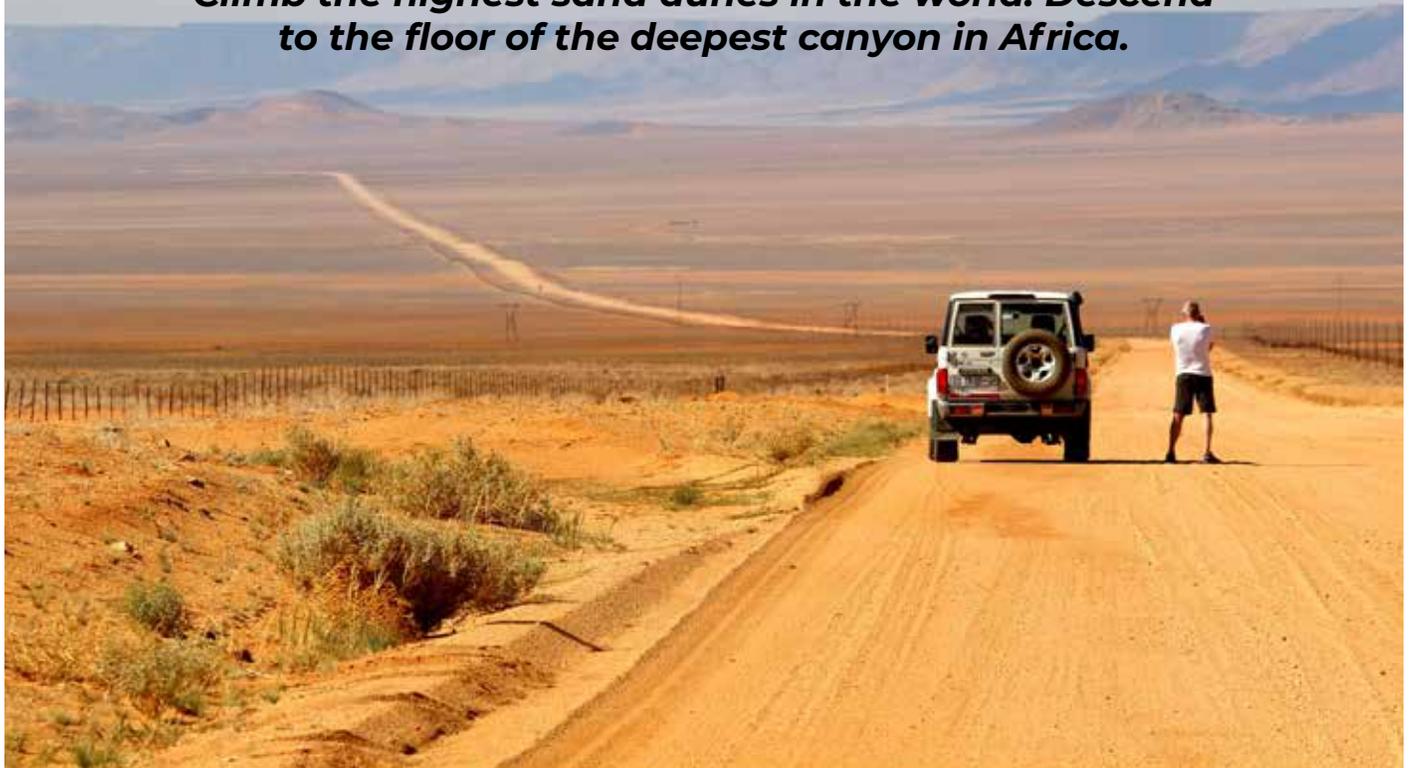
Penja by award-winning pop-up chefs Pierre Siewe, Glory Kabe and Moos Gbane promises innovative African cuisine from Cameroon and Benin. Meanwhile, for sundowners, head to Jiko Cocktails by Tribe Hotel Kenya.

Expo 2020 is set to be a food lover's paradise, with more than 200 F&B outlets serving 50-plus global cuisines, as well as delicious foodie tours and innovative culinary tech.



Touring Namibia

Climb the highest sand dunes in the world. Descend to the floor of the deepest canyon in Africa.

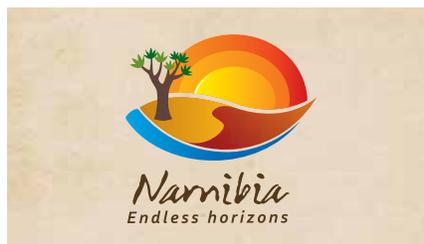


Immerse yourself in the past at one of Africa's richest rock art sites, and watch wildlife shimmer against one of the most spectacular pans on earth.

Explore the oldest, driest desert in the world and take time to listen to the silence and to your soul.

Namibia is home to vibrant cities where people are excited about the future, while remaining deeply

connected to their rich, cultural past. A stable, democratic government,



infrastructure that allows guests to move confidently off the beaten path and endless horizons that beckon you to explore define this country and its people.

This is Namibia, where you are sure to find adventure, and you may just find yourself.

WHEN TO GO

Namibia has 308 days of sunshine a year and each season has its unique qualities, so there really is no bad time to visit. September the green vegetation has

completed faded and the heat begins to return.

Adventure Activities

STARGAZING

With its generally cloudless night sky, especially in the dry winter





months, minimal contamination by artificial light and air pollution, and excellent view of the southern constellations, Namibia has superb stargazing conditions. As such, it is favored by professional and amateur astronomers alike.

Many lodges have medium-sized telescopes (up to 16" diameter) for use by guests, and provide novice stargazing guests with a layman's introduction to astrology. An impressive 'farm' of telescopes and other equipment is maintained by the German-based International Amateur Observatory at the guest farm Hakos on top of the Gamsberg

Pass, two hours' drive away from Windhoek.

DOLPHIN CRUISES

The cold Atlantic waters off the Namib coast harbor a wealth of marine life, including three dolphin species and a large colony of Cape fur seals resident at Pelican Point. The 1.3 meter-long Heaviside's dolphin is endemic to the west coast and sightings are 99 percent successful, while the larger Atlantic bottlenose and dusky dolphins are seen less often. In season (July-October), larger mammals like

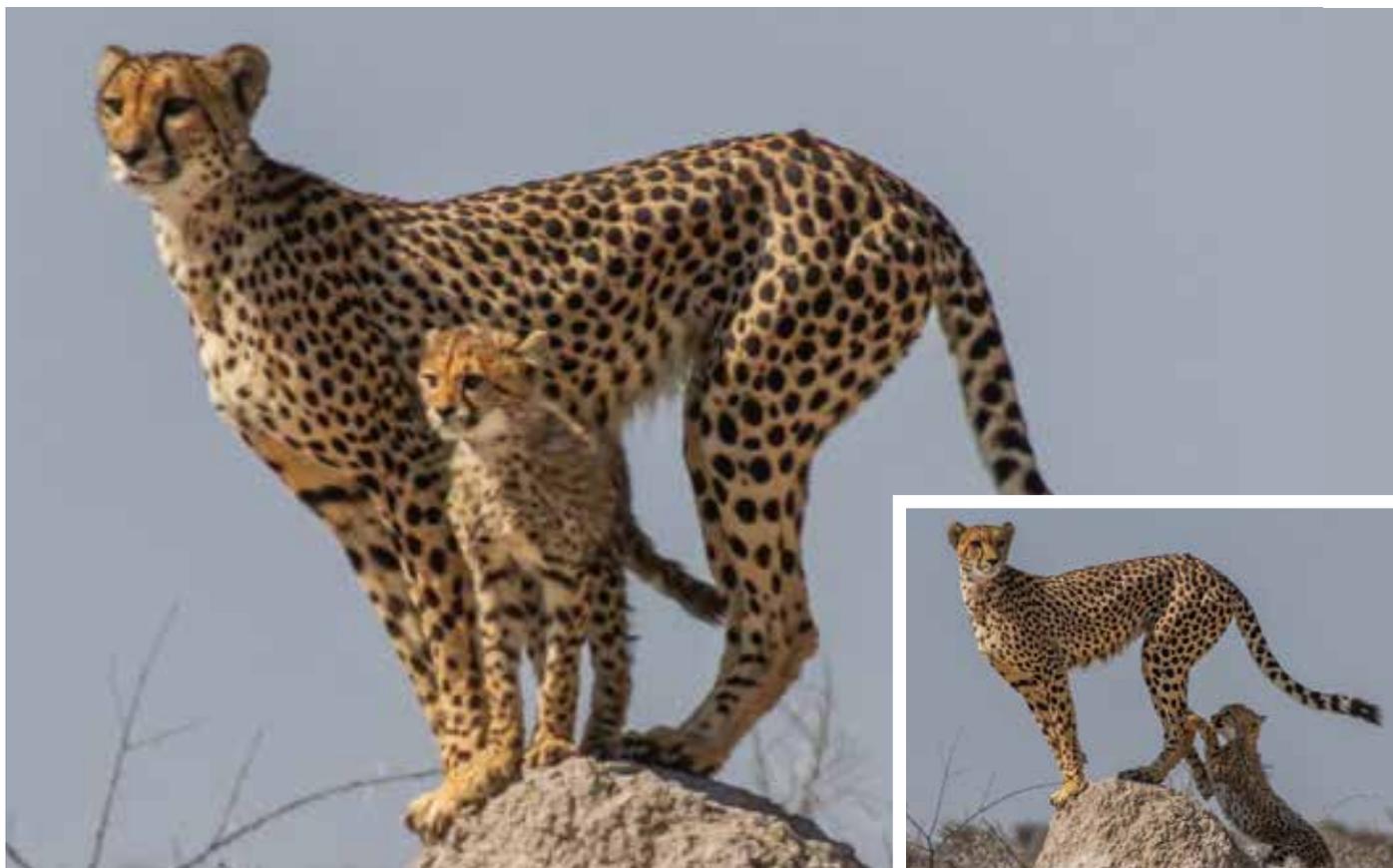
the southern right and humpback whales may be spotted, and with a bit of luck, the mighty killer whales (orcas). Rare sightings of sunfish (mola mola) and leatherback turtles also keep guests on the lookout.

Several operators run catamaran cruises out of Walvis Bay.

BALLOONING

Hot-air ballooning is like a magic carpet ride. While you fly, you feel no turbulence as you are travelling at the current wind speed. The tranquility of your flight will give you





unsurpassed views and plenty of photographic opportunities.

At Sossusvlei the hot-air balloon takes off as the sun rises over the world's oldest desert. The splendor of the Namib plays out in front of you as you soar with the winds for an hour over the ocean of sand and mountains. Below you is an endless vista of shadow and light, red dunes intermingling with dark mountains linked by pristine gravel plains.

A balloon flight over the Twyfelfontein Conservancy will give you a bird's-eye view over magnificent Damaraland desert scenery, including a unique variety of desert flora and fauna and fascinating geological formations.

At Swakopmund you can enjoy an early-morning balloon flight and experience the contrast of the

desert with the Atlantic Ocean as you drift along the coast.

SURFING

Namibia has yet to develop into a commercial destination, which makes it a favorite for those looking to escape the crowds and have world-class waves all to themselves. Skeleton Bay has been deemed by several professionals as the longest breaking barrel in the world.

ROCK CLIMBING

Rising abruptly above the Namib plains, the Spitzkoppe is Namibia's top rock-climbing destination. Since the first successful ascent in 1946, there have been more than 500 ascents to the 1,728 meter-high summit. There are several sport

climbing routes that have been secured with bolts. Some 44 sport climbing routes, ranging from South African grades 10 to 27, have been opened in the Spitzkoppe area. The Erongo Mountains also offer excellent rock climbing challenges, such as Omandumba in the western Erongos, offering 30 traditional routes up to the South African grade 20, as well as 20 sport climbing routes, ranging from SA grades 16 to 23.

A selection of climbing routes is available at Aussenkehr in the south, about 50 km west of the Noordoewer order crossing. With high summer temperatures, climbing is best done between April and September.

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Room without a view - French war bunker reborn as guesthouse



A bunker built by German troops in northern France during World War Two has been restored and refitted as an underground guesthouse.

The northern coast is still strewn with fortifications left by the German army, which built up a so-called Atlantic Wall to try to fend off Allied Forces.

In Saint-Pabu, on the Breton coast, concrete bunkers are half-buried along the sandy beaches in an area that once operated as a radar station. Serge Colliou bought up a plot of land around one of them and

spent 18 months digging out and renovating the 400-square-metre structure, turning it into rental for up to eight people, complete with bar and living room.

"We adapted (the bunker) while preserving a certain feel," Colliou said.

"We wanted to give the building a second life, so we are not going to live in the past forever. We saved some aspects, you know where you are, there are historic cues, but this isn't a museum either."

War-time touches in Bunker L479 include helmets, reproduction guns and signs on the walls.

Both German and French guests have stayed there since it opened a year ago, Colliou said.

Some mayors have tried to remove bunkers and other remains from the coastline, in case there are a danger to swimmers.

Others in Saint-Nazaire, La Rochelle, Brest and other areas have taken steps to restore the historic sites.

"We are starting to preserve those famous bunkers and it is a good thing, but we cannot save them all," said Herve Farrant, a bunker specialist and author who began to explore the structures in the 1980s. ●

A Ferris wheel lifts spirits in New York's Times Square



A 110-foot-high (34 m) Ferris wheel spins in the once bustling heart of Times Square, looking to bring some joy to New York City and help turn the economy around.

For 12 minutes, customers can ride the Times Square Wheel for a bird's eye view of the so-called 'Crossroads of the World' in midtown Manhattan, by the red glass steps over the TKTS booth where discounted Broadway show tickets are sold.

"I don't remember the last time I've been on a Ferris wheel. That was so

much fun," said Deborah Johnson after taking a spin. "It was special to be able to go that high in a Ferris wheel in Times Square. How often do you get that opportunity? Never," said Penelope Bustamante.

Before his ride the Naked Cowboy, a regular attraction himself in Times Square, strummed his guitar and sang, "I'm scared of heights so I'll probably squeal, ahhhh!"

The idea is to bring back the joy of childhood, said Vito Bruno, who thought up the ride and is the founder and chief executive of AM:PM Entertainment Concepts. "It's a feel good thing. It's just the right

time. You see people come alive again. New York and this country needs happy right now."

Not all riders were so enthusiastic.

"It wasn't as exciting as I thought it would be. This was eh," said Arlene Schulman. "I thought I could go up to the elevator at one of the hotels and get a better view. Or maybe I'm just a jaded New Yorker."

Tickets range from \$15 to \$35. Rides are free each day for 100 people who get a first or second COVID-19 vaccine shot from August 1 through September 12, when the pop-up attraction ends.

Latest Paris attraction drives tourists into the Seine



It looks like a bus that has taken a wrong turning, speeding down a slipway into the River Seine, scattering swans and prompting screams from the passengers. But when the splash subsides, the bus floats serenely along the river.

Welcome to one of the French capital's newest tourist attractions: an amphibious bus that drives along the city streets, and then converts instantly into a river-going pleasure boat. "It was very different from the usual," said Giulia Gallo, a 12-year-old girl from Italy on board the bus this week. "But it was very nice."

Amphibious tour buses -- commonly known as ducks -- have been used for years to ferry tourists around other cities in the world. They are often modified military sea-borne assault craft. Some have made headlines by sinking, or catching fire.

But the version in use in Paris is a new purpose-built design constructed largely in France, and, according to its operators, it is the first amphibious vehicle to gain a license to carry tourists on the roads and waterways of Paris.

The tours have been run since this summer by a firm called "Canards de Paris", French for ducks of Paris.

On an excursion this week, the vehicle in conventional bus mode carried passengers past sights including the Arc de Triomphe and the Eiffel Tower.

Later, the bus switched to boat mode, engaging its propeller at the rear to float along the River Seine. Life vests were suspended from the ceiling, and an anchor was stowed in a box on the side of the bus.

Marcel Pinault, an eight-year-old from a suburb near Paris who was on the bus with his mother, said it was "very different from other boats, and other buses. It's a mix of both."

Geological analysis explains durability of Stonehenge megaliths



The first comprehensive scientific analysis of Stonehenge's imposing megaliths has revealed some of the traits that made them an exemplary building material for the famed monument in southern England including their stout resistance to weathering.

Researchers described a battery of examinations that provided a glimpse inside one of Stonehenge's 52 sandstone megaliths, known as sarsens, gaining insight into its geology and chemistry.

They studied a core sample extracted from one of the sarsens, called Stone 58, during 1950s conservation work. It was kept in the United States for decades before being returned to Britain for research in 2018.

The sarsens are made of stone called silcrete that formed gradually within a few yards (meters) of the ground surface as a result of groundwater washing through buried sediment.

The examination clarified Stone 58's internal structure. It showed that the silcrete is comprised of mainly sand-sized quartz grains cemented tightly together by

an interlocking mosaic of quartz crystals. Quartz is extremely durable and does not easily crumble or erode even when exposed to eons of wind and weather.

"This explains the stone's resistance to weathering and why it made an ideal material for monument-building," said University of Brighton geomorphologist David Nash, who led the study published in the journal PLoS ONE.

In a remarkable engineering achievement by late Neolithic people, the sarsens were erected at the site in Wiltshire, England



around 2500 BC. Stone 58, one of the giant upright sarsens at Stonehenge's center, stands about 7 meters (23 feet) tall, with another 2 meters (7 feet) underground, and an estimated above-ground weight of 24 tons.

The core sample is a rod of stone, about an inch (2.5 cm) in diameter and roughly a yard (meter) long. Its cream color is brighter than the pale-gray exterior of the megaliths, which have been exposed to the elements for millennia.

It was given as a souvenir to a man named Robert Phillips who worked for a company involved in the conservation work and was on-site during drilling. Phillips took it with him with permission when he emigrated to the United States in 1977. Phillips decided to

return it to Britain for research in 2018. He died in 2020. "Getting access to the core drilled from Stone 58 was very much the Holy Grail for our research," Nash said. "All the previous work on sarsens at Stonehenge involved samples either excavated from the site or knocked off from random stones."

The researchers used CT-scanning, X-rays, microscopic analyses and various geochemical techniques to study fragments and wafer-thin slices of the core sample - such testing being off limits for megaliths at the site.

"This small sample is now probably the most analyzed piece of stone other than moon rock," Nash said.

It remains unclear precisely when the rock formed, though

the researchers found that some embedded sand grains dated to as long ago as the Mesoproterozoic Era, 1 billion to 1.6 billion years ago.

Nash led research published last year involving the same core sample that showed that 50 of the 52 sarsens share a common origin about 15 miles (25 km) from Stonehenge at a site called West Woods. Stonehenge's builders may have either dragged or moved the huge stones on rollers.

"I think Stonehenge has fascinated archaeologists and other scientists for centuries now, partly because we don't know what it was used for exactly, and there are a number of theories as to why the site was built," Nash said. "It's a site that is still rich with possibilities for doing more research."

Sponge-like Canadian fossils may be earliest sign of animal life



Fossils found in rugged mountainous terrain in Canada's Northwest Territories may give a glimpse at the humble dawn of animal life on Earth - sea sponges that inhabited primordial reefs built by bacteria roughly 890 million years ago.

A Canadian researcher said the fossils, dating to a time called the Neoproterozoic Period, appear to show distinctive microstructures from the body of a sea sponge built similarly to a species living today called the Mediterranean bath sponge, or *Spongia officinalis*.

If this interpretation is correct, these would be the oldest fossils of animal life by roughly 300 million years.

"The earliest animals to emerge evolutionarily were probably sponge-like. This is not surprising given that sponges are the most basic type of animal both today and in the fossil record," said geologist Elizabeth Turner of Laurentian University in Canada, who conducted the study published in the journal *Nature*.

The Earth formed more than 4.5 billion years ago. The first life forms were bacteria-like single-

celled marine organisms that arose hundreds of millions of years later. Complex life evolved relatively late in Earth's history.

The first appearance of rudimentary animal life has been a much-debated topic in terms of its timing and form. An enigmatic ribbed, pancake-shaped organism called *Dickinsonia* known from fossils dating to roughly 575 million years ago has been considered a candidate as the earliest-known animal.

Turner said she believes animals evolved much earlier than the present fossil record indicates.



"The existence of a protracted back-history is not surprising, but the sheer duration of it - a few hundred million years - may be a little unexpected for some researchers," Turner said.

When people think of animals, a sponge may not immediately come to mind. But sponges - aquatic invertebrates that live fixed to the sea floor and possess soft, porous bodies with internal skeletons - are among the most successful animal groups.

"They lack a nervous, digestive and circulatory system. They have an amazing water-pumping machine, produced by specialized cells, that they use to move seawater through their bodies to filter-feed," Turner said.

Some sponges have skeletons made of microscopic rods of

quartz or calcite. Others have skeletons made of a tough protein called spongin that forms a complex three-dimensional meshwork supporting the animal's soft tissue. The Canadian fossils represent this latter kind, called a horny sponge.

"It is the relict structure of the 3-D meshwork spongin skeleton that is preserved and that is so distinctive," Turner said.

This structure, visible under the microscope, consists of tiny tubes that branch and rejoin to form the meshwork. The body size for the sponge would have been roughly four-tenths of an inch (1 cm). Turner said the sponges appear to have lived in cavities just below the reef surface and in surface depressions. If these fossils genuinely show a type of sponge, their age would indicate

that Earth's first animals evolved before a pair of landmark events usually seen as predating animal life.

One of these was the second of two episodes in the planet's history when the amount of atmospheric oxygen greatly increased, sometime between about 830 and 540 million years ago. The other was a tremendously cold time when Earth may have been encased in ice or at least partially frozen over, sometime between about 720 and 635 million years ago.

The fossils predate by about 350 million years what had been the oldest-known sponge fossils. Turner noted that genetic research indicates that sponges first appeared at approximately the time to which these fossils date.

Wildfire leaves historic, 'quirky' California town in smoldering ruins



The main thoroughfare in a historic California gold-rush town was in smoldering ruins, hours after the state's largest wildfire engulfed the hamlet of Greenville in the Sierra Nevada Mountains.

Fire crews were still working to extinguish fires in Greenville, about 160 miles (260 km) north of Sacramento, after the Dixie Fire roared through on the previous night.

As apocalyptic images from the burnt-out center of town spread, showing Greenville's quaint main strip in heaps of ashes and debris as smoke rose into the hazy

sky, people from the area grew emotional.

"We lost Greenville tonight. And there's just no words for how us in government haven't been able to get the job done," US Representative Doug LaMalfa, who represents the area, said in a video posted on Facebook, pausing to gather himself.

"My heart is just aching for what people are dealing with up there right now," LaMalfa said, a huge billow of smoke appearing in the distance over his shoulder.

Greenville, population 800, was founded more than 150 years ago when nearby gold mines attracted settlers and merchants

to the picturesque town in the Indian Valley.

"My defiantly quirky, beautiful adopted hometown turned into a ghost town last night," wrote Meg Upton, a reporter for the Plumas News, in an online article.

The Dixie Fire has been raging in the area for three weeks, burning 322,000 acres (130,000 hectares), and was 35% contained morning, officials said.

It was among the more than 12 wildfires burning around the state.

The River Fire, which started recently and has charred 2,400 acres in Nevada and Placer



Counties, forced thousands of people to evacuate including most of the town of Colfax.

More than 50 homes or other structures were destroyed and another 30 damaged, while the fire was zero percent contained, Cal Fire said.

California, which typically experiences peak fire season later in the year, was on pace to suffer even more burnt acreage this year than last year, which was the worst fire season on record. California's five largest wildfires

in history have all occurred in the last three seasons, burning more than 2.5 million acres and destroying 3,700 structures. The Dixie Fire is the sixth-largest in state history.

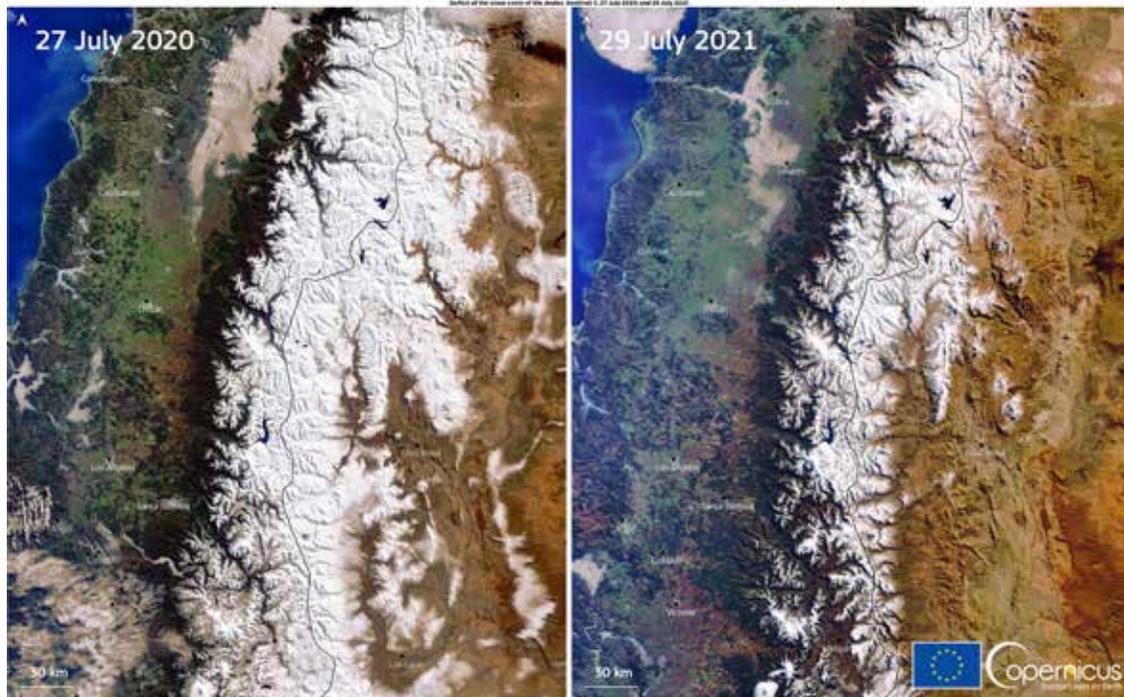
It was unclear how many structures were destroyed in Greenville as fire crews were still assessing the damage, Cal Fire spokesperson Mitch Matlow told. There were no injuries or deaths reported, he said. But one man was missing after he told his sister he was evacuating, the Plumas News reported. The Plumas

County Sheriff's Office had ordered Greenville residents to evacuate.

The Dixie Fire started on July 14 in the area of the Feather River Canyon, about 20 miles from Paradise, a town destroyed by a wildfire in 2018 that killed 86 people.

The California Office of Emergency Services said that about 16,000 people had been evacuated from several fires burning across five counties in the northern part of the state.

'Mega-drought' in Andes from climate change leaves some peaks without snow



The Andes Mountain range, which draws skiers to South America, is facing historically low snowfall this year during a decade-long drought that scientists link to global warming.

Scant rain and snowfall are leaving many of the majestic mountains between Ecuador and Argentina with patchy snow cover or no snow at all as dry brown earth lies exposed.

As precipitation declines and glaciers retreat across the region, communities that depend on the mountains for water supply are likely to suffer shortages, said Ricardo Villalba, principal investigator for the Argentine Institute of Snow, Glacier and

Environment Science Studies (IANIGLA).

"Here we are seeing a process of long-term decrease in precipitation, a mega-drought," Villalba said.

"If you look at the precipitation levels right now for the entire Cordillera (Andes range), they show that it has either not snowed at all or has snowed very little," he said.

The Southern Hemisphere is experiencing winter, when snowfall should peak.

Ski resorts have reopened after lengthy closures during the pandemic and are attracting jubilant skiers to the Argentina-Chile border. But scarce snowfall

is forcing many resorts to move snow to cover popular runs or make artificial snow. Satellite images from July 2020 and this year show a marked decrease in snow cover. That is mirrored in water level measurements for rivers.

The Andes' glaciers, which between 2000-2010 remained the same size or even grew, are now receding, Villalba said.

"The glaciers are in a very dramatic process of retreat that is much more accelerated than we have seen before," he said.

"This is unfortunately happening in all the glaciers of the Cordillera, and is strongly linked to the global warming process that is affecting the entire planet."

Britain to invest five million stg in climate resilience research



Britain has launched a 5 million pound (\$7 million) research programme to help better prepare for risks posed by climate change such as heatwaves and floods, the government said.

The move comes a week after scientists warned Britain's weather is already being hit by climate change and following catastrophic floods across northwest Europe last month and wildfires in several Mediterranean countries this month. "From flooding to wildfires – the

extreme weather events we've recently witnessed show how crucial it is for communities to build resilience and protect their futures," Alok Sharma, president for the COP 26 international climate talks to be held in Britain later this year, said in a statement.

The research will be carried out by some of the leading authorities in environmental science such as University College London and the UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, and will help to inform future climate policy, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy said (BEIS). Britain's independent climate

advisers, the Climate Change Committee, warned earlier this year the country has so far failed to prepare for many of the likely impacts of a warmer planet, such as worsening food security and the risks posed to health by overheating buildings.

Last month's floods follow just weeks after a record-breaking heatwave killed hundreds of people in Canada and the United States. Scientists have since said that extreme heat would have been "virtually impossible" without climate change, which had made such an event at least 150 times more likely to occur. ●

Eco-friendly vehicles offer quieter, cleaner safaris in Kenyan reserve



In Kenya's Maasai Mara National Reserve, the Toyota 4x4 Landcruiser of tour guide and driver Sylvester Mukenye glides silently past a herd of grazing elephants, then past a pride of lions lying in the grass.

The animals are completely unperturbed by the proximity of the vehicle because its diesel engine has been replaced by an electric one that eliminates the rumbling noise and, just as importantly, reduces the emission of diesel fumes.

"If you drive here silently, you will of course get much closer to animals, especially the elephants that we are next to right now,

because there are no vibrations on the ground and there are no fumes that they get the smell from like in other cars," Mukenye said.

His vehicle was converted by Opibus, a Nairobi-based Kenyan-Swedish company founded in 2017. It is, for now, the only company in Kenya that converts off-road safari vehicles from diesel and petrol to electric power.

Off-road vehicles are a common sight in Maasai Mara, world-famous for the annual wildebeest migration but these are the first in the usually carbon-heavy business of safari tours to be entirely powered by electric batteries.

Wanjiru Kamau, an electrical

engineer at Opibus, said the company had so far converted 10 vehicles used in Kenyan game parks, including three in the Maasai Mara.

As well as being more environmentally friendly than diesel engines, the electric motors cut operating costs by half, she added.

"In Kenya our fuel prices are always rising... Why not save on that?" she told at the Opibus workshop, where assembled vehicles were in various stages of electrification.

Kamau said her company uses 35% locally made materials and aims eventually to use only local materials.

After wildfires, Greek PM says climate crisis demands radical action



Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said wildfires that ripped through the outskirts of Athens and other parts of Greece this month underlined the need for radical shifts in behaviour to tackle global warming.

Everything needed to change in order to minimise the effects of the climate crisis, he told parliament during a debate on the wildfires and criticism of the government's response to them.

Dealing with the crisis "is forcing us to change everything; the way we produce agricultural products, how we move around, how we generate

energy and the way we build our homes," he said. Part of a succession of blazes that struck southern Europe during a summer heatwave, the Greek fires scorched more than a quarter million acres of pine forest, with the island of Evia and areas of the Peloponnese, including near the archaeological site of the ancient Olympics, also hit.

Mitsotakis told lawmakers an earlier public apology for the disaster was also a call for action to become better at tackling such phenomena.

"We were called to put out 1,279 wildfires ... the majority were tackled in the beginning but some got away. Preparedness was not adequate," he said. Defending the response of

the fire brigade and civil protection services, he reiterated that his government's top priority was to save lives. During August, Greece recorded its hottest temperatures since 1987.

Mitsotakis, who has approved a 500-million-euro (\$587 million) aid budget for Evia and the Attica region around Athens, said the protracted heatwave had turned forests into powder kegs.

"It is wrong to say that wildfires are only put out from the air. We cannot have a helicopter above every home," he said, but pledged to increase aerial firefighting capacities and set up a force able to operate efficiently inside forests.

South African study shows high COVID protection from J&J shot



Johnson & Johnson's COVID-19 vaccine is working well in South Africa, offering protection against severe disease and death, the co-head of a trial in the country said.

The J&J vaccine was administered to healthcare workers from mid-February in a research study, which was completed in May, with 477,234 health workers vaccinated, joint lead investigator Glenda Gray told a media briefing.

South Africa's health regulator approved the J&J shot in April, and it is being used in the national vaccine programme alongside Pfizer's.

Gray said the single-shot J&J vaccine offered 91% to 96.2%

protection against death, while offering 67% protection against hospitalisation when the Beta coronavirus variant dominates and about 71% protection against hospitalisation when the Delta variant dominates.

"Consistently after receiving the vaccine, there was very little death occurring in the vaccinated group as compared to the control group and showing a remarkable up-to 96.2% protection against death," Gray said.

"This was our primary endpoint and we are able to say this vaccine protected health workers against death," she added.

South Africa's vaccination campaign got off to a shaky start in February after the government paused AstraZeneca

vaccinations because of a small trial showing the shot offered minimal protection against mild to moderate illness caused by the Beta variant, which was dominant in the country at the time. Vaccinations have since ramped up, with over 8.3 million people vaccinated.

Newly appointed health minister Joe Phaahla told the same briefing that the government was planning to start using other vaccines approved by the regulator, including the Sinovac shot.

"It was approved ... also that the AstraZeneca vaccine, which has now been shown to be effective against the Delta variant, that we should also look at bringing it back into use," Phaahla said.

CanSinoBIO COVID-19 says booster shot can reverse drop in antibodies



Antibody levels in people inoculated with CanSino Biologics' (CanSinoBIO) single-dose COVID-19 vaccine fell by some 30% after six months, however a booster shot could offer a significant lift, a senior executive said.

The decline in antibodies does not necessarily mean the shots will lose their protection, though how fast they wane could still serve as an important indicator of the immune response, Zhu Tao, chief scientific officer at China's CanSinoBIO, said in an online presentation.

Apart from durable antibodies,

researchers have said that other components in a person's immune system, such as T cells and B cell memory, elicited by COVID vaccines may also contribute to protection.

Six months after being vaccinated with CanSinoBIO's shot, neutralising antibodies were at roughly 70% of the level seen 28 days after the shot, Zhu said, citing data from 35 vaccinated people.

When a second dose was given after six months, antibody levels shot up about eight fold two weeks after the shot, Zhu said, citing data from 28 people.

Five out of the seven vaccines

approved in China are two-shot inactivated vaccines from Sinovac and state-backed Sinopharm that contain "killed" coronavirus. CanSinoBIO's shot uses a modified common cold virus known as adenovirus to ferry genetic information from the spike protein of the coronavirus into the human body.

A third booster shot of CanSinoBIO's vaccine three to six months after the second shot of an inactivated vaccine generated significantly higher antibody levels, versus using an inactivated vaccine as a third-dose booster, Zhu said. He cited data from about 200 participants in a clinical trial.

Amid COVID surge, some Sri Lankans opt for cardboard coffins when cremating loved ones



At a factory in Sri Lanka's Dehiwala-Mount Lavinia city, workers use staples and glue to assemble long cardboard boxes, which will be used as coffins for some of the country's coronavirus victims.

The coffin is made out of recycled paper and costs a sixth of the cheapest wooden casket, according to 51-year old Priyantha Sahabandu, the local government official who first came up with the idea.

As Sri Lanka's death toll from COVID-19 surges, some are opting for these cardboard coffins when they cremate their loved ones. The country recorded its highest daily

death toll of 198, with total fatalities reaching 7,560. Currently, about 400 people die per day on average in Sri Lanka of various causes, including COVID-19, said Sahabandu, a member of the municipal council for Dehiwala-Mount Lavinia, a city in Colombo district. "To make 400 coffins you have to cut some 250 to 300 trees. To prevent that environmental destruction I proposed this concept to the health committee of the council," he said.

"With the spread of the coronavirus, people found it difficult to pay for expensive wooden coffins," he said.

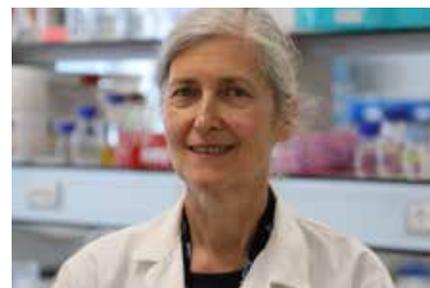
Each coffin costs around 4,500 Sri Lankan rupees (\$22.56), compared with 30,000 rupees for a cheap wooden coffin, Sahabandu said.

It can hold up to 100 kilograms. The coffins were initially used mostly for COVID-19 victims, but have become more popular among those concerned about the environment. Some 350 cardboard coffins have been delivered since early 2020, and the factory is working on another 150 ordered by the council.

"The majority of the people in the country support this. The issue today is supplying it. We are working on that," Sahabandu said.

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa announced a total lockdown for ten days to curb a renewed surge in COVID-19 cases driven by the spread of the highly transmissible Delta variant.

Llama antibodies blunt COVID variants in lab trial, says Belgian start-up



Llama antibodies could soon be playing a role in the global fight against COVID-19, if clinical trials being conducted by a Belgian biomedical start-up live up to their early promise.

Researchers from the VIB-UGent Center for Medical Biotechnology in Ghent say antibodies extracted from a llama called Winter have blunted the virulence of coronavirus infections, including variants, in laboratory testing.

The technology, which would supplement rather than replace vaccines by protecting people with weaker immune systems and treating infected people in hospital, is a potential "game-changer", said Dominique Tersago, chief medical

officer of VIB-UGent spin-off ExeVir.

Unusually small, llama antibodies are able to bind to specific part of the virus's protein spike and "at the moment we're not seeing mutations of a high frequency anywhere near where the binding site is," she said.

The antibodies also showed "strong neutralisation activity" against the highly infectious Delta variant, she added.

Researchers expect clinical trials in healthy volunteers, started last week in partnership with Belgian pharmaceutical company UCB, along with those in hospitalised patients, to be similarly effective.

Along with other llamas and members of the camel family, Winter produces versions of

conventional antibodies that are smaller, more stable, easier to reproduce and more versatile than those of other mammals, said VIB-UGent group leader Xavier Saelens.

"Their small size... allows them to reach targets, reach parts of the virus that are difficult to access with conventional antibodies," he said.

The search for a COVID-19 treatment follows studies from 2016 into llama antibodies to counter the SARS and MERS coronaviruses. France's Sanofi paid 3.9 billion euros (\$4.6 billion) for Ablynx, a Ghent-based medical company that specialises in llama antibody research, in 2018.

Meanwhile Winter, whose antibodies can now be reproduced in the lab, is enjoying retirement in a private art and animal park in Genk.

Cancer patients' own cells used in 3D printed tumours to test treatments



Researchers have used brain cancer patients' own cells in a form of 3D printing material to make a model of their tumour to test the efficacy of potential treatments before using them for real inside the body.

The scientists extract "a chunk" of the tumour from the brain of a patient with glioblastoma - an aggressive cancer with a very poor prognosis - and use it to print a model matching their MRI scans, said Professor Ronit Satchi-Fainaro, who led the research at Tel Aviv University.

The patient's blood is then pumped through the printed tumour, made with a compound that mimics the brain, followed by a drug or therapeutic treatment. While previous research has used such

"bioprinting" to simulate cancer environments, the Tel Aviv University researchers say they are the first to print a "viable" tumour.

"We have about two weeks (to) test all the different therapies that we would like to evaluate (on) that specific tumour, and get back with an answer - which treatment is predicted to be the best fit," Satchi-Fainaro said.

A treatment is deemed promising if the printed tumour shrinks or if it lowers metabolic activity against control groups.

The research was published in the journal *Science Advances*.

Glioblastoma is the most common form of brain cancer in adults. It spreads quickly to other parts of the brain, making it difficult

to treat. Survival is around 40% in the first year after diagnosis and 17% in the second, according to the American Association of Neurological Surgeons.

Researchers have often 3D printed tumour models to plan for surgery, but more recent innovations have focused on bioprinting, which uses live cells as a sort of ink to build up the layers.

Ofra Benny, who leads similar research at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, said the use of a patient's own cells to develop 3D tumour models could be "a game changer in the field of personalised medicine".

"The more physiological mimicry you create, the better prediction you get in terms of how drug treatments will work on the actual tumour in the patient's body," she said.



BRITISH HERALD'S TAKE ON WORLD CINEMA

TAKE 1



If Anything Happens I Love You

Movie Review: A Painful Tale Of 'Love's Labour's Lost'



By Beth Cooper

If anything happens I love you', a short film written and directed by Will McCormack and Michael Govier, captures the heart-wrenching journey of loss, grieving and acceptance in the life of two deceased parents, after the unfortunate demise of their daughter. The film, which was unveiled on Netflix, on November 2020, clinched the award for the Best Animated Short Film at the 93rd Academy Awards this year, and is helmed by Gilbert Films and Oh Good Productions.

The film, which extends to a brief 12 minutes, stays true to William Shakespeare's lines 'Brevity is the soul of wit' and appeals to all human emotions. It reflects on the fact that deeper meanings could be translated to the mind with precision and sincere emotions adapted from life's greatest lessons.



Director: **Will McCormack,**

Michael Govier

Duration: **12 minutes**

It transposes the viewers into the lives of two parents and the permeating emptiness in their world, after losing their daughter to a fatal accident in her school. While it shows the parents submerged in pain and always seen disputing and holding each other accountable for the tragedy that has befallen them, their consciences are represented in the form of shadows, who are drifted further apart, contrary to their desires of uniting all over again. If anything happens I love you, as the title implies, is the message that the daughter sends to her parents' phone, before succumbing to death.

As the father and the mother seek different ways, they are constantly taken back to the past by the halcyon and how things would not be the same again. From their daughter celebrating her tenth birthday to her growing inclination towards soccer, the parents witness a splurge of memories.

It shows how the child loses her life, after being killed in a shooting in school, in spite of the premonitions that kept ramming the minds of the parents on that tragic day.

Music plays an important part of this subtle film, which presents every layer of life- the bliss, familial love, loss of someone you love, the excruciating pain, acceptance to finally being united by the canopy of family, for that is the only thing left of themselves, as they pick one broken piece after another.

The song titled 1950 by King Princess adds to the emotions felt by the characters and tugs right at the heart strings, as it becomes an elegy, throwing light on waiting for the beloved and praying to be united all over again. In addition to the music, the intentional use of no colours brings out the void in the life of the grieving parents and their bleak present and probably future, according to their perception. How they get back to each other and find comfort and closure at the same time, by revelling in the memories of the good old days forms the rest of the story. The music by Lindsay Marcus is immersive and comes across as the true depiction of the story.

Review on series 'Katla': A meta exploration of human emotion



By Dorothy Sash

Katla is an Icelandic sci-fi drama directed and created by Baltasar Kormákur and Sigurjón Kjartansson. The series premiered on Netflix this year and stars Guðrún Eyfjörð, Ingvar Sigurðsson, Björn Thors, Íris Tanja Flygenring, Þorsteinn Bachmann and Alette Opheim in prominent roles.

The events in the series take place in the remote town of Vík where the volcano Katla erupts. A year since the eruption, most of the town has vacated, except for a few who chose to stay back through the choking ash from the eruption. Lives of the people in the town begin to turn upside down as eerie unexplained things begin to occur around them. The rest of the drama revolves

Director: **Baltasar Kormákur, Börkur Sigþórsson, Þóra Hilmarsdóttir**
 Cast: **Guðrún Eyfjörð, Ingvar Sigurðsson, Alette Opheim**

around how these people try to solve these mysterious happenings and get their lives back on track.

Something about movies or series set in remote Nordic locations has an air of mystery to itself. The naturally pale gray tone of the regions add to the eerie element of the story. In Katla, the location is the central character. A handful of people who have decided to stay back in the town are greatly affected by the natural changes happening around them. While the volcanic eruption and the unexplained

occurrences that happen as a result might seem like central to the emotion of the characters, in reality, the series is exploring nuanced human emotions. In just eight episodes, the series gives us a plethora of really deep experiences with each of the characters and how it is tied to the gray ash and smoke rising from the volcano. However, by the end of the series, we could see how these experiences are tied more to themselves than to Katla. It is a meta exploration of grief, with elements outside of human control.

While those who have watched the spectacular 'Dark' series might get a similar vibe from this one, Katla, while it has a sci-fi angle to it, the series has more to do with human emotions. It's a slow burner that is worth a watch. You may go back to it or you may at least contemplate the idea of going back to yourself, just to know what it feels like. ●

Foundation Cine-Peek: A futuristic leap salvaging only the best of human civilisation



By Beth Cooper

The trailer of Foundation, the upcoming science fiction series from Apple, was unveiled recently, and it is a revelation in itself. Based on the series of novels by Isaac Asimov of the same name, the trailer sets out with the voice of a character named Gaal Domick, essayed by Lou Llobell, who transposes the viewers to when she used to be narrated with stories of a man, who predicted the future.

Little does she realise that what was once a story for her would one day become one of her own and she would find herself amid this testing world for the future. The fate of the galactic world is determined by the prophesy of Dr Hari Seldon, played by Jared Harris.

As per his foresight derived from his profound wisdom of psychohistory, the empire is going to witness a downfall. The champions of the empire, however, are intimidated

Director: **Rupert Sanders (Pilot Episode)**

Cast: **Jared Harris, Lee Pace, Lou Llobell**

by the prediction and set out on depleting this set of messiahs. Now, the question arises as to what is likely to become of the movement they have instigated.

The lines that linger in the mind from the trailer is

"Martyrs tend to have a long half-life."

"Wars will be endless."

"Change is frightening. Especially to those in power."

At troubled times as this, when there has been a clamour for power and survival, with intermittent war-like situations being triggered in the nook and corner of the world, the

trailer of Foundation comes at the right time. It articulates the need for laying a foundation for future generations to thrive on, retaining only the best of humanity. To salvage the humankind and to pave way for it to rise from the ashes, they have to now preserve only the vestige of all things humane, and 'only the essential pieces of civilisation', as described in the trailer.

The series has a stellar cast, in addition to SAG Award winner and Emmy Award nominee Jared Harris and Lou Llobell, Emmy Award nominee Lee Pace, Leah Harvey and Laura Birn, among many others.

Foundation, directed by Rupert Sanders (for the pilot episode) and created by David S Goyer and Josh Friedman, who are also the executive producers, is a mighty leap into the future. The series is produced for Apple by Skydance Television, along with Robyn Asimov, Cameron Welsh, David Ellison, Dana Goldberg and Marcy Ross.

The series is slated for release on September 24 this year.

Chloe Zhao joins fellow Oscar winner Bong Joon-ho on Venice festival jury



"Nomadland" director Chloe Zhao will join fellow Oscar-winning filmmaker Bong Joon-ho on the main jury at this year's Venice International Film Festival, organisers said.

The judging line-up for the 78th edition of the festival held in the Italian lagoon city will also

include "Widows" and "Harriet" actress Cynthia Erivo and filmmaker Alexander Nanau, a nominee at this year's Oscars for documentary "Colectiv".

Virginie Efira, star of this month's Cannes Film Festival contender "Benedetta", actress Sarah Gadon, known for "Alias Grace" and "Enemy", and Italian director Saverio

Costanzo complete the line-up.

The festival earlier this year had already announced "Parasite" director Bong as the president of the jury, which hands out the event's main Golden Lion prize. "Nomadland" won the award at Venice last September.

This year's festival runs from September 1-11.

Singer Rihanna is officially a billionaire, Forbes says



Pop star Rihanna's net worth is estimated at \$1.7 billion, making her the richest woman musician in the world, but her music is not the primary source of her wealth, Forbes magazine said.

The Barbados-born singer, whose birth name is Robyn Fenty, derives an estimated \$1.4

billion of her fortune from her 50% stake in the Fenty Beauty cosmetics line, Forbes reported.

The rest of Rihanna's wealth comes from her share of the Savage x Fenty lingerie company and her income as a singer and actress, the magazine said.

Rihanna's beauty company, of which LVMH owns the other

half, is known for its broad range of 50 skin tones, including dark shades for women of color, which were rare when it launched in 2017. This made it a leader in inclusivity in the industry.

The singer of "Umbrella" and "Love the Way You Lie" ranks second behind Oprah as the richest female entertainer, Forbes said.

Latin singer Selena featured in new US comic book



Selena, the Tejano music performer killed in 1995, will be the star of a US comic book debuting later.

Selena, whose birth name was Selena Quintanilla-Perez, will be the focus of "Female Force: Selena," a comic book in English and Spanish being released by TidalWave Comics on Aug. 11. "So

much has been said about Selena. I wanted to tell her story while bringing something new to it. I hope the readers - and her fans - enjoy what we've put together," said Michael Frizell, writer of the comic book.

The book is part of a series focused on women who make a worldwide impact.

Sometimes called the Mexican Madonna or queen of Tejano, Texas-born Selena died on March 31, 1995, when she was shot by the founder of her fan club.

But her Grammy-winning music has continued to sell strongly. Tejano, also called Tex-Mex music, fuses American and Mexican influences.



Cannes film 'Paris 13th district' shows another side of the French capital



French director Jacques Audiard's new film "Paris 13th district" ("Les Olympiades") does not show the Eiffel Tower, Haussmann buildings or the River Seine.

He trains his lens instead on the brutalist apartment towers of the 13th arrondissement, known as the Chinatown of Paris, where he once lived.

With characters inspired by the graphic novels of American artist Adrian Tomine, Audiard sketches young, educated but disillusioned people trying to find their path, and he consciously avoids film clichés of the rich-poor divide in France. "I wanted to talk about the middle class, people who

have university degrees and have somewhat obtained a level of success, but don't really have anything going for them," Audiard told, a day after his film premiered in Cannes.

"Paris 13th district" is one of 24 films in competition for the Palme d'Or at the 74th Cannes festival.

Filming during the COVID-19 lockdown helped first-time actress Lucie Zhang get into her character Emilie, a young woman struggling to hold a job and not fall in love with her one-time flatmate.

"During the pandemic, we're a lot more alone, and closed and isolated. So maybe that can bring this type of emotion in the characters, unconsciously," Zhang

said. Audiard, who won the Palme d'Or in 2015 with "Dheepan", a film about Tamil refugees in France, said it was troubling that some French films lack multi-racial representation.

In "Paris 13th district", two of the main characters - Camille and Emilie - are from immigrant families.

"In (Francois) Truffaut's films, you could see a real estate agent too, or a lover that passes out, but there is no Black person, no Chinese person," Audiard told journalists.

Audiard is the director of critically-acclaimed films including "The Sisters Brothers", "A Prophet" and "Rust and Bone".

Dutch museum fills 'Blind Spot' with exhibit for visually impaired



Visitors to a Dutch exhibition titled "The Blind Spot" may call it a little cheesy - but they mean that as a compliment.

Utrecht Central Museum launched the unusual project this month in a push to make its offerings more accessible and enjoyable for the visually impaired.

The exhibit recreates existing paintings but with extra dimensions, such as sound and smell - including the aroma of ripe cheese. And for once, museum-goers are allowed to touch.

Sighted visitors are encouraged to wear a blindfold as they experience

works including a version of the 1610 "Still Life with Fruit, Nuts and Cheese" by Floris van Dyck.

"The first thing that struck me was the smell," said Farid el Manssouri, who is visually impaired, smiling after he ran his hands over cheese, grapes and a bread roll made into objects from Van Dyck's original canvas.

"I could really smell the cheese, and I touched it too."

El Manssouri pondered how the table was slanted yet the food did not fall off. "That was really surprising to feel ... I guess it was glued on pretty well."

Artist Jasper Udink ten Cate and

designer Jeroen Prins said the idea came when they served food to accompany an artwork, and a blind woman visiting was very moved.

"That moment was the starting point," Ten Cate said.

Steffie Maas, the museum's head of inclusivity, said Blind Spot was one experiment on the way to more improvements, with better accessibility and facilities as important as the display.

"I think it's an amazing experience, which is, to my idea, quite unique in the Netherlands," said another appreciative visitor, Bas Suurland. "It triggers the other senses, other than visual sense."

Art lovers flock to see master Antonio Lopez paint on Madrid square



It's not often you get the chance to see a master at work, but Madrid residents have recently been able to watch one of Spain's greatest living artists set up his studio under the blazing sun on the famous Puerta del Sol square.

Every day from 6.30 p.m. to 9 p.m. since the start of July, painter and sculptor Antonio Lopez, 85, has positioned his large easel and canvas and begun mixing his paints, as a crowd of shoppers, dog walkers and art lovers assembles around him.

Seeing such a famous face installed among the tourist shops and lottery

stalls of Puerta del Sol has excited many locals. "It's a once-in-a-lifetime moment because Antonio Lopez is a living legend of Spanish art," said art teacher Javier Mateo, 33, who was inspired by Lopez to study art himself.

Lopez, who has enjoyed a long career in Spain and features in the permanent collections of museums around the world, is renowned for his lifelike depictions of everyday subjects, from city scenes to portraits.

He famously does not rush his work - a portrait of Spain's royal family was unveiled in 2014, 20 years after it was commissioned.

And it's not the first time Lopez has tried to take on the iconic square in the centre of the Spanish capital.

"Puerta del Sol is a very old idea of mine and this is my third attempt," Lopez said.

He first tried to depict the square more than 20 years ago. A second try coincided with construction work, which forced him again to abandon the painting. Now he has decided the time is right to resume the work he started in 2010.

"I hope that this is the definitive one that I can finally complete and take to the limit of what I can do," he said.

Bezos offers NASA \$2 billion in exchange for moon mission contract

Fresh off his trip to space, billionaire businessman Jeff Bezos offered to cover up to \$2 billion in NASA costs if the US space agency awards his company Blue Origin a contract to make a spacecraft designed to land astronauts back on the moon.

NASA in April awarded rival billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk's SpaceX a \$2.9 billion contract to build a spacecraft to bring astronauts to the lunar surface as early as 2024, rejecting bids from Blue Origin and defense contractor Dynetics. Blue Origin had partnered with Lockheed Martin Corp, Northrop Grumman Corp and Draper in the bid.

The space agency cited its own funding shortfalls, SpaceX's proven record of orbital missions and other factors in a contract decision that senior NASA official Kathy Lueders called "what's the best value to the government."

In a letter to NASA Administrator Bill Nelson, Bezos said Blue Origin would waive payments in the government's current fiscal year and the next ones after that up to \$2 billion, and pay for an orbital mission to vet its technology. In exchange, Blue Origin would accept a firm, fixed-priced contract, and cover any system development cost overruns, Bezos said.



"NASA veered from its original dual-source acquisition strategy due to perceived near-term budgetary issues, and this offer removes that obstacle," Bezos wrote.

"Without competition, NASA's short-term and long-term lunar ambitions will be delayed, will ultimately cost more, and won't serve the national interest," Bezos added.

A NASA spokesperson said the agency was aware of Bezos' letter but declined to comment further, citing the protest Blue Origin filed with the US Government Accountability Office accusing the agency of giving SpaceX an unfair advantage by allowing it to revise its pricing.

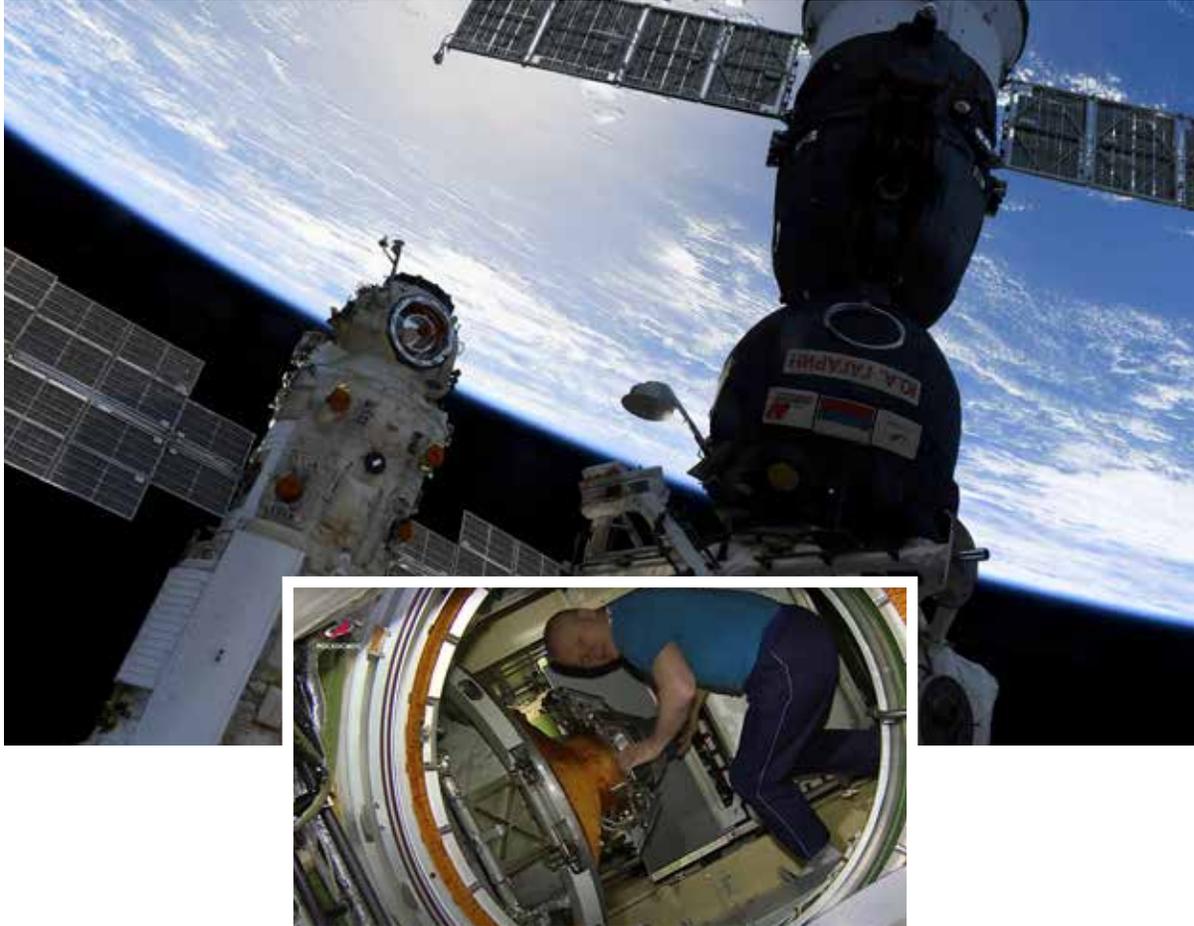
The GAO's decision is expected

by early August, though industry sources said Blue Origin views the possibility of a reversal as unlikely.

Before choosing SpaceX, NASA had asked for proposals for a spacecraft that would carry astronauts to the lunar surface under its Artemis program to return humans to the moon for the first time since 1972. Blue Origin's lunar lander is called "Blue Moon." Bezos and Musk are the world's richest and third-richest people respectively, according to Forbes.

Bezos' offer came six days after he flew alongside three crewmates to the edge of space aboard Blue Origin's rocket-and-capsule New Shepard, a milestone for the company's bid to become a major player in an emerging space tourism market.

Russian cosmonauts give video tour of module that jolted space station



Russian cosmonauts have given a video tour of the interior of a research module which briefly threw the International Space Station out of control a few hours after docking.

Russian space officials said a software glitch and possible lapse in human attention were to blame for the mishap that caused the entire space station to pitch out of its normal flight position 250 miles above the Earth with seven crew members aboard.

Footage published late showed cosmonauts Oleg Novitsky and Pyotr Dubrov opening the hatches and giving a short tour inside the Nauka module, the Russian space agency Roscosmos said.

According to NASA's account incident, the mission flight director immediately declared a spaceflight emergency as engineers on the ground struggled to restore stability to the sprawling research satellite.

NASA and Roscosmos each said

that the seven crew members - two Russian cosmonauts, three US astronauts and two others from Japan and France - were never in any immediate danger.

Roscosmos, which this week spoke of plans to launch another Russian module to the station in November, has suffered a series of mishaps and corruption scandals, including during the construction of the Vostochny Cosmodrome in the country's far east where contractors were accused of embezzling state funds.

Branson's Virgin Galactic to sell space flight tickets starting at \$450,000



Spaceship company Virgin Galactic said it will open ticket sales for space flights starting at \$450,000 a seat, weeks after billionaire founder Richard Branson's high-profile trip to the edge of space.

Branson soared more than 50 miles above the New Mexico

desert aboard a Virgin Galactic rocket plane on July 11 and safely returned in the vehicle's first fully crewed test flight to space, a symbolic milestone for a venture he started 17 years ago.

Shares of the company rose 5% in extended trading recently. In June, Virgin Galactic received

approval from the US aviation safety regulator to fly people to space. The company said it will have three consumer offerings - a single seat, a multi-seat package and a full-flight buy out.

Sales will initially open to the company's significant list of "early hand-raisers", it said.

Musk says Tesla likely to launch humanoid robot prototype



Tesla Inc Chief Executive Elon Musk said the electric automaker will probably launch a "Tesla Bot" humanoid robot prototype next year, designed for dangerous, repetitive, or boring work that people don't like to do.

Speaking at Tesla's AI Day event, the billionaire entrepreneur said the robot, which stands around five foot eight inches tall, would be able to handle jobs from attaching bolts to cars with a wrench, or picking up groceries at stores.

The robot would have "profound implications for the economy," Musk said, addressing a labour shortage. He said it was important to make the machine not "super-expensive."

The AI Day event came amid growing scrutiny over the safety and capability of Tesla's "Full Self-Driving" advanced driver assistant

system. Musk didn't comment on that scrutiny over the safety of Tesla technology but said that he was confident of achieving full self-driving with higher safety than humans using current in-car cameras and computers.

US safety regulators earlier this week opened an investigation into Tesla's driver assistant system because of accidents where Tesla cars crashed into stationary police cars and fire trucks.

Two US senators have also called on the Federal Trade Commission to investigate Tesla's claims for its "Full Self-Driving" system.

At the event recently Tesla also unveiled chips it designed in-house for its high-speed computer, Dojo, to help develop its automated driving system. Musk said Dojo would be operational next year. He said Tesla will also introduce new hardware for its self-driving computer for its

Cybertruck electric pick-up truck in "about a year or so."

Tesla in July pushed back the launch of its much-anticipated Cybertruck from this year, without giving a timeframe for its arrival on the market.

Some questioned whether Musk, who has frequently touted technology advances at showpiece events only to scale plans down later on, would be able to come good on his aims for the robot.

"Is the 'Tesla Bot' the next dream shot to pump up the hype machine?" said Raj Rajkumar, professor of electrical and computer engineering at Carnegie Mellon University.

"I can safely say that it will be much longer than 10 years before a humanoid bot from any company on the planet can go to the store and get groceries for you."

Teenage girls in northern Nigeria 'open their minds' with robotics



Teenage girls in the northern Nigerian city of Kano are learning robotics, computing and other STEM subjects as part of an innovative project that challenges local views of what girls should be doing in a socially conservative Muslim society.

In a place where girls are expected to marry young and their education is often cut short, the Kabara NGO aims to widen their world view through activities such as building machines, using common software programmes and learning about maths and science.

"I came to Kabara to learn robotics and I have created a lot of things," said Fatima Zakari, 12. One of her creations is a battery-powered spin art device to create distinctive artwork.

"I am happy to share this with my younger ones and the community

at large for the growth of the society," she said proudly. Kabara is the brainchild of engineer Hadiza Garbati, who wanted to raise the aspirations of northern Nigerian girls and help them develop skills they might harness to start their own small businesses or enroll at university.

Since it started in Kano in 2016, Kabara has trained more than 200 girls, and Garbati is working on expanding her project to other northern cities.

It is a rare educational success story in northern Nigeria, where more than 1,000 children have been kidnapped from their schools by ransom seekers since December, causing many more to drop out because their parents are fearful of abductions.

Kabara, located in a safe area in the heart of Kano, has been unaffected by the crisis. Garbati said she had overcome resistance from some parents by being highly respectful

of Islamic traditions. The girls wear their hijabs during sessions.

Crucial to her success has been support from Nasiru Wada, a close adviser to the Emir of Kano, a figurehead who has moral authority in the community. Wada holds the traditional title of Magajin Garin Kano.

"The main reason why we are doing this is to encourage them, to open their minds," said Wada.

"Tradition, not to say discourages, but does not put enough emphasis on the education of the girl child, with the belief that oh, at a certain age, she will get married," he said.

"It is good to encourage the girl child to study not only the humanities but the science subjects as well because we need healthcare workers, we need science teachers," he said, adding that even married women needed skills to manage their affairs.

Apple to check iCloud photo uploads for child abuse images

Apple Inc said it will implement a system that checks photos on iPhones in the United States before they are uploaded to its iCloud storage services to ensure the upload does not match known images of child sexual abuse.

Detection of child abuse image uploads sufficient to guard against false positives will trigger a human review of and report of the user to law enforcement, Apple said. It said the system is designed to reduce false positives to one in one trillion.

Apple's new system seeks to address requests from law enforcement to help stem child sexual abuse while also respecting privacy and security practices that are a core tenet of the company's brand. But some privacy advocates said the system could open the door to monitoring of political speech or other content on iPhones.

Most other major technology providers - including Alphabet Inc's Google, Facebook Inc and Microsoft Corp - are already checking images against a database of known child sexual abuse imagery.

"With so many people using Apple products, these new safety measures have lifesaving potential for children who are being enticed online and whose horrific images are being circulated in child sexual abuse material," John Clark, chief executive of the National Center

for Missing & Exploited Children, said in a statement. "The reality is that privacy and child protection can co-exist."

Here is how Apple's system works. Law enforcement officials maintain a database of known child sexual abuse images and translate those images into "hashes" - numerical codes that positively identify the image but cannot be used to reconstruct them.

Apple has implemented that database using a technology called "NeuralHash", designed to also catch edited images similar to the originals. That database will be stored on iPhones.

When a user uploads an image to Apple's iCloud storage service, the iPhone will create a hash of the image to be uploaded and compare it against the database.

Photos stored only on the phone are not checked, Apple said, and human review before reporting an account to law enforcement is meant to ensure any matches are genuine before suspending an account.

Apple said users who feel their account was improperly suspended can appeal to have it reinstated.

The Financial Times earlier reported some aspects of the program.

One feature that sets Apple's system apart is that it checks

photos stored on phones before they are uploaded, rather than checking the photos after they arrive on the company's servers.

On Twitter, some privacy and security experts expressed concerns the system could eventually be expanded to scan phones more generally for prohibited content or political speech.

Apple has "sent a very clear signal. In their (very influential) opinion, it is safe to build systems that scan users' phones for prohibited content," Matthew Green, a security researcher at Johns Hopkins University, warned.

"This will break the dam-governments will demand it from everyone."

Other privacy researchers such as India McKinney and Erica Portnoy of the Electronic Frontier Foundation wrote in a blog post that it may be impossible for outside researchers to double check whether Apple keeps its promises to check only a small set of on-device content.

The move is "a shocking about-face for users who have relied on the company's leadership in privacy and security," the pair wrote.

"At the end of the day, even a thoroughly documented, carefully thought-out, and narrowly-scoped backdoor is still a backdoor," McKinney and Portnoy wrote.

Weibo pulls celeb ranking list after state media raps 'unworthy' stars



China's Twitter-like Sina Weibo said it would take down an online list that ranks celebrities by popularity after state media said social media platforms ought to rein in the promotion of celebrity culture to protect children.

The announcement came hours after the state-owned People's Daily published an editorial criticising platforms that prioritise traffic and create celebrities out of "unworthy" individuals, who can draw attention and money from fans.

It did not name any companies.

Weibo said its decision to take down the "star power list", which ranked celebrities based on the popularity of their social posts and number of followers, was partly due to the "irrational

support" some fans were showing for celebrities.

"The list cannot comprehensively and objectively reflect the social influence of stars" and discourages healthy interaction between stars and fans, the company said in the statement.

The list was no longer visible on line. The People's Daily opinion piece is one of several editorials published this week calling for crackdowns on industries such as gaming and alcohol, which have prompted investors to dump stocks in targeted sectors.

The article argued that teenagers' cultural experience, self-awareness and consumption habits were all influenced by new media and technology, while the type of celebrities they followed and admired were closely related to online platforms. The editorial comes

after Chinese-Canadian pop singer Kris Wu was detained by police amid allegations of seducing underage women. Wu has denied the accusations.

Wu's case has been widely followed in China and seen as a sign of excesses in China's entertainment industry and timely in the wake of the global #MeToo movement.

Online platforms should "strictly control idol development programmes and strengthen management of talent show programmes" by controlling reviews, voting mechanisms and comments, the article said.

Popular platforms in China on which fans interact with celebrities, besides Weibo, include Bilibili Inc, Kuaishou Technology, and ByteDance-backed Douyin.

Man photographed as naked baby on Nirvana album cover sues for 'sexual exploitation'



A man who appeared as a naked baby on the cover of Nirvana's 1991 "Nevermind" album has filed a lawsuit against the surviving members of the influential band, alleging the image was child sexual exploitation.

In a lawsuit filed in federal court in California, Spencer Elden alleged he has suffered lifelong damages from the image used on the album's cover, which depicted him swimming naked toward a dollar bill pierced with a fish hook.

"Nevermind" is one of the best-selling albums of all time, having sold over 30 million copies worldwide.

"Defendants intentionally commercially marketed Spencer's

child pornography and leveraged the shocking nature of his image to promote themselves and their music at his expense," he alleged in the lawsuit.

Elden, now 30, is asking for \$150,000 in compensation from each of several defendants, including Universal Music Group, photographer Kirk Weddle, Nirvana drummer and rock legend Dave Grohl, Nirvana bassist Krist Novoselic and Courtney Love, the widow of Nirvana's lead singer Kurt Cobain, who died in 1994.

Universal Music Group, Weddle and a publicist for Love did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

According to the lawsuit, Elden's parents never received any compensation for the image shot by

Weddle, who was a friend of Elden's father.

The lawsuit alleged Cobain initially agreed to have a sticker censor Elden's genitals on the album cover, but no stickers were used.

Elden recreated the image as an adult in 2016, and has "Nevermind" tattooed on his chest.

Weddle told the Guardian in 2019 that he was still in contact with Elden.

Weddle told the publication: "I used to think, 'Man, when that kid is 16 he's gonna hate my guts!' He doesn't, but he's conflicted about the picture. He feels that everybody made money off it and he didn't. I think he deserves something. But it's always the record labels that make the money."

Nigeria's hyena men put maligned animals centre stage



A hyena may not be your average house pet, but in northern Nigeria some men keep the creatures in their homes, display them at festivals and even use their dung or saliva to make remedies.

Abdullahi Jahun comes from a line of hyena men, as they are called. He learnt how to tame and handle a hyena from his father, and now makes a living from touring around northern Nigeria to entertain crowds with his own animal.

"This was my job from when I started walking as a child," said Jahun during an appearance in the city of Kano. "I used to see my elders do it and became enthusiastic about it."

Jahun says he captured his hyena two years ago and has taken it to events such as festivals, coronations of traditional rulers, and durbars, a type of parade where horsemen in colourful costumes show off their skills to honour a local emir.

Jahun and his hyena usually appear alongside other street performers

such as snake charmers, drummers and dancers.

He allows children to sit on its back, and sometimes he carries a child on his own shoulders and the hyena around his hips at the same time.

Depending on the size of the crowd, he makes between 8,000 and 20,000 naira (\$20-\$50) per appearance.

Hyenas are often viewed as repulsive and sinister, partly due to their scavenging habits in the wild, but traditional leader Nasiru Wada says hyena men have been part of popular culture in northern Nigeria for many generations.

'DYING ART'

"It used to be really prolific but not anymore," he said, adding that hyenas are harder to come by than in the past due to shrinking habitats. "What we have seen now is a dying art."

Wada acknowledged that the

ways of the hyena men may not chime with modern ideas about the treatment of animals, and conservationists have raised questions about how they are captured and kept.

But Yaya Kawu, a farmer, hunter and traditional healer, who lives with a hyena and several snakes in a rural town in Kano State, says his animals are considered part of normal life in his community.

His mud brick compound regularly attracts gaggles of children eager to look at the animals, and neighbours who have just slaughtered a goat sometimes offer him a gift of meat for his hyena.

Kawu sells remedies made from hyena dung, saliva or hair, which he says can help with a range of ailments -- even bad behaviour by teenagers.

"Some young people, they get into drugs, alcohol. The parents come to me and I give them a remedy so that everything will be all right," he said. ●

'The sinister attracted me': Brazilian tattoo artist morphs into devil look-alike



Brazilian tattoo artist Michel Faro Prado has taken body modification to a new level by transforming himself into a devil look-alike.

Prado, known on social media as Diabao Prado or Devil Prado, changed his appearance by tattooing 80% of his body, reducing his nose size and removing one of his ring fingers to mimic a claw-like hand. He also has sharpened fangs and implanted horns.

"Turning into the devil wasn't something I planned, it was not my idea," said Prado. "The sinister attracted me."

Once homeless and a drug addict, the 46-year-old tattoo artist said those tough years helped make him a better man who is constantly working towards self-knowledge.

Despite his frightening image, Prado says he has a good heart. His wife Carol Prado, 36, who is known as Demon Woman, also

altered her body to fit the image. The Sao Paulo-based couple have undergone their most extreme modifications during the last five years.

Even though he has faced prejudice and hate, Prado has learned not to care what others think about him.

"What I desire differs from society's established patterns," he said. "I receive so much love, so much love that it (prejudice) has become so small."

Messi's exit sends shockwave through Barcelona



FC Barcelona fans were left reeling after the club announced that star striker Lionel Messi would be leaving the Camp Nou, where he has spent his entire professional career.

Messi, now 34, had been expected to sign a new five-year deal, but negotiations fell apart at the last hurdle night, with the club blaming financial restrictions imposed by La Liga.

"To suddenly end like this when you thought he was already contracted again... It's really sad, really really sad," said 36-year-old student and Barca fan Jose Rivero, standing on the street in the Catalan capital. Messi, who joined Barcelona aged 13, is the club's all-time top scorer, helping them claim 10 league titles,

four Champions Leagues and three Club World Cups during a glittering career.

Full page photographs of the six-time Ballon d'Or winner were splashed across the front pages of Spain's newspapers, while regional newspaper El Periodico ran with the one-word headline "Unbelievable."

"We've been used to having Messi for 20 years and this day was always going to arrive. Now it's here," said Tsvetan Georgiev, 36, a carpenter in Barcelona. "We have to accept it and support him wherever he wants to go."

With debts of more than 1 billion euros, Barcelona would have needed financial restructuring to resign Messi, whose last contract in 2017, was the most lucrative in world sport, according to Spanish

newspaper El Mundo. However, they failed to sufficiently reduce their wage bill to stay within La Liga's Financial Fair Play (FFP) regulations.

The Argentine's next move remains unclear, and for now he is without a club ahead of the 2021-2022 season.

He has long been linked with a move to Manchester City, where he would be reunited with his former Barcelona boss Pep Guardiola or France's Paris St Germain, which according to The Athletic, has already made overtures.

Still, some observers believe that the announcement of Messi's departure is actually Barca boldly calling La Liga's bluff over its FFP rules.



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