



4 Taxi drivers compete with private, unmarked taxis



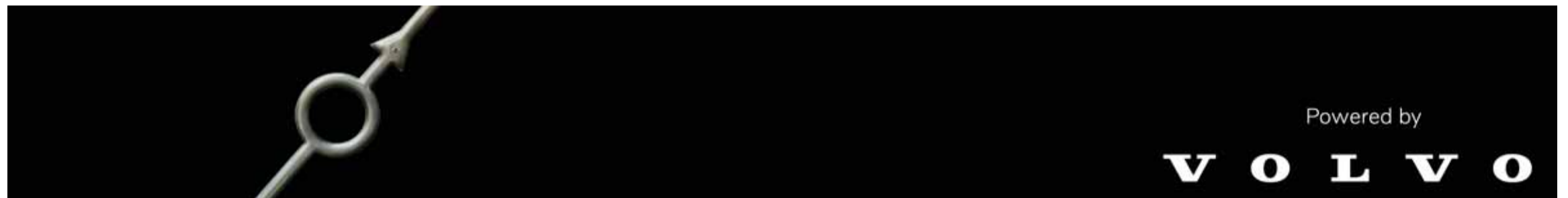
6 Lebanon's pandemic fighter restores faith in public sector



8 Microsoft to keep exploring TikTok deal after Trump talks



14 Defending champ Blues, NHL win leader Boston lose openers



Passengers from 31 countries can enter after 14-day layover

Arriving travelers also need a negative PCR test conducted within 72 hours



KUWAIT: Passengers arrive at Kuwait international Airport on Aug 1, 2020 after commercial flights resumed after months of shutdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

KUWAIT: Kuwait's civil aviation body reiterated late Sunday that non-Kuwaiti passengers from 31 countries are not allowed to enter Kuwait, whether flying directly or via other countries. However, non-Kuwaiti passengers will be allowed to fly to Kuwait if they stayed in third countries for at least 14 days, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) said.

After 14 days, they must undergo a PCR test for COVID-19 and provide a certificate proving a negative result of not being infected with the coronavirus, the DGCA added in a press statement. It noted that the validity of this certificate should not exceed 72 hours between the test date and arrival date to Kuwait.

The directorate announced on Saturday a ban on all passengers coming from 31 countries from entering Kuwait until further notice. It pointed out that the move was taken based on instructions by the Kuwaiti

health authorities due to the situation and repercussions caused by the spread of the coronavirus in these "high risk" countries.

The countries from which passengers are banned from entering Kuwait include Armenia, Bangladesh, Brazil, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chile, China, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Italy, Kosovo, Lebanon, Mexico, Moldova, Montenegro, Nepal, Northern Macedonia, Panama, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Serbia, Singapore, Spain, Sri Lanka and Syria.

Commercial flights resumed to Kuwait airport on Saturday, but a concerted campaign by a large number of lawmakers and Kuwaitis on social media forced the civil aviation authority to ban passengers from these 31 countries. The foreign ministry said the decision will be regularly revised to remove or add other countries. — KUNA

Indian ministers in hospital; Manila locks down again

BANGALORE/MANILA: India's interior minister and the chiefs of two big states have been hospitalized with COVID-19 as the country's daily cases topped 50,000 for a fifth straight day yesterday. The country reported 52,972 new confirmed infections in the past 24 hours, taking the total to 1.8 million - the third highest in the world after the United States and Brazil - data from India's Ministry of Health and Family Welfare showed yesterday. With 771 new deaths, the COVID-19 disease has now killed

Continued on Page 2

Saudi Arabia concludes hajj amid pandemic

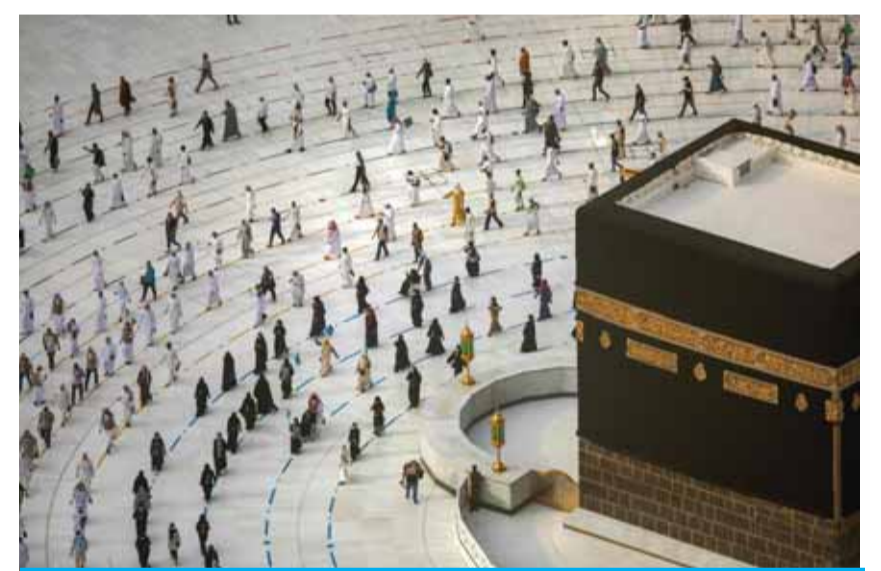
MAKKAH: Pilgrims circled Islam's holiest site along socially distanced paths Sunday in the final ritual of the hajj, the smallest in modern history as Saudi authorities sought to prevent a coronavirus outbreak. Only up to 10,000 Muslims took part in the hajj, a far cry from the 2.5 million who took part in the five-day annual pilgrimage last year. Masked pilgrims threw pebbles at a wall symbolizing Satan in Mina, close to the holy city of Makkah, on the final day of hajj, state media reported.

Instead of gathering the pebbles

themselves as in past years, they were handed them bagged and sterilized by hajj authorities, to protect against the novel coronavirus. Pilgrims returned to the Grand Mosque in Makkah later Sunday to perform a final "tawaf", or circling of the Kaaba - a cubic structure towards which Muslims around the world pray.

Holding the ritual in the shadow of the pandemic required "double efforts" by Saudi authorities, King Salman said on Friday after being discharged from hospital following surgery to remove his gallbladder. "The hajj this year was restricted to a very limited number of people from multiple nationalities, ensuring the ritual was completed despite the difficult circumstances," said the kingdom's ruler.

Continued on Page 2



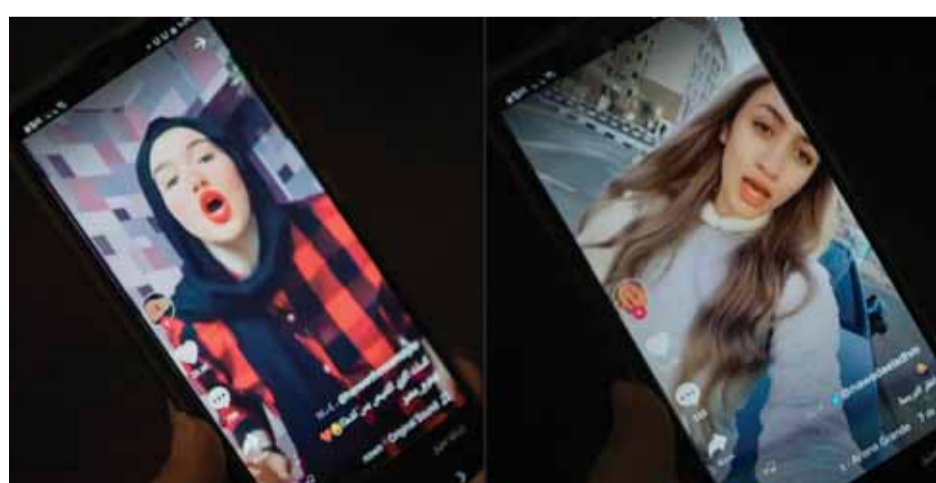
MAKKAH: Pilgrims circumambulate the Kaaba at the center of the Grand Mosque along specific pre-ordained rings on the final day of the annual hajj pilgrimage. — AFP

Egypt grapples with women's freedoms online

CAIRO: Social media has become a new and dangerous battleground for women's rights in Egypt after young TikTok influencers were jailed while a resurgent #MeToo movement decried male sexual violence. Last Monday, a court sentenced five female social media influencers, Haneen Hossam, Mowada Al-Adham and three others, to two years in jail each on charges of violating public morals over content posted to video-sharing app TikTok.

International digital rights group Access Now described them as "all women, all young, all exercising their right to freedom of expression online". Just two days later, a court sentenced another young social media influencer, Manar Samy, to three years in prison over TikTok videos, deeming the clips in which she dances and lip-syncs to popular songs to be "inciting debauchery".

Many in the deeply conservative country have cheered on the arrests, as traditional social values clash with online con-



CAIRO: This combination of pictures shows a woman watching videos of Egyptian influencers Haneen Hossam (left) and Mowada Al-Adham (right) on the video-sharing app TikTok. — AFP

tent seen as racy and sexually suggestive. Egypt has in recent years enforced strict Internet controls as it walks a tight line between balancing the Islamic law that shapes its governance and adapting to a rapidly shifting society with a penchant for social media content. Stringent laws were approved in 2018 allowing authorities to block websites seen as a threat to national security and to monitor personal social media accounts with over 5,000 followers.

The six jailed women combined have

millions of followers. Hossam was arrested after posting a clip saying that girls could make money by working with her, a message that was interpreted as a call for prostitution, while Adham had posted satirical videos on TikTok and Instagram. Aside from being a virtual battleground of competing interpretations of morality, social media has also empowered young Egyptian women to speak up about sexual assault, sometimes with negative consequences.

Continued on Page 2

SpaceX brings US astronauts safely home

WASHINGTON: America's first crewed spaceship to fly to the International Space Station in nearly a decade returned safely to Earth on Sunday, splashing down in the Gulf of Mexico. The mission, carried out jointly by NASA and the private company SpaceX, demonstrated that the United States has the capacity once more to send its astronauts to space and bring them back. The SpaceX Crew Dragon Endeavour splashed into the water off Pensacola, Florida at 2:48 pm (1848 GMT), trailed by its four main parachutes.

It was the first water landing for a crewed US spaceship since the 1975 Apollo-Soyuz mission. "It's truly our honor and privilege," said pilot Doug Hurley, who was joined on the mission by commander Bob Behnken. "On behalf of the NASA and SpaceX teams, welcome back to planet Earth and thanks for flying SpaceX," replied SpaceX's Mike Heiman, to laughter in the control room.



NASA astronauts Robert Behnken (left) and Douglas Hurley are seen inside the SpaceX Crew Dragon Endeavour spacecraft shortly after landing in the Gulf of Mexico on Sunday. — AFP

A flotilla of civilian boats swarmed the landing zone as a recovery ship sped to the scorched capsule and hoisted it aboard with its crane. The Coast Guard said it had warned people to stay away from the capsule but "numerous boaters" ignored the requests. The "capsule was in the water for a good period of time," said NASA administrator Jim Bridenstine, "the boats just made a beeline for it."

The hatch opening was delayed as a team worked to stop a potentially dangerous leak of rocket fuel vapor. "What's not common is having passers-by approach the vehicle at

Continued on Page 2

Local

Coronavirus in Kuwait: What we know so far

KUWAIT: Kuwait has recorded 68,299 cases infected with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) as of yesterday, in addition to 461 deaths. With the exception of 126 cases in intensive care, all infected cases are in stable condition and are recovering in quarantined locations designated by the government for this purpose, while tens of thousands have been discharged from quarantine after exhibiting no symptoms during their 14-day quarantine period, the Ministry of Health confirmed. Meanwhile, 59,739 people have recovered completely after previously being infected with the virus, while there are 8,099 people receiving treatment.

Curfew

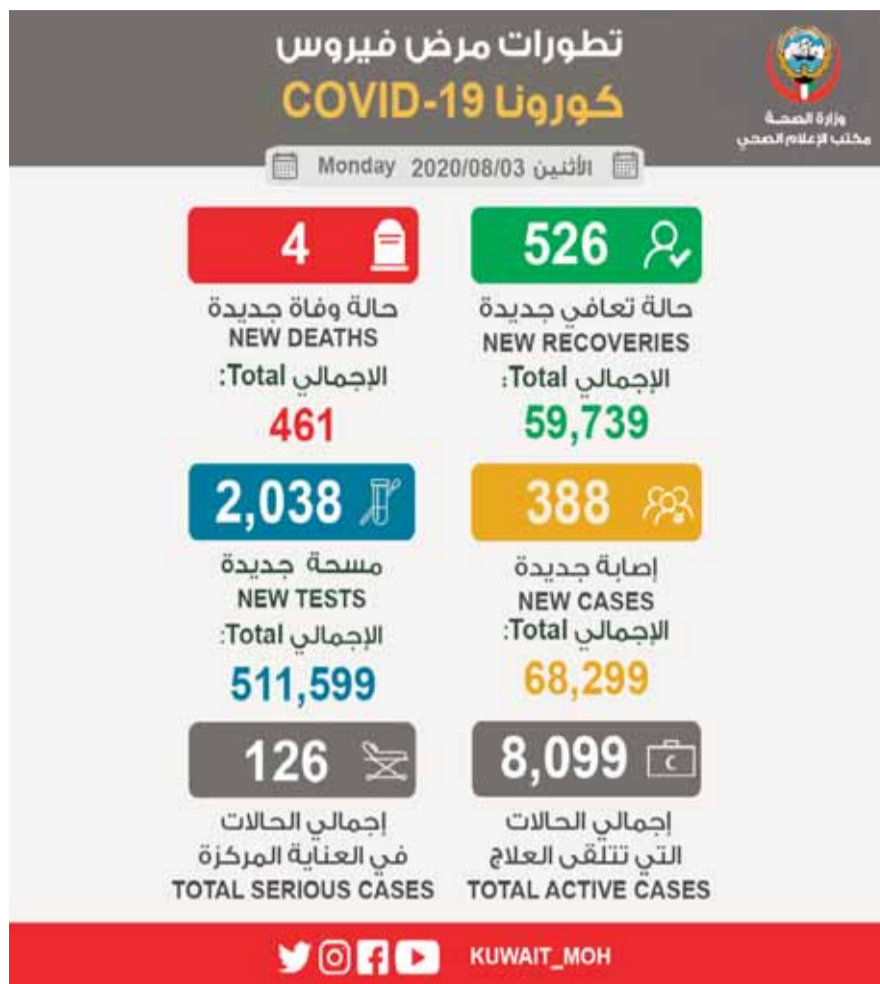
Kuwait moved to the third phase of a five-phase plan for a gradual return to normal life on June 28, 2020. The curfew is set from 9:00 pm to 3:00 am, government and private offices are able to operate with up to 50 percent capacity, mosques are allowed to host Friday prayers with strict social distancing and health precautions observed, malls can operate from 10:00 am to 8:00 pm, taxis are allowed to resume operations but they are allowed to carry only one passenger, while resorts, hotels and furnished apartment businesses are allowed to reopen.

The first phase included a total lockdown on Farwaniya, Khaitan, and Hawally, joining Mahboula and Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh which were put under lockdown earlier. The lockdown ended in Hawally and Khaitan on June 21, 2020, in Mahboula and Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh on July 9, 2020, and in Farwaniya on July 26, 2020.

Commercial flights

Commercial flights resumed on August 1, while the airport will operate at 30 percent capacity during the six-month first phase of a three-stage airport reopening plan. However, flights to and from the following countries are suspended until further notice: Armenia, Bangladesh, Brazil, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chile, China, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Italy, Kosovo, Lebanon, Mexico, Moldova, Montenegro, Nepal, Northern Macedonia, Panama, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Serbia, Singapore, Spain, Sri Lanka and Syria.

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation presented a set of rules for the safe resumption of air travel. The new rules mandate all travelers to wear protective facemasks and keep a hand sanitizer in their possession, besides strictly abiding by social distancing guide-



lines and keeping hand luggage to a minimum. Departing passengers are required to register to the 'Kuwait Mosafer' app, and provide negative COVID-19 test results before boarding their flights to destinations where such tests are required. Citizens are also required to obtain travel insurance that covers COVID-19 treatment. Manual checks of tickets have now been scaled back as a result of the pandemic in favor of the more popular digital e-tickets, whose scanning requires no physical contact. Passengers must be present at the airport no less than four hours before departure to ensure a smooth and convenient journey.

Meanwhile, arriving passengers must register to the 'Shlonik' app before boarding, and obtain an accredited PCR certificate showing negative COVID-19 test results valid for 96 hours from the test's date. Passengers will have their temperatures checked before boarding the plane and upon arrival, while a random PCR test will be conducted for 10 percent of passengers on each flight. All arriving passengers must home quarantine for 14 days upon arrival. Kuwait had earlier sent special flights to repatriate Kuwaitis back home from countries affected with the virus' spread.

Meanwhile, the Cabinet announced on April 9 the operation of all airline flights for expats who are wishing to return back to their countries. Kuwait suspended issuing entry permits and visas unless those issued through diplomatic missions.

School year ended

The Ministry of Education announced on July 17 ending the 2019-2020 school year, with the remaining part of the curriculum of the year's second half will be integrated into the first chapter of the next academic year 2020-2021 virtually effective as of October 4, after modifying the curriculum. Pre-school pupils, students of elementary and intermediate levels will be promoted to the higher classes. As to the high school level, students who desire to improve their grades can re-enroll in the scholastic year. As to grade 12, the remaining period of the second semester of the 2019-2020 school year was set at six weeks, while curricula were amended in tandem with the complementary study period, due between August 9 and September 17, and that will be via electronic means. Students' assessment will be on weekly basis through interaction and virtual pres-

ence at the set educational website. The ministry is still expected to release regulations regarding the start of the 2020/2021 school year at foreign private schools. Earlier, the Ministry of Education had suspended classes at all public and private schools (for both students and teaching staffs); first from March 1 to March 12, and later extended it until March 29, before eventually suspending schools until August for grade 12 and October for other stages.

Hotlines

The Ministry of Health has set the following hotlines to receive inquiries about the coronavirus 24/7: 24970967 - 96049698 - 99048619.

The Education Ministry set the following hotlines to receive inquiries on school closures related to the anti-coronavirus measures:

- 24970967 (24/7 hotline)
- 51575591 (Capital Educational Zone)
- 51576117 (Hawally Educational Zone)
- 51576576 (Farwaniya Educational Zone)
- 51577055 (Jahra Educational Zone)
- 51577655 (Ahmadi Educational Zone)
- 51577951 (Mubarak Al-Kabeer Educational Zone)
- 51578171 (Religious Studies Department)
- 51588599 (Private Education Department)
- 51592515 (Services Department)
- 51594544 (Public Relations Department)

Medicine delivery

Kuwait's Ministry of Health (MOH) launched a new medicine delivery service for people in Kuwait, which they can use to order medications to be delivered during curfew hours. The medications will be delivered within 72 hours after the order is submitted. To place an order, patients should send a WhatsApp to the numbers for the hospitals and medical centers as listed below. The patient should include their name, Civil ID number, hospital or clinic file number, mobile phone number and the medicine needed to the following numbers:
Amiri Hospital: 50880699
Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital: 50880755
Farwaniya Hospital: 50880852
Adan Hospital: 50880908
Jahra Hospital: 50881066
Sabah Hospital: 97632660
Jaber Hospital: 96992079
Ibn Sina Hospital: 99613948
Chest Hospital: 99258749
Razi Hospital: 97633487
Kuwait Cancer Control Center: 96735242

Psychiatric Hospital: 97350113
Physiotherapy Hospital: 99824037
Maternity Hospital: 98559531
As'ad Al-Hamad Dermatology Center: 98514508
Zain Hospital: 97552031
NBK Hospital: 96931761
Al-Rashed Allergy Hospital: 94162470
Infectious Diseases Hospital: 96989164
Palliative Care Hospital: 94024786
Sabah Al-Ahmad Urology Center: 90952469
KFH Addiction Treatment Center: 94169363

Meanwhile, all licensed pharmacies in Kuwait delivering medicine are allowed to continue their services 24 hours a day. The Ministry of Health is also asking doctors and nurses affiliated with the private medical sector to volunteer in order to contribute to the fight against the virus. Volunteering is available through the link: <http://volunteering.q8-ehealth.com>. The ministry had closed all private clinics and medical centers effective March 22, 2020 until further notice.

Mental health assistance

The Kuwait Center for Mental Health provides help through its suicide hotline: 24621770 (8 am - 5 pm). Meanwhile, the Kuwait Psychological Association (KPA) is providing consultation through the phone for people suffering from the psychological impacts of coronavirus. Different doctors are working on the hotline in different timings as follows:

Dr Rashed Al-Sahl: on Monday and Wednesday 10:00 am - 1:00 pm. Call 9797-6168.

Dr Fahad Al-Tasha: daily from 8:00 pm - 12:00 am. Call 9904-8258.

Dr Othman Al-Asfour: daily 5:00 pm - 8:00 pm. Call 9938-5350.

Dr Mohammed Al-Khalidi (head of this team): daily 9:00 am - 12:00 pm. Call 9903-6470.

Dr Ahmad Al-Khalidi: daily 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm. Call 9910-7965.

Dr Muneera Al-Qattan: Monday and Wednesday 9:00 am - 1:00 pm. Call 9953-3108.

Dr Zainab Al-Saffar: Sunday and Thursday 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm. Call 9954-9908.

Dr Sameera Al-Kandari: Tuesday 9:00 pm - 12:00 am. Call 6770-9434.

Dr Kawthar Al-Yaqout: Monday and Wednesday 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm. Call 5521-0088.

For information and other concerns, call 9401-4283.

Egypt grapples with women's...

Continued from Page 1

In May, a shocking video came to light of a young woman sobbing, her face battered and bruised. Menna Abdel-Aziz, 17, posted an Instagram video in which she said she had been gang raped by a group of young men. The authorities' response was swift: The six alleged attackers were arrested - but so was Abdel-Aziz. All were charged with "promoting debauchery". "She committed crimes, she admitted to some of them," the prosecutor-general said in a

statement. "She deserves to be punished."

Since Abdel-Aziz's case surfaced, a revived #MeToo movement among Egyptian women, mostly from affluent backgrounds, has sprung into action. A gang rape allegation made in late July stemming from a prominent social media account has been one trigger. Another was young women posting testimonials about sexual misconduct that led to the arrest earlier in the month of Ahmed Bassam Zaki, 22, a former student of some of Egypt's most elite schools and universities.

But the movement faces an uphill battle. Comedians, academics, bloggers, journalists, political dissidents, lawyers and activists are among those who have been jailed in recent years, and a music video director has died in custody. — AFP

Indian ministers in hospital; Manila...

Continued from Page 1

38,135 people in India, including that of a minister on Sunday in the most-populous state of Uttar Pradesh. On Sunday, federal interior minister Amit Shah, one of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's closest aides, as well as the chief minister of the southern state of Karnataka, were hospitalized. The chief of the central state of Madhya Pradesh is also recovering in hospital. It was not immediately clear whether Shah's cabinet colleagues, including the finance minister, had isolated themselves.

As infections continue to surge in the country, having registered a record of 57,118 on Saturday, India has also stepped up efforts to test more people and search for a vaccine. The health ministry said on Twitter that the country's drugs authorities had allowed Serum Institute of India, the world's largest manufacturer of vaccines by volume, to conduct clinical trials of a vaccine candidate developed by Oxford University and AstraZeneca Plc.

Meanwhile, more than 27 million people in the Philippines - about a quarter of the population - will go back into lockdown today after overwhelmed health workers warned the country was losing the battle against the coronavirus. Since the beginning of June, when much of the country emerged from one of the world's longest stay-at-home orders, confirmed infections in the archipelago have increased fivefold, surging past 100,000.

The new restrictions announced by President Rodrigo Duterte late Sunday apply to the capital Manila and four surrounding provinces on the main island of Luzon.

For the next two weeks, public transport, including the ubiquitous jeepney minibuses, will be halted

and domestic flights grounded to try and slow the spread of the virus, which has killed more than 2,000 people in the country. People have been ordered to stay home unless they need to buy essential goods or exercise outdoors.

Only a limited number of businesses will be allowed to operate and restaurants will be permitted to do take-aways only. "We really fell short. Nobody anticipated this," Duterte said, as he rejected calls for the Health Minister Francisco Duque to be sacked. "Nobody expected that thousands will get sick on a single day."

The move comes after 80 medical associations representing tens of thousands of doctors on Saturday called for Duterte to tighten virus restrictions as hospitals, unable to cope with the influx of patients, turned people away. Yesterday, they welcomed Duterte's decision, saying it will give medical workers breathing room and buy time for the system to handle the surge. The Philippines announced a record 5,032 new infections on Sunday. More than 5,000 medical workers have contracted the virus - including 500 in the past week, health department figures show. A total of 38 have died so far.

The government has blamed poor compliance with virus restrictions for the sharp increase in infections which have been concentrated in Manila and the central city of Cebu. In a bid to curb rampant local transmission, police have been deployed to force people who have tested positive for the virus and cannot self-isolate at home into government-run quarantine facilities. Researchers from the University of the Philippines project the total number of infections to top 200,000 by the end of August.

Despite the grim trajectory, Duterte has been reluctant to reimpose a lockdown after the previous stay-at-home order took a heavy toll on the economy and threw millions out of work. Data to be released on Thursday is expected to show the economy tumbled into recession in the first half. — Agencies

lars of Islam and a must for able-bodied Muslims at least once in their lifetime, is usually one of the world's largest religious gatherings.

But local media said up to 10,000 people already residing in the kingdom were participating this year. The hajj ministry had initially said around 1,000 pilgrims would be allowed. The hajj typically costs thousands of dollars for pilgrims, who often save for years as well as endure long waiting lists for a chance to attend. But this year, the Saudi government is covering the expenses of all pilgrims, providing them with meals, hotel accommodation and healthcare, worshippers said. — AFP

SpaceX brings US astronauts...

Continued from Page 1

close range with nitrogen-tetroxide in the atmosphere... We need to make sure we're warning people not to get close to the spacecraft in the future," Bridenstine said.

Around an hour after splashdown, the astronauts exited the capsule and headed for shore on a helicopter. They were reunited with their families in Houston, where they walked off a plane - in apparently good physical shape and upbeat spirits - at a military base. Addressing a socially distanced welcome ceremony in a hangar, Behnken, a veteran of the Space Shuttle program, praised the SpaceX team behind the successful mission. "There's something special about having that capability to launch and bring your own astronauts home," he said.

A visibly excited SpaceX founder Elon Musk said the mission heralded a new era. "We're going to go to the Moon, we're going to have a base on the Moon; we're going to Mars," he said. "I'm not very religious but I prayed for this one." President Donald Trump - who had travelled to Florida for the capsule's launch two months ago - hailed its safe return. "Thank you to all!" he tweeted. "Great to have NASA Astronauts return to Earth after very successful two month mission." The United States has had to rely on Russia for rides to space since the last Space Shuttle flew in 2011. The mission is also a huge win for Musk's SpaceX, which was founded in only 2002 but has leap-frogged its way past Boeing, its main competitor in the commercial space race. The US has paid the two companies a total of about \$7 billion for their "space taxi" contracts, though aerospace giant Boeing's efforts have floundered. The Crew Dragon



The SpaceX Crew Dragon Endeavour spacecraft lands in the Gulf of Mexico. — AFP

capsule performed several precisely choreographed sequences in order to return home safely. First, it jettisoned its "trunk" that contains its power, heat and other systems, which burned up in the atmosphere. It then fired its thrusters to maneuver into the proper orbit and trajectory for splashdown.

As it re-entered the atmosphere at a speed of around 28,000 kph, it experienced temperatures of 1,900 degrees Celsius. It deployed two sets of parachutes on its descent, bringing its speed down to a mere 24 mph as it hit the Gulf of Mexico. Endeavour will now undergo a six-week inspection to certify the vessel as worthy of future low-Earth orbit missions. The next mission - dubbed "Crew-1" - will involve a team of four: three NASA astronauts along with Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency mission specialist Soichi Noguchi. Launch is set for late September, and the crew is due to spend six months on the space station. — AFP

Local

Assembly to debate two heavyweight grillings today

MPs recall Iraqi invasion anniversary, demand report publication

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The National Assembly returns to regular meetings today after a stoppage for several weeks over the coronavirus pandemic and will begin by debating two heavyweight grillings against the finance and interior ministers.

MP Riyadh Al-Adasani has filed to grill Finance Minister Barrak Al-Sheetan for allegedly submitting austerity proposals to the cabinet that would directly impact the income of Kuwaiti citizens. The lawmaker is also accusing the minister of failing to adequately act on the corruption case of the Malaysian sovereign fund.

MP Shuwaib Al-Muwaizri meanwhile filed to grill Interior Minister Anas Al-Saleh over allegations that he made economic benefits by making commercial contracts with the government, failed to halt physical abuse by police and also failed to stop violations in the electoral rolls.

The lawmaker on Sunday insisted that the grilling should be held in public for the facts to be known by the people. Saleh meanwhile asked the public prosecution to investigate the allegations that his companies signed contracts with the government reflecting conflict of interest.

In the meantime, lawmakers on Sunday recalled the 30th anniversary of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait by highlighting the steadfastness of the Kuwaiti people that helped evict the Iraqi army only seven months after the August 2, 1990 invasion.

Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said the Kuwaiti people succeeded in defending their homeland by sacrificing their blood for the sake of their country.



Lawmaker pushes for public debate

MP Osama Al-Shaheen called on the assembly office to lift restrictions on the publication of a report prepared by a parliamentary fact-finding committee in 1995. He said that being a very important national document, the report must be released and the Kuwaiti people, especially the younger generation, be allowed to read it.

MP Ahmad Al-Fadhil called to honor martyrs during the invasion by naming streets after them and by teaching their stories at schools. MP Thamer Al-Suwait said the invasion anniversary is very painful but the Kuwaiti people overcame it by their unity, adding that what is more painful now is the widespread corruption in the country which he described as a new invasion.



The National Assembly.

Deputy Amir thanks Eid Al-Adha well-wishers

KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday thanked all citizens inside and outside Kuwait and residents on their sincere congratulations and heartfelt sentiments on Eid Al-Adha. His Highness the Deputy Amir wished Kuwait more security, prosperity and progress under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. His Highness Sheikh Nawaf wished His Highness the Amir a speedy recovery and everlasting wellbeing. — KUNA



Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah



KUWAIT: Firemen search for a person who went missing off Sabah Al-Ahmad Sea City's coast. The victim's body was later located and handed over to medical emergency teams.



A truck completely destroyed by a fire reported in Farwaniya.



A fireman puts out a blaze that started following a two-truck collision on Jassem Al-Kharafi Road.

Man drowns off Sabah Al-Ahmad beach

KUWAIT: A man drowned while swimming off Sabah Al-Ahmad Sea City's coast, Kuwait Fire Service Directorate confirmed. Firefighters were dispatched to the scene after receiving a report about a 37-year-old Kuwaiti man who went missing

after going for a swim. Firemen were able to find the victim's body after sweeping the area, and handed it over to medical emergency teams. In this regard, KFSD's public relations and media department released a statement urging the public to take all precautionary measures at beaches, and advised those who cannot swim well to wear life vests. Several drowning cases were reported in Kuwait after beaches were reopened following the lifting of the total curfew on May 31.

In other news, firemen put out a blaze that engulfed a trailer truck loaded with sponge and garments while it was parked in an open yard in Farwaniya. The fire was contained without reporting

any casualties, KFSD said in a press statement. Meanwhile, firefighters battled a blaze that broke out in a sixth-floor apartment in Farwaniya. Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh and Sabhan fire teams rushed to the scene and immediately evacuated the 10-storey building before putting out the flames. No injuries were reported. Case were filed and further investigations are in progress to determine the cause of the fires.

Separately, two trucks collided along Jassem Al-Kharafi Road (Sixth Ring Road) opposite Sabah Al-Nasser, KFSD said, noting that one of the trucks caught fire and two people were trapped inside until fire teams managed to rescue them and contain the flames.



Heavy damage left by a fire reported in a Farwaniya apartment.

News in brief

National heroes honored

KUWAIT: Roads and tunnels across Kuwait will soon bear the likeness of national heroes who sacrificed their lives during Iraq's invasion of the country thirty years ago. Minister of Housing and Public Works Rana Al-Fares said. The initiative is a gesture of appreciation and a homage to Kuwait's martyrs, she noted, adding that the project would see the light of day soon.

Grade 12 school day

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Education announced the mechanism for completing the 2019-2020 academic year for grade 12 students at Arabic public and private schools through e-learning. It explained that the mechanism for evaluating students was determined according to the modified curriculum at 25 percent for attendance and absence, 25 percent for interaction and participation, 25 percent for assignments (homework), and 25 percentage for reports. The school day will be from 8 am to 1 pm, with 4 classes daily starting August 9, it explained.

4,000 to receive support

KUWAIT: More than 4,000 Kuwaitis have registered with the government due to lack of salary, Al-Anbaa Arabic newspaper reported. Citizens were invited to register on a new online platform launched two weeks ago to receive support from the government. The Ministry of Social Affairs will evaluate cases on an individual basis and provide support for those impacted by the coronavirus crisis. The Public Authority for Manpower and the Public Institution for Social Security will also be providing assistance.

Flights operating normally

KUWAIT: The Directorate General of Civil Aviation denied news reported in a local Arabic newspaper alleging that all flights at Kuwait International Airport have been stopped. The aviation authority affirmed that commercial flights are operating from and to Kuwait International Airport normally.

Stay safe. Stay home. Stay informed.



Kuwait Times
Established 1961
The First Daily in The Arabian Gulf

THE LEADING INDEPENDENT
DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF
ESTABLISHED 1961

Founder and Publisher
YOUSUF S. AL-ALYAN

Editor-in-Chief
ABD AL-RAHMAN AL-ALYAN

EDITORIAL : 24833199-24833358-24833432
ADVERTISING : 24835616/7
FAX : 24835620/1
CIRCULATION : 24833199 Extn. 163
ACCOUNTS : 24833199 Extn. 125
COMMERCIAL : 24835618
P.O.Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait.
Email: info@kuwaittimes.com
Website: www.kuwaittimes.net

Kuwait shines light on child rights amid pandemic

KUWAIT: Kuwait's human rights office said on Sunday that as the world continues to grapple with the coronavirus crisis, a child rights approach should be a pivotal part of its response to the pandemic. With their academic futures thrown into limbo because of the coronavirus, children have had to withstand the devastating effects of the pandemic, which has upended their social lives. Kuwait's human rights watchdog said in a statement.

An ad hoc committee looking into child rights has been formed to ensure that Kuwaiti children, who are entitled to free and compulsory education, are not deprived of their right to learn in the midst of these trying times, the statement highlighted. Another aspect the committee would be taking into account is child healthcare, the statement highlighted, with greater attention given to kids growing up in dysfunctional families who are often prone to emotional neglect, it added.

Measures will also be taken to protect children from violence, whether its domestic trouble or skirmishes at school, including setting up a hotline that would make reporting such abuse much easier, it revealed. The local media will be joining this collective endeavor as well, with a campaign set to be rolled out to create more awareness on the matter across various state bodies, aiming to make sure that the inalienable rights of children are never disregarded, it said. — KUNA

Taxi drivers compete with private, unmarked taxis

Average daily income drops from KD 35 to KD 10

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: Taxi resumed services on July 28 after almost four months of hiatus, but some taxi drivers are complaining about competition from private or unmarked taxis. "I hope the government will stop the use of private cars as taxis. They have a great advantage now because they can earn more money than us, because they can carry more than one passenger, while taxis are not permitted to take more than one passenger," a taxi driver said.



KUWAIT: A man talks to a taxi driver at a street in Salmiya. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

“ We are in great trouble ”

The government decided to suspend all taxi services on March 25 in an effort to stop the spread of the coronavirus. However, based on Kuwait's five-phase plan to return to normalcy, taxis returned to the streets of Kuwait with the onset of phase three. "The problem now is the low count of passengers. We are in direct competition with private cars that are still picking passengers from the streets. If this continues, we will not be able to pay

KD 7.5 daily (to taxi operators)," he said.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, he said his average daily income was KD 30 to 35, but now it's barely KD 10. "We have to pay our operators KD 7.5 daily, so how much is left for us? Not even KD 3. So we are in great trouble. How are we going to survive? We have families to feed as well: we have to pay the rent and for food. The KD 3 is barely good for the gas to run the taxi. So we have nothing left for ourselves," the cabbie said. "We hope the operators will be flexible or give us a discount, but they won't listen. They said we are back to

work and now we need to give them the daily fee of KD 7.5, or even KD 10," he added.

In the absence of taxis, some private cars have taken advantage of the situation to pick up passengers. According to taxi operators, these unmarked taxis are still plying the roads. Meanwhile, in the absence of buses, people are complaining about the passenger limit. "If we are a family, do we have to take separate taxis? I hope the government will consider this and allow buses to run again soon. We have to save money for our families too," a passenger opined.

Shaheed Park commemorates Kuwait martyrs

KUWAIT: Shaheed Park hosted an Art exhibition on August 2, 2020 to commemorate Kuwait's martyrs on the 30th anniversary of the Iraqi Invasion. The 'Consolidation' art exhibition, held at the park's multipurpose hall, featured art by artist an designer Jasem Al-Nashmi, who designed and executed an interactive artistic structure to commemorate Kuwaiti martyrs. Visitors remotely interacted with the digital monument while observing social distancing, and each platform contained information

about the concept of consolidation.

In this regard, the park's manager Salman Al-Roshoud said that the monument was especially designed to honor those who sacrificed their lives in defense of Kuwait and its freedom. He added that the name 'consolidation' was chosen to reconfirm the concept of solidarity during wars and various challenges, and show how a group of individuals can create a force capable of defeating enemies and overcoming challenges.

Meanwhile, Nashmi said that the structure is made by the people for the people, adding that there is a digital platform where people can view the structure online, in addition to the real-life monument built in the park to show visitors the heroism of the resistance during the invasion and commemorate the martyrs.

"This structure highlights the positive sides during the invasion when the Kuwaiti people showed



Jasem Al-Nashmi



Salman Al-Roshoud

unrivalled solidarity, patience, courage, faith, loyalty, unity and patriotism," Nashmi stressed, noting that each of these values is represented in the structure by an upside down pyramid.

Kuwait Times
ESTABLISHED 1961
THE FIRST DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF

STAY CONNECTED

- Read Kuwait Times now on your phone for **FREE**
- Send Subscribe to **+965 944 88888**
- Enjoy the first daily paper in Kuwait on your phone

P.O. Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait
Tel: 24833199 - 24833358 - 24835616/7 | Fax: 24835620 - 24835621
E: info@kuwaittimes.net



KUWAIT: Kuwait National Guard's Undersecretary Lt Gen Hashem Abdul Raziq Al-Refaie recently visited the National Guard's 5th Facility Protection Platoon on guard at the central oil district and the fuel reservoirs in Sabhan, where he congratulated officers on the occasion of Eid Al-Adha.

Kuwait's June crude oil exports to Japan down

TOKYO: Kuwait's crude oil exports to Japan fell 1.9 percent in June from a year earlier to 6.34 million barrels, or 212,000 barrels per day (bpd), for the third straight month of decline, government data showed. As Japan's third-biggest oil provider, Kuwait supplied 11.1 percent of its total crude imports, compared with 7.8 percent in the

same month of last year, the Japanese Natural Resources and Energy Agency said in a preliminary report. Japan's overall imports of crude oil in June plunged 31.2 percent year-on-year to 1.91 million bpd, down for the sixth month in a row. Shipments from the Middle East accounted for 95.2 percent of the total, up 8.2 percentage points from the year before. Saudi Arabia remained Japan's top oil supplier, but imports from the kingdom shrank 18.1 percent from a year earlier to 761,000 bpd, followed by the United Arab Emirates with 671,000 bpd, down 28.9 percent. Qatar ranked fourth with 159,000 bpd and Vietnam fifth with 30,000 bpd, respectively. Japan is the world's-third biggest oil consumer after China and the US. — KUNA



Tropical storm roars up the US east coast

Verdict looms in the killing of Lebanese former PM Hariri

Page 7

Page 6



SYDNEY: People wearing face masks walk on a street in the central business district of Sydney yesterday. Australia's total reported infections of the COVID-19 reached almost 18,000 in a population of 25 million. — AFP

Global virus cases top 18 million

Australian second-largest city begins curfew

MELBOURNE: Australia's second-largest city started a six-week curfew and the Philippine capital was ordered back into lockdown, as the number of global coronavirus cases yesterday topped 18 million. The spread of the virus is gathering pace with worldwide deaths nearing 700,000, and a White House adviser warning that it was "extraordinarily widespread" in the United States—the worst-hit nation. There has been a resurgence in countries that had previously brought their outbreaks under control, including Australia, where sweeping new restrictions kicked in for hard-hit Victoria state despite their heavy economic cost.

They include a nighttime curfew in Melbourne for the next six weeks, with the city ordering non-essential businesses to close, and a ban on weddings. "It's hard, especially knowing that in other parts of the country people are quite free to go around and (enjoy) almost normal life," said Tracy Skilling, 42, who manages a cafe in Melbourne. "People just seem quite despondent and down... and just want it to be over." Melbourne had continued to report hundreds of new cases daily even as other states in Australia reported zero or a small number.

Authorities in the Philippines have also had to reimpose curbs after infections surged past 100,000, forcing more than 27 million people—including in the capital Manila—back into lockdown on Tuesday for two weeks. The World Health Organization has warned that the effects



Philippine capital ordered back into lockdown

of the crisis "will be felt for decades to come", and that the pandemic is likely to be protracted. Many parts of the world are still battling their first waves of devastation. Iran—fighting the Middle East's deadliest outbreak—reported its highest single-day infection count in nearly a

month, warning that most of its provinces are facing a resurgence.

'Extraordinarily widespread'

The United States has reported 4.6 million infections, with nearly 155,000 deaths, and a top White House adviser said it had entered a "new phase" of the pandemic. "What we are seeing today is different from March and April," Deborah Birx, head of the White House coronavirus task force, told CNN. "It is extraordinarily widespread," she warned. The pandemic has spurred a race for a vaccine, as without a viable treatment, economically costly and unpopular lockdowns in varying forms are among the few options to stop the virus. Tens of millions have been left jobless in the United States, and similar devastation has been unleashed on the global economy too. Protests have broken out in nations on nearly every continent, with governments facing pressure from different sections of society and from across the political spectrum. Berlin saw thousands rally over the weekend against virus restrictions, with far-left and far-right demonstrators joined by those supporting widely debunked conspiracy theories.

Restrictions at festivals

The pandemic has upended life across the planet, with the need for social distancing dramatically changing the management of large crowds—from religious gatherings like the Islamic Hajj to spectator sports and cultural events. China's famous Qingdao annual beer festival opened on Friday with the main "Beer City" limited to only 30 percent capacity, and temperature checks for visitors. Still, many were happy to get a chance to attend such a festival.

"It's been half a year since I last travelled around," tourist Wang Hua told state broadcaster CCTV. "I feel so happy and relaxed right now." And on the Balearic party island of Ibiza, the government has only allowed clubs with a capacity of 300 or less to open—with mega clubs closed for the season. Nightclub operators said social distancing would make it impossible to stage the wild parties Ibiza is famous for. "When we shout, saliva can go as far as two meters," said Jose Luis Benitez, head of the Ibiza Leisure Association. "Who can keep distances inside a nightclub?" — AFP



ISRAEL-SYRIA BORDER: An Israeli military vehicle patrols near the Syria border in the Israeli-annexed Golan Heights yesterday, near the location where the army said it killed four men laying explosives at a security fence. — AFP

Israeli army kills 4 planting bombs at the Syria border

JERUSALEM: The Israeli army said yesterday it killed four men laying explosives at a security fence along the Israeli-occupied sector of the Golan Heights, adjacent to Syrian-controlled territory. "They were inside Israeli territory but beyond the fence," military spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Jonathan Conricus told journalists in a telephone briefing. He said an Israeli commando unit lying in wait attacked the intruders shortly after 11 pm Sunday with assault rifles and sniper fire backed by air strikes.

"Our estimate is that all four were killed," Conricus said in English, adding that there were no Israeli casualties. Tensions are already high between bitter rivals Israel and Syria. Last month, Israeli army helicopters struck military targets in southern Syria in retaliation

for earlier "munitions" fire towards Israel. Israel did not directly blame Syrian forces for the munitions fire, but said it held the Damascus government responsible.

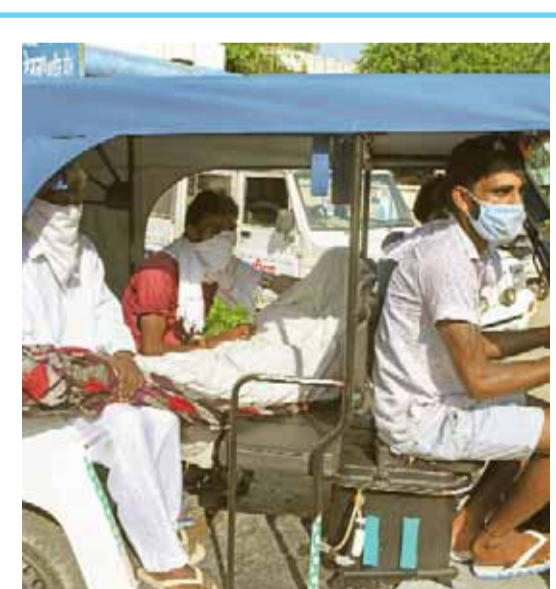
Several Israeli media outlets reported that the military actions were in response to an increased threat from the Iran-backed Lebanese Shiite group Hezbollah, which has a significant presence in Syria. Last month, five Iran-backed fighters were killed in an Israeli missile strike south of Damascus, according to monitoring group the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. Conricus said Israeli troops were early Monday searching the area of the incident for clues but that he could not immediately link the overnight attack to the Lebanese group or its sponsors in Tehran. "We do not know at this stage and we cannot confirm a link between this terrorist squad and Hezbollah or Iranians," he said. "We know that there are many different factions operating on Syrian soil." He said that the Maglan commando unit had been deployed at the attack site for several days. "We spotted irregular night-time activity in this specific location for the past week and we had a commando unit deployed in the area," Conricus said. He added that for Israeli civilians on the Golan Heights, normal life was uninterrupted during the incident. — AFP

India bootleg alcohol death toll rises to 98 as families mourn

NEW DELHI: The death toll from a toxic bootleg alcohol scandal in the north Indian state of Punjab rose to 98 Sunday, officials and reports said. Police have arrested 25 people so far over the worsening tragedy, which started coming to light late last week, the Press Trust of India news agency said. Hundreds of people die every year in India from illegal alcohol made in backstreet distilleries which sells for as little as 10 rupees (13 US cents) a litre, affordable for even the poorest.

The death toll from the illicit booze had risen to 75 in Punjab's Tarn Taran district after further investigation, the local administration's deputy commissioner Kulwant Singh said. "Several families refused to divulge details of deaths and a few even cremated them. We have come to this number after information gathering," Singh told AFP Sunday. A further 11 people had died in Gurdaspur district, a local official told AFP. PTI reported Saturday that toxic moonshine had also killed 12 in Amritsar.

Relatives of the victims mourned on Sunday as the state opposition party called on the Punjab government to "curb liquor mafia in the state" in a series of tweets. Punjab state chief minister Amarinder Singh said Friday he had ordered a special inquiry into the deaths and "anyone found guilty will not be spared". In a separate incident, authorities in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh said on Friday that nine people had died



TARN TARAN, India: Relatives on an auto-rickshaw hold the dead body of Darshan Singh, who died after allegedly drinking spurious alcohol, at the Civil Hospital in Tarn Taran, some 25 km from Amritsar. — AFP

after drinking alcohol-based sanitizer.

Of the estimated five billion liters of alcohol drunk every year in India, around 40 percent is illegally produced, according to the International Spirits and Wine Association of India. Deaths are frequently reported, with bootleggers often found adding methanol—a highly toxic form of alcohol sometimes used as an anti-freeze—in their brews to increase its strength. If ingested, methanol can cause blindness, liver damage and death in larger concentrations. In 2015, more than 100 people died in a Mumbai slum after drinking illegal moonshine. — AFP

International

Coronavirus exposes cracks in Brazil's public health system

Brazil closes in on 100,000 deaths from COVID-19

RIO DE JANEIRO: Brazil's public health care system, considered among the world's most advanced when it was launched, is being pushed to the brink by the coronavirus pandemic, which has exposed the impact of years of under-funding and mismanagement. As Brazil closes in on 100,000 deaths from COVID-19 - the second country in the world to reach that bleak milestone, after the United States - the public health care system is struggling to care for those who depend on it.

Launched in 1988, the so-called SUS-for Sistema Unico de Saude, or Single Health System - was modeled on Britain's National Health Service (NHS). It was created when Brazil adopted a new constitution to steer it out of its 1964-1985 military dictatorship. The constitution states that "health is a universal right and a duty of the state." The SUS is one of the only systems in Latin America to offer universal coverage, meaning free access to health care for the entire population in theory, at least.

"On paper, the SUS is a perfect system. But in reality, we have a lot of problems," said Fred

Nicacio, an emergency room physician in the southeastern city of Bauro. "We need more hospital beds, staff and a wider range of medicines," he told AFP. Several of his colleagues have been infected with the virus, taking them out of commission for two weeks - sometimes without being replaced. "The health care professionals on the front line are demotivated, underpaid and feel undervalued," he said.

He also noted that systemic corruption is another major problem. "It stretches all the way from political leaders embezzling funds for supplies to patients pretending to be sick so they can get a doctor's note for work," he said. Brazil has been rocked by numerous scandals related to the pandemic, including over-billing for emergency ventilator purchases and field hospitals that were budgeted for but never built.

Chronic condition

But corruption alone, though a "serious problem," does not explain the cruel lack of resources for the public health system, said Guilherme Werneck, vice president of the Brazilian Collective

through flooded roadways. "But this time, pack your masks and hand sanitizers in your kit and remember to social distance." Up to 150 national guard soldiers have been activated to help prepare for the storm and assist in the aftermath if necessary, Cooper said.

Isaias, downgraded from a category one hurricane, had earlier threatened Florida where some coronavirus testing centers - many housed in tents - were closed last week as the storm approached. They will reopen on Wednesday, according to the local government COVID-19 website. State emergency management director, Jared Moskowitz, said: "This was a really good test of a lot of the new protocols and procedures that have been put in place here in the state of Florida (to) battle a hurricane season with COVID-19."

He said hotels had been set up so those seeking shelter could maintain social distancing, or to serve as shelters for people who had tested positive for the virus. "It looks like we're (in) really good shape, but we're not declaring mission accomplished until this thing is away from us," he told CNN. The storm earlier dumped torrential rain on the Bahamas, felling trees and flooding streets, before emergency

Lebanon's pandemic fighter restores some faith in public sector

BEIRUT: Dr Firass Abiad was a little-known Beirut hospital director until the coronavirus pandemic propelled him into the spotlight and restored at least some faith in Lebanon's much-maligned public sector. At a time when the country has also been mired in its deepest economic crisis in decades and rocked by runaway inflation and violent street protests, Abiad has emerged as a comforting voice of reason amid the chaos. Before the COVID-19 crisis hit, his Rafiq Hariri University Hospital was synonymous with labour strikes over unpaid wages and regarded as a last resort for the neediest patients who have no health insurance.

But since the first coronavirus case was reported in Lebanon in February, Abiad's hospital has taken centre-stage in battling a disease that has infected 4,885 people and cost 62 lives across the country. His prolific Twitter feed has since become a point of reference for Lebanese for its near daily updates and commentary on the pandemic. On a typical recent workday, 52-year-old Abiad inspected an outdoors testing centre and then checked in via video call with his staff, wearing full protective gear inside the coronavirus ward.

Playing down his newfound celebrity, a local equivalent of that surrounding US top infectious diseases specialist Anthony Fauci, the American University of Beirut (AUB) graduate spoke to AFP in



BEIRUT: Director of the Rafiq Hariri University Hospital Firass Abiad, heads a videoconference meeting with medics inside the coronavirus department in the capital Beirut. — AFP



RIO DE JANEIRO: A health professional takes a patient out of the post-COVID-19 ward of the Pedro Ernesto University Hospital (HUPE) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, amid the novel coronavirus pandemic. — AFP

Health Association (ABRASCO). "The constitution says the state has a duty to guarantee access to health care, but funding for the SUS is extremely, chronically insufficient," he said. A 2019 report by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and

Development (OECD) found Brazil was among the countries making the least public investment in health care, with per-capita spending 30 percent below the average for developed and emerging countries. — AFP

Tropical storm roars up the US east coast

MIAMI: Tropical storm Isaias threatened to bring strong winds, flash flooding and life-threatening storm surges to North and South Carolina as it roared up the east coast of the United States yesterday. The storm was packing maximum sustained winds of nearly 70 miles per hour and was expected to reach near-hurricane strength when it made landfall in the virus-hit Carolinas later in the day, the National Hurricane Center (NHC) said in its latest public advisory at 0600 GMT. It warned on Twitter that Isaias could "bring a storm surge of up to 4 feet to coastal parts of South and North Carolina."

Both states have seen a recent surge in coronavirus cases, with South Carolina announcing 1,100 new infections on Sunday and North Carolina just over 1,340. "We in North Carolina mostly know what to do," said the state's governor, Roy Cooper. "You pack your emergency kit, follow local evacuation orders, stay in a safe place and never drive

Trump calls for new death sentence for marathon bomber

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump called Sunday for Boston Marathon bomber Dzhokhar Tsarnaev to be re-sentenced to death after an appeals court overturned the death penalty. "Rarely has anybody deserved the death penalty more than the Boston Bomber, Dzhokhar Tsarnaev," Trump tweeted. "So many lives lost and ruined. The Federal Government must again seek the Death Penalty in a do-over of the original trial. Our Country cannot let the appellate decision stand," he added.

Tsarnaev, 27, was sentenced to death in 2015 for planting two homemade bombs near the finish line of the race in 2013, killing three people and injuring 264 others. He has admitted carrying out the attack as a 19-year-old with his older brother, Tamerlan Tsarnaev, who died four days after the atrocity in a gunfight with police.

Citing in particular issues with neutrality in the jury selection process, a federal appeals court in Massachusetts on Friday upheld most of Tsarnaev's convictions but instructed a district court to hold a new penalty-phase trial to determine his fate for crimes that carried the death sentence. Regardless of the new trial's outcome, Tsarnaev will remain "confined to prison for the rest of his life," the three appellate judges said. Attorneys for Tsarnaev, a US citizen who came to the United States from the former Soviet Union as a child, have always claimed that his brother was more culpable of the two, saying Dzhokhar had no history of violence.

Trump has regularly called for increased use of the death penalty, and in the runup to the November 3 election in which Trump is seeking a second term in the White House - his administration appears determined to carry out a record number of federal executions. Federal death penalty cases are rare in the United States, though three inmates were executed this month after Trump ordered a resumption of federal executions following a 17-year hiatus. A fourth is scheduled for late next month. — AFP

News in brief

UAE urges Turkey to back off

ABU DHABI: A United Arab Emirates official has urged Turkey to stop interfering in Arab affairs, mockingly referring to the Ottoman empire which collapsed a century ago. The backlash came after Turkey condemned what it termed "malicious" actions by the UAE in Libya, where the two countries support opposing sides in its grinding conflict. Anwar Gargash, minister of state for foreign affairs, called on Turkey "to stop intervening in Arab affairs". Turkey can no longer behave like "the Sublime Porte and use the language of colonialism", he said, referring to the government of the Ottoman empire which ruled the Arab world for centuries. "The Sublime Porte and colonialist illusions belong to the archives of history... and relations between states are not conducted with threats," Gargash wrote. — AFP

Benedict XVI 'extremely frail'

BERLIN: Former pope Benedict XVI became seriously ill himself after visiting his sick brother in Germany in June and is "extremely frail", according to a report in the yesterday edition of the German Passauer Neue Presse newspaper. Benedict, 93, is suffering from erysipelas of the face, a virus that causes a facial rash and episodes of severe pain, the newspaper reported, citing the former pope's biographer Peter Seewald. "According to Seewald, the Pope emeritus is now extremely frail," the report says. "His thinking and his memory are quick, but his voice is hardly audible at the moment." Seewald reportedly visited Benedict in Rome on Saturday to present him with his biography. "At the meeting the emeritus Pope, despite his illness, was optimistic and declared that if his strength increased again he would possibly take up his pen again," the paper said. — AFP

Iran, UAE diplomats in rare talks

TEHRAN: Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said he discussed the region's coronavirus outbreaks and other issues with his Emirati counterpart in rare talks held via a videoconference call on Sunday. "Just had a very substantive, frank and friendly video conversation with UAE FM" Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Zarif wrote on Twitter. "We agreed to continue dialogue on theme of hope - especially as region faces tough challenges, and tougher choices ahead," he added. According to UAE state news agency WAM, the top diplomats exchanged greetings for the Eid al-Adha Muslim holiday and discussed efforts to control the COVID-19 pandemic in the region. Bin Zayed emphasized "enhancing international cooperation, solidarity and synergy between all countries" to tackle the virus, WAM said. — AFP

Tourist 'crushed by whale's tail'

SYDNEY: A tourist snorkelling off Australia's pristine northwest coast was airlifted to hospital in a serious condition after being struck by a whale, medics said yesterday. The victim was exploring near the World Heritage-listed Ningaloo Reef in the Indian Ocean when she was struck by the tail of one of the giant creatures. St John Ambulance service told AFP they transferred the woman to a remote airport for evacuation and emergency treatment in Perth. She sustained "chest injuries" and was said to be in a "serious but stable condition," after suffering a "crush from being hit by a whale's tail," a spokesperson said. Other reports said the 29-year-old was struck by a whale shark, the world's largest fish which can reach a length of 15 meters. The area is well known for its close encounters with whale sharks and the even larger humpbacks. — AFP

International

Growing calls to scrap 'racist' names for Australia landmarks

A positive step in Australia's long road toward reconciliation

BRISBANE: Like many indigenous Australians, Pat Dudgeon grew up in the shadow of a mountain range that made her feel inferior and "conquered" on her own traditional lands. The King Leopold Ranges, a mountain chain in Western Australia, were named after the Belgian ruler King Leopold II, whose regime killed and maimed millions of Congolese in the late 1800s.

So, when the landmark was renamed Wunaamin Miliwundi on July 3 to honor its traditional owners, Dudgeon, who is a member of the Bardi Aboriginal community, saw the move as a positive step in Australia's long road toward reconciliation. "As an Aboriginal woman, I was really chuffed to see that happen - it was very empowering for me," the psychology professor at the University of Western Australia said.

As protests over racial inequality continue to sweep across the world, Australia is seeing a renewed push for the removal of cultural reminders of colonialism which rights advocates say are harmful to the pride and health of Aboriginal citizens. Thousands of landmarks and places across Australia bear names that are offensive to Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders or that celebrate their oppressors, indigenous activists say.

They are calling for geographical locations to revert to names they were given by traditional landowners who can trace their lineage back 60,000 years, instead of those given by white settlers. "It has troubled me for years that an extraordinary area of Western Australia should be named in honor of a person who is widely regarded as an

evil tyrant," said Western Australia Aboriginal affairs minister Ben Wyatt on the renaming of the King Leopold Ranges last month.

"It's important to acknowledge and promote the long history of the Aboriginal peoples' connection to this land, and the proud place it takes in Western Australia's shared history," he said in a statement. In 2018, the Australian Electoral Commission agreed to change the name of the federal seat of Batman, in Melbourne, to Cooper in recognition of indigenous activist William Cooper. John Batman, considered one of Melbourne's founding fathers, was accused of involvement in the massacre of Aboriginal people in Tasmania during the early 1800s.

Also in 2018, a mountain in the northeast state of Queensland named after racial segregationist Jim Crow was renamed Baga to reflect the site's indigenous heritage. The list of name places that indigenous citizens and advocates hope to see changed next include a series Blackfellow Creek in Cairns and Black Gin Creek in Rockhampton. "I think if you grow up in conditions where the most brutal of your oppressors... are celebrated and you have landmarks named after them, it's a form of racism and oppression," said Dudgeon.

Health impacts

The psychological and physiological effects of racism on indigenous Australians - who make up more than 3% of the population, according to government data, and rank near the bottom on economic and social indicators - are well documented. A 2019 health study revealed that indigenous adults

living in the state of Victoria were four times more likely to have experienced racism over the previous year than their non-indigenous counterparts.

In 2015, Donna Ah Chee, chief executive officer of the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, an Aboriginal-controlled healthcare service, said racism has clear, tangible effects on the health of indigenous people. "As a life stressor, racism directly and negatively affects the cardiovascular system causing high blood pressure (or) hypertension and heart disease," she said in a statement. "It seriously affects mental health, causing depression, anxiety and other psychological and psychiatric disorders, and racism contributes to low birth weight of newborns, as well as premature birth," Chee added.

And the racism does not need to be overt to do damage, noted historian Grace Karskens. While place names that contain racial slurs are more obviously offensive, names alluding to often ignored colonial chapters in the nation's history are also deeply hurtful, said the University of New South Wales professor. She pointed to the name of Townsville, a city on the northeastern coast of Queensland, as an example.

The city was named after Robert Towns, who is said by some historians to have endorsed slave trading expeditions to nearby islands to bring back labor for local cane fields. Indigenous leaders and advocates want Townsville to change its name and remove a statue of him that stands on Pioneers Walk, a route that features statues of people who have shaped the city's history. "Until you know that history, it doesn't immediately jump out at you like

'nigger' or 'Jim Crow' or those other disgusting words," Karskens said. "(In) Townsville we need to understand what he did because most people don't remember, they just walk past the statue." Townsville Mayor Jenny Hill disagrees that Robert Towns' statue should be removed, noting it is just one of several statues in the city commemorating historical figures. Others include Joan Innes Reid, the town's first woman councillor, and indigenous land rights campaigner Eddie Mabo. "They are all significant people that are part of Townsville's history and, good or bad, they have been involved in the creation of this community," she said in emailed comments.

'Maturing as a nation'

Academic and former diplomat Stephen Hagan, a Kullilli man from southwest Queensland, is among those calling for places like Townsville to be renamed. Hagan fought for nine years to change the name of a grandstand called ES "Nigger" Brown in a stadium in the city of Toowoomba. The stand was demolished in 2008 with its name unchanged. Hagan said while he believes the Black Lives Matter movement has pushed the nation to talk about race, he feels the majority of Australians are not ready to face up to the pain these landmark names have caused in their own country. But the recent renaming of the King Leopold Ranges is a step in the right direction, showing that Australia is "maturing as a nation", he added. "It's a big statement," he said. "Look at the changes around, it's the power of the people. If they make enough noise they can bring change any time, any place." — Reuters

News in brief

20 die in Afghan prison raid

JALALABAD: At least 20 people have been killed in fighting between security forces and Islamic State gunmen raiding an Afghan jail, officials said yesterday, after the jihadist group claimed the ongoing attack. Fighting was raging one day after gunmen stormed the prison in the eastern city of Jalalabad. Nangarhar provincial hospital spokesman Zaher Adel said that 20 people had been killed so far including security personnel while the governor's spokesman put the toll at 21. The toll was expected to rise, Adel warned, as many of the more than 40 wounded people were in serious condition. The raid shattered the relative calm of a ceasefire between the Taliban and Afghan government forces that started Friday to mark the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Adha. The three-day truce ended Sunday, with Kabul hoping it could be extended. — AFP

US firefighters battle blaze

LOS ANGELES: More than 1,300 firefighters were battling a blaze that was burning out of control Sunday in southern California, threatening thousands of people and homes east of Los Angeles. The so-called Apple Fire that broke out Friday near the city of San Bernardino has so far charred more than 20,000 acres, sending up columns of smoke visible from far away. It was so smoky that authorities declared an air quality alert Saturday evening. At least 2,600 homes and nearly 7,800 people were evacuated. Officials said it was not clear when they might be able to come back. Just before midday, more than 1,360 firefighters backed by helicopters, water-dumping planes and trucks were working to put out the fire. — AFP

Guyana's president sworn in

GEORGETOWN: Guyana's opposition candidate was sworn in as president on Sunday, hours after being declared winner of the disputed March 2 general election in the oil-rich, cash-poor South American nation. Irfan Ali, 40, of the People's Progressive Party (PPP) was named the top vote-getter by Guyana Elections Commission chief Claudette Singh 154 days after the poll, following a recount, court battles and allegations of fraud. Outgoing leader David Granger, 74, said his coalition "respects the lawful consequences of the 'declaration'" by the elections commission, but also said claims of electoral fraud and other irregularities would be taken to the High Court. Granger appealed to his supporters to be peaceful. Ali called for national unity in this former British colony whose population is almost evenly split among ethnic lines, with descendants of Indian indentured laborers supporting the PPP and descendants of African slaves backing Granger's coalition. — AFP

Fuel-trafficking cartel chief

MEXICO CITY: Jose Antonio Yopez, the leader of a powerful fuel-trafficking cartel in Mexico, was captured Sunday in a military operation in the central state of Guanajuato, the government said. The capture of Yopez, also known as "El Marro," was announced on the official Twitter account of Alfonso Durazo, the federal minister of public security. Yopez, considered one of Mexico's most wanted criminals, has built a cartel focused on drilling into pipelines and then selling the fuel on the black market. Durazo said Yopez had been transferred to a maximum-security prison in central Mexico state, and would be appearing before the federal judge who issued his arrest order on charges of "organized crime and fuel theft." — AFP

Lebanon former PM Hariri murder trial: The accused

BEIRUT: A UN-backed court is to deliver its judgment Friday on four suspected Hezbollah members tried in absentia for former Lebanese premier Rafiq Hariri's murder in a 2005 Beirut car bombing. The Lebanese Shiite movement does not recognize the Netherlands-based Special Tribunal for Lebanon, denies all the accusations and has refused to hand over the accused. A massive bomb tore through Hariri's armored convoy as he drove home for lunch on Valentine's Day 2005, killing him and 21 other people including seven of his bodyguards, as well as wounding 226 others. Here are those indicted:

Mustafa Badreddine

The alleged mastermind, Hezbollah commander Mustafa Badreddine is believed to have died in Syria in May 2016 while providing military support to the Damascus regime. The Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) in July that year overturned its decision to try him in absentia, finding sufficient evidence to establish his death. Badreddine joined the Hezbollah movement newly created by Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards after Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982. He was jailed in Kuwait for attacks on the French and US embassies in 1983. His release was among the demands of Shiite militants who hijacked two airliners, before he was freed in the chaos caused by Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Salim Ayyash

Salim Ayyash, 56, has been accused of leading the team that carried out the bombing. His whereabouts, like the three others awaiting the verdict, remain unknown. Charges against Ayyash include "committing a terrorist act", "intentional homicide" of Hariri, "intentional homicide of 21 other people", and attempting to kill 226 more, according to the STL website. In a separate case, the tribunal in 2019 also charged him with terrorism and murder over three other deadly attacks on Lebanese politicians in 2004 and 2005.

Hussein Oneissi, Assad Sabra

Hussein Oneissi, 46, and Assad Sabra, 43, alleged-

Verdict looms in the killing of Lebanese former PM Hariri

THE HAGUE: A UN-backed tribunal will give its verdict Friday on the 2005 murder of former Lebanese premier Rafiq Hariri, but questions will remain over a long and costly trial whose suspects remain at large. Four alleged members of the Shiite Muslim fundamentalist group Hezbollah are on trial in absentia at the court in the Netherlands over the huge Beirut suicide bombing that killed Sunni billionaire Hariri and 21 other people.

The judgment harks back to an event that changed the face of the Middle East, with Hariri's assassination triggering a wave of demonstrations that pushed Syrian forces out of Lebanon after 30 years. The court is billed as the world's first international tribunal set up to probe terrorist crimes, and it has cost at least \$600 million since it opened its doors in 2009 following a UN Security Council resolution.

But the tribunal faces doubts over its credibility with Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah refusing to hand over the defendants, and the case relying almost entirely on mobile phone records. And while Hariri's son Saad looked forward to a "day of truth and justice", many Lebanese people are meanwhile more preoccupied with the country's economic crisis, the worst since the 1975-1990 civil war. Due to



Combo pictures show four Hezbollah suspects indicted in the assassination case of former Lebanese prime minister Rafiq Hariri, (from top left to right) Mustafa Amine Badreddine, Assad Hassan Sabra, Hussein Oneissi and Salim Jamil Ayyash. — AFP

ly sent a fake video to the Al-Jazeera news channel claiming responsibility on behalf of a non-existent group. Oneissi and Sabra are accused of "being an accomplice to the felony of committing a terrorist act", as well as accomplices in the "intentional homicide" of Hariri, in the "intentional homicide of 21 other people", and in attempting to kill 226 more. The court in 2018 threw out a bid to acquit Oneissi, saying that while much of the evidence was circumstantial, it was still in theory sufficient to produce a conviction.

Much of the prosecution case has relied on mobile phone records that allegedly show the suspects conducting surveillance of Hariri until minutes before the explosion. The defense has argued the evidence was "theoretical" and that the defendants had "no motive" to carry out the crime.

Hassan Merhi

Hassan Merhi, 54, is accused of general involvement in the plot. He is charged with the same crimes as Oneissi and Sabra. — AFP



SIDON: A file photo shows billboards bearing portraits of Lebanese ex-premier Rafiq Hariri on the Sidon-Beirut highway in southern Lebanon on the eve of the anniversary of his assassination in 2005. — AFP

the coronavirus pandemic, the judgment "will be delivered from the courtroom with partial virtual participation" at 0900 GMT on Friday.

'Intentional homicide'

The four defendants went on trial in 2014 on charges including the "intentional homicide" of Hariri and 21 others, attempted homicide of 226 people wounded in the bombing, and conspiracy to commit a terrorist act. Salim Ayyash, 56, is accused of leading the team that carried out the bombing, which involved a truck packed full of explosives that detonated near Hariri's motorcade on February 14, 2005. Assad Sabra, 43, and

Hussein Oneissi, 46, allegedly sent a fake video to the Al-Jazeera news channel claiming responsibility on behalf of a made-up group. Hassan Habib Merhi, 54, is accused of general involvement in the plot.

The alleged mastermind of the bombing, Hezbollah commander Mustafa Badreddine, was indicted by the court but is believed to have died while fighting with the Syrian regime in May 2016. The surviving suspects face life imprisonment if convicted, although sentencing will be carried out at a later date. "If a convicted person is at liberty and not present the trial chamber shall issue a warrant of arrest," a court spokesman said. — AFP

— AFP

Business

TUESDAY, AUGUST 4, 2020

Zain offers wide range of digital and cloud solutions to corporate customers

Services empower remote working and increase efficiency during current situation

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced the offering of a wide range of digital and cloud solutions to corporate customers, allowing them to increase operational efficiency and empower remote working during the COVID-19 pandemic over Zain's superfast and nationwide network.



Zain offers superfast network

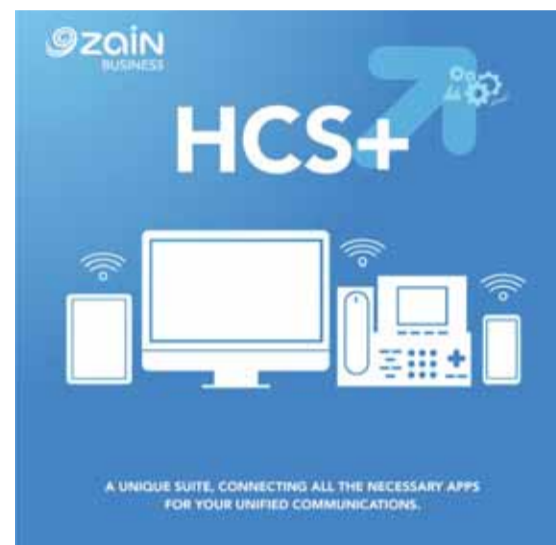
Zain offers these solutions as part of its national commitment towards the nation during this crisis, through which the company reflects its role as a leading Kuwaiti private sector organization by making its tech capabilities available. The company is keen on offering the most advanced services and solutions as per the highest international standards to facilitate the continuous operation of government entities and companies of all sizes, while serving their unique needs during the current situation, all while empowering them into digital transformation.

The services and solutions Zain offers include @Lasilki, a world-class Push-to-talk (PTT) service that enables corporate customers, SMEs, and public sector entities to reliably and securely communicate with their employees, volunteers, or others, whether individuals or



large groups. The service is compatible with Zain's nationwide LTE 4G network for solid and fast communication over long distances. @Lasilki features a wide range of advanced devices that allows each organization to choose the device that best suits their needs. The service also comes with the dispatcher management application in the control room and more features to guarantee the highest operational efficiency.

Zain also offers Vehicle Tracking System (VTS) and Fleet Management services, which allow corporate customers who own fleets of vehicles for e-commerce or other purposes to track their vehicles over an M2M (Machine-to-Machine) platform. By installing smart



devices on their vehicles, business owners are able to smartly manage their fleets and gain actionable data and detailed insights, enabling them to reduce fleet-related costs, as well as optimize delivery and maintenance procedures.

Additionally, Zain offers Hosted Collaboration Solutions (HCS and HCS+) that feature a wide range of contact center and customer service solutions, allowing corporate customers to build and operate their own integrated contact centers capable of operating remotely and from home. This contributes to increasing customer satisfaction levels and ensuring fast and reliable customer service during the crisis. Zain HCS and



HCS+ solutions include Interactive Voice Response (IVR), call recordings, advanced call queues, and much more. The solutions support eight different languages to facilitate communication with all customers.

Zain strongly believes in the crucial role played by private sector organizations in supporting social and economic sustainability projects, especially during crises. Springing from its growing commitment towards practicing its social responsibility, the company is committed to printing a positive print through all its activities. This has led Zain to embrace the most crucial issues in the community, including the support of the country's entities by making its tech capabilities available.



A cargo ship carrying cars making its way on the Yangtze River in Yichang in China's central Hubei province. — AFP

Asia's factory pain eases as China's activity jumps

TOKYO: Asia's factory pain continued to ease in July with contraction slowing in big export-reliant nations, adding to hopes the region is steadily emerging from the devastating hit of the coronavirus pandemic. Manufacturing activity in China expanded at the fastest pace in nearly a decade as domestic demand improved, a private sector survey showed yesterday, suggesting the world's second-largest economy will help cushion the pandemic's blow to world growth.

But worries about a second wave of infections may weigh on global demand and business sentiment, keeping any rebound in Asia's factory output feeble, some analysts say. Japan, for one, will enjoy only a "very gradual and protracted recovery" as concerns about a resurgence in COVID-19 cases will weigh on domestic and overseas spending, said Stefan Angrick, senior economist at Oxford Economics.

"With the pace of recovery slowing in some of Japan's key trading partners, exports and business spending are likely to continue to struggle," he said. China's Caixin/Markit Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) rose to 52.8 last month from June's 51.2, marking the sector's third consecutive month of growth and the biggest jump since January 2011.

The upbeat findings echoed an official survey on Friday, adding to evidence the world's second-largest economy is getting back on its feet faster than expected. Japan and South Korea saw factory activity shrink at a much slower pace, a sign that pressures on manufac-

turers were easing and raising hopes the worst impact from the pandemic was over.

Taiwan's manufacturing activity also rose above the 50-mark separating growth from contraction, suggesting that increased demand for work-from-home equipment is underpinning chip sales.

But factory activity in the Philippines and Vietnam slid in July, underscoring the patchy nature of the recovery. India's factory slump also deepened as renewed lockdown measures to contain surging virus cases weighed on demand and output.

"While the broad steadying of the PMI prints across the region point towards further stabilization in the regional manufacturing sector after the April-May malaise, the path ahead remains a rocky one, as evidenced by the more uncertain tone in the latest reading for some economies," said Wellian Wiranto, an economist at OCBC Bank. Japan's final au Jibun Bank Flash Manufacturing PMI rose to a seasonally adjusted 45.2 in July from 40.1 in June, marking the slowest pace of contraction in five months.

South Korea's IHS Markit PMI rose to 46.9 in July from 43.4 in June, the highest reading since January, reflecting easing pressure on output and new orders. A gauge of expectations for South Korea's manufacturing output over the next 12 months jumped, though exports - which account for nearly 40 percent of the economy - remained a concern.

"Manufacturers maintained a bias towards price discounting and continued to take a cautious view on their staffing numbers," said IHS Markit economist Joe Hayes. The hit from lockdowns and social distancing policies to contain the virus has pushed many Asian economies into recession including Japan, South Korea, Thailand and Singapore. While some countries have eased restrictions, a renewed spike in infections has cast a shadow over the recovery prospects in Japan. — Reuters

of more than a billion euros in the same period a year earlier and follows a loss of 326 million euros in the first quarter. "This quarter has been sharply impacted by the COVID-19 global health crisis and its economic repercussions," Societe Generale said in a statement.

Net banking income—a bank's core measure of profitability—tumbled 13.5 percent, with all business areas affected except for private banking, asset management and financial and consultation services. Given the uncertain outlook, the bank said it had put aside 653 million euros to cover losses during the three months.

While most banks have suffered badly in the coronavirus pandemic like Societe Generale, its French peer

Microsoft to keep exploring TikTok deal after talks with Trump

WASHINGTON: Microsoft announced Sunday it would continue talks to acquire the US operations of popular video-sharing app TikTok, after meeting with President Donald Trump who seemingly backed off his earlier threats to ban the Chinese-owned platform. "Following a conversation between Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella and President Donald J Trump, Microsoft is prepared to continue discussions to explore a purchase of TikTok in the United States," the company said in a statement, acknowledging the "importance of addressing the President's concerns" over national security.

Microsoft added that it would continue negotiations with ByteDance, TikTok's Chinese parent company, with the intention of "completing these discussions no later than September 15."

The statement came after Trump on Friday said he would ban the app, which is especially popular with young audiences who create and watch its short-form videos and has an estimated one billion users worldwide. TikTok should be sold or blocked in the US, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin told ABC earlier Sunday, while Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said on Fox News the president would "take action in the coming days with respect to a broad array of national security risks that are presented by software connected to the Chinese Communist Party."

TikTok denies it could be a tool for Chinese intelligence, with its US general manager Vanessa Pappas declaring Saturday: "We're not planning on going anywhere."

'Biggest loser'

"The United States would be the biggest loser if it banned TikTok," Daniel Castro, vice president of the think tank Information Technology & Innovation Foundation, said Saturday.

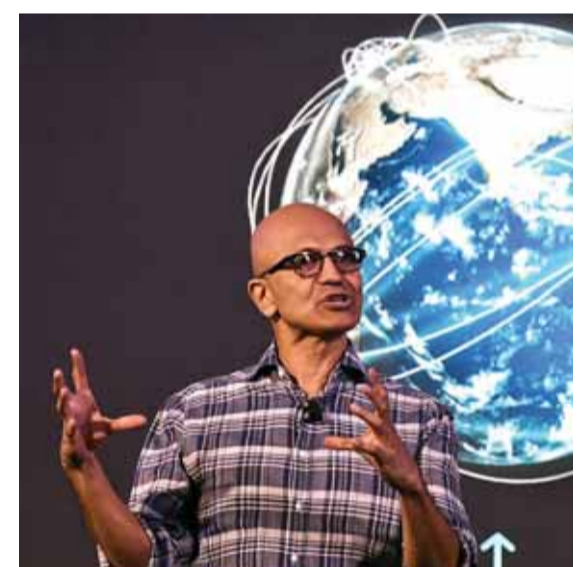
"All of its data centers are outside of China, and there is no evidence that it presents a national security threat," Trump said he would use an executive order to ban TikTok, or the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, a law granting the president powers to regulate international trade in the face of an "unusual and extraordinary threat" from abroad to US foreign policy, national security or the economy.

His threat has caused great concern for US TikTok users, particularly content creators who make money on the platform. Many of them have posted links to

BNP? Paribas bucked the trend, managing to report Friday only a slightly lower second quarter net profit of 2.3 billion euros thanks to a surge in investment banking. BNP however was also forced to more than double provisions to 1.4 billion euros.

Societe Generale said it had been forced into two large write-downs — 700 million euros on its markets activities, plus another 650 million euros on certain tax benefits. Despite the loss and difficult environment, the bank's capital adequacy position remained strong, at 12.5 percent at end-June compared with 12.6 at end-March.

Societe Generale said the clear challenge now was to adapt to the changes brought by the pandemic. "If the months of April and May were marked by a reduc-



BANGALORE: Microsoft Corporation Chief Executive Officer Satya Nadella gestures as he addresses the Future Decoded Tech Summit in Bangalore. — AFP

their Instagram or YouTube accounts so as not to lose followers if the platform is ultimately blocked.

In its statement, Microsoft said it plans to "build on the experience TikTok users currently love, while adding world-class security, privacy, and digital safety protections." Buying TikTok would give Microsoft a chance to break into the social networking market.

The IT group currently owns the professional networking platform LinkedIn, and Teams, an internal messaging service for companies.

'Bizarre'

Pappas promised Saturday to create 10,000 US jobs at TikTok over the next three years, in addition to the 1,500 current employees. "Don't fall for this," responded senior Trump aide Peter Navarro, a fierce China critic and a main architect of the trade war with Beijing.

"China has hired a whole bunch of American lobbyists. They put a puppet CEO in charge of that company," he told Fox News, referring to former Disney executive Kevin Mayer, who became the CEO of TikTok in May. On Friday evening Trump indicated he opposed a takeover of TikTok by an American company, a solution nevertheless agreed to by most of the involved parties, including ByteDance, according to The New York Times.

"This is getting bizarre. A 100 percent sale to an American company... mitigates any reasonable data protection concerns," tweeted Alex Stamos, a former Facebook head of security and a researcher at Stanford University. "If the White House kills this (sale) we know this isn't about national security," he added. — AFP

France's Societe Generale plunges into Q2 loss

PARIS: Top French bank Societe Generale said yesterday the COVID-19 crisis pushed it into a second quarter loss of more than a billion euros as it was forced to increase loss provisions sharply.

The net loss of 1.26 billion euros (\$1.48 billion) for the three months to June compared with a profit

tion in activity in many economies around the world, the rebound since mid-May has been encouraging," bank chief Frederic Oudea said in the statement.

"Supported by a very solid capital base and a loan book of intrinsic quality, the bank is going to continue the adjustment of its business to the new post-COVID environment, extending notably its cost-cutting efforts," Oudea said. Societe Generale said it had reduced its second quarter costs by 10 percent compared with the 2019 period.

"The group is already working on its 2021-23 strategy around three priority objectives—the importance of the client, social and environmental responsibility, and operational efficiency based on new digital technologies," Oudea said. — AFP

Business

China's young jobseekers struggle despite slow economic recovery

Nine million people graduate and enter job market this year

ZHENGZHOU, China: Biology student Ma Jingjing wandered the hall of a job fair in central China among other young Chinese hoping to find work in an economy crushed by the coronavirus pandemic.

Ma, 26, is one of almost nine million people graduating and entering the job market this year at a time of great uncertainty, an issue that has the ruling Communist Party worried to the point that President Xi Jinping has made it a priority. The world's second-largest economy may have rebounded sharply from a historic virus-induced contraction, but its young graduate jobless rate in June was more than three times that for urban unemployment.



Analysts caution rebound may be overestimated

Ma was among hundreds of young faces streaming in and out of the job fair on a recent weekend in Zhengzhou, where employers in industries ranging from real estate to manufacturing were recruiting.

Like many others, the aspiring teacher is "at a loss" and wondering if she should settle for any job or hold off work for further education. "I have applied to seven or eight private schools, but only one has called me back for an interview," she told AFP at the fair.

"I've studied for so many years and don't want my family to pay for further training," she said.

"I'm especially worried about my finances." Aware of the risk that mass unemployment can spark political unrest-jeopardizing the party's pledge of prosperity in

return for unquestioned political power-the government has been making efforts to boost graduate employment via state-owned enterprises (SOEs). But poorer opportunities this year are pushing some into further studies, less ideal jobs or other options.

'Extremely anxious'

Although China's economy appeared to make a strong comeback in the second quarter-growing 3.2 percent on-year-analysts caution the rebound may be overestimated, with a gap re-emerging between national figures and higher-frequency data. Louis Kuijs of Oxford Economics told AFP there is no doubt China is recovering, but the magnitude would determine if growth is "strong enough to re-absorb some of the labor market problems" that emerged earlier this year, such as layoffs.

A gap in growth of a few percentage points could lead to a difference of millions of jobs created, he added. Although China's urban unemployment rate slipped to 5.7 percent in June, 19.3 percent of new graduates remained jobless. UOB economists said in a report, adding the labor market "continued to face challenges".

Top-level economic data has not necessarily meant better hiring on the ground. A 27-year-old surnamed Kang, who graduated in 2017, is back in the market after his contract in the communications industry in Beijing ended.

He decided to return to Zhengzhou, but has only received around five callbacks after sending more than 30 resumes to firms-and is still looking for a job. "The virus outbreak has limited travel and a lot of job fairs have been postponed or cancelled," he said. "I'm extremely anxious."

Lu Yifan, 25, said the pandemic had caused many overseas Chinese students like him to return home sooner than planned-adding to the flood of jobseekers.

And Guangdong graduate Zhao Jingying, 22, told



ZHENGZHOU: A job seeker (left) interacts with a hiring official of a company during a career fair in Zhengzhou, China's Henan province.— AFP

AFP: "For us (this year), getting a single job offer is a feat." Another, Beijing-based Huo Ruixi, 23, left university in July but is planning a second round of further education after an unsuccessful five-month job search.

'Pressures are larger'

The crisis is also causing problems for employers. Yang Changwei, manager at Deyou Real Estate, told AFP at the Zhengzhou fair it was getting harder to hire sales staff based on commission.

"It feels like jobseekers' mindsets have shifted," he said. "In sales, you may or may not make deals but with other jobs there can be more stability in income. Because of the epidemic, financial pressures are larger

as well." Officials are ramping up efforts to boost graduate employment, and Premier Li Keqiang announced over nine million new roles will be created this year.

A State Council guideline in March said smaller firms that recruit graduates with contracts longer than a year will be given a subsidy, while SOEs will "continuously expand" the scale of graduate-hiring this year and next. Henan authorities, for one, said at least half the recruitment positions at SOEs within the province should be reserved for this year's graduates, while Nanjing city in Jiangsu province set aside one billion yuan (\$143 million) to provide 100,000 internships for struggling graduates. Xinhua news agency reported.— AFP



HONG KONG: Pedestrians walk past the local HSBC headquarters building in Hong Kong yesterday. HSBC said yesterday its first half post-tax profits for 2020 plunged 69 percent on year as the Asia-focused banking giant was hammered by the coronavirus and spiraling China-US tensions.— AFP

HSBC hammered by pandemic, soaring US-China tensions

HONG KONG: HSBC said yesterday profits for the first half of 2020 plunged by 69 percent on year as the banking giant was hammered by the coronavirus pandemic and spiraling China-US tensions.

The lender reported post-tax profit of \$3.1 billion while pre-tax profit was \$4.3 billion, a 64 percent drop on the same period last year. Reported revenue was down nine percent at \$26.7 billion. The figures missed analyst forecasts and the bank also raised its estimate for 2020 loan losses from \$8 billion to \$13 billion. Its shares plunged more than four percent on the Hong Kong stock exchange after the results were released in the lunch break, trading at HK\$33.55. Chief executive Noel Quinn described the first six months of the year as "some of the most challenging in living memory".

"Our first-half performance was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, falling interest rates, increased geopolitical risk and heightened levels of market volatility," he said in a statement to the Hong Kong stock exchange. Even by the standards of the current economic maelstrom engulfing global banks, HSBC has had a torrid time. Before the coronavirus crisis it was beset by disappointing profit growth, ground down by US-China trade war uncertainties and Britain's departure from the European Union.

The Asia-focused lender embarked on a huge cost-cutting initiative at the start of the year, including plans to slash about 35,000 jobs as well as trimming fat from less profitable divisions, primarily in the United States and Europe.

The coronavirus upended some of that cost-cutting drive with banks hammered by market volatility and the economic slowdown caused by the pandemic.

But HSBC has a further headache-geopolitical tensions via its status as a major business conduit between China and the West. HSBC makes 90 percent of its profit in Asia, with China and Hong Kong being the major drivers of growth.

Caught in crossfire

As a result it has found itself more

vulnerable than most to the crossfire caused by the increasingly bellicose relationship between Beijing and Washington. The bank has tried to stay in Beijing's good graces. It vocally backed a draconian national security law that Beijing imposed on Hong Kong in June to end a year of unrest and pro-democracy protests.

The move sparked criticism in Washington and London but analysts saw it as an attempt to protect its access to China, which has a track record of punishing businesses that do not toe Beijing's line.

But that has not shielded it from Beijing's wrath. Last month the bank was a subject of multiple reports in China's state-run media claiming that it had helped to provide the evidence that led to the arrest in Canada of Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou on a US arrest warrant.

HSBC released a statement on its Chinese Weibo accounts saying it had not "framed" telecom giant Huawei or "fabricated evidence" that led to the arrest of Meng. China's internet censors blocked access to HSBC's statement within hours of publication, without offering an explanation. Quinn referenced the bank's growing political vulnerability in Monday's statement. "Current tensions between China and the US inevitably create challenging situations for an organization with HSBC's footprint," he said. "However, the need for a bank capable of bridging the economies of East and West is acute, and we are well placed to fulfil this role," he added.

The bank's Asia operations continued to show "good resilience", Quinn said, with profit before tax of \$7.4 billion. Earlier this year Quinn put some of the job cuts on hold as the pandemic struck.

But in yesterday's statement he vowed to press ahead with the cost-cutting. "As we seek to accelerate our transformation in the second half of the year, I am mindful of the impact it will have for some of our people, particularly those leaving us," he said.— AFP

Cameroon tomato farmers count losses to weather, virus

YAOUNDE: Tomato farmer Gregory Ngwana is used to good years. But this season, wild weather - too little rainfall and then too much - has paired with Cameroon's coronavirus lockdown to slash harvests, make transport difficult and drive away buyers. "I cannot earn enough income for my family, not to speak of recovering the money to repay loans incurred to invest in my tomato farm this season," the 45-year-old from the town of Soa, north of Yaounde, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation at Mokolo market in the capital.

"This is the first time we are having a double crisis: weather disappointment and the coronavirus lockdown," Ngwana said. Thousands of other small-scale tomato farmers in Cameroon similarly are facing huge losses from what had been a thriving business - one promoted by Cameroon's government as a way to boost incomes.

"Agriculture is one of the key mainstays of our economy - the reason we are putting in every effort to promote rapid-yield food crops like tomatoes and vegetables," Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development Gabriel Mbairrobe told an online government meeting last month.

Farmers say a lack of rain in the traditional planting period in March - a problem believed linked to climate change - cut harvests. When rains finally arrived, they were too heavy, leading to crop losses and rapid spoilage, farmers said. Then, what they were able to pick turned out to be difficult to sell, with COVID-19 lockdowns hitting transport and cross-border trade, and sharply driving down prices.

Mary Azong, a tomato farmer in Yaounde, said her production had dropped from 20 tons this time last year to just 8 tons this year.

"This is making it very tough for me and my family to cope," she said. Farmers said the price of a 20-litre container of tomatoes had dropped by three-quarters compared to last year. Environment experts said extreme weather this year was taking a heavy toll on the crop.

"Tomatoes are sensitive to heavy rains. They get rot faster with heavy and prolonged rains," said Zachee Nzoh Ngandembou, CEO of the Centre for the Environment and Rural Transformation, (CERUT), a sustainable development non-profit. "Weather extremes linked to climate change are a major cause for concern," he

said. Farmers also have struggled to get their harvest to market on badly maintained, mainly dirt roads rendered impassable by rain, he said - a particular problem for a perishable crop like tomatoes.

Cross-border trade

Both Cameroon's government and farmers say closure of borders between the country and Nigeria, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea since mid-March, as a result of COVID-19, has worsened the country's tomato crisis. Ngwana said he normally sells more than 80 percent of his harvest in large-scale lots to buyers from neighboring countries. But those buyers no longer are coming, he said. "We now have local consumers who more or less buy in small quantities just for family consumption," the grower said. To try to sell their harvest before it spoils, some farmers near cities like Yaounde have turned to door-to-door sales, offering produce at prices nearly 90 percent below former market rates, Ngwana said. While bad news for farmers, that has been good for urban buyers, who can't always afford tomatoes. This year, "even the poor can put good tomato sauce on their table more regularly," noted Yaounde resident Angela Ebong, a seamstress. Cameroon has seen more than 17,000 cases of the coronavirus this year, with over 390 deaths.

Government help?

Mbairrobe, the agriculture minister, said the government hoped to increase support to tomato farmers to compensate some of their losses. As part of the country's 2035 development plan, aimed at boosting economic growth and reducing poverty, over 12,000 young people have gotten government support over the last five years to begin growing tomatoes or other vegetables. Official statistics put tomato production in Cameroon at about 878,000 tons in 2019. Estimates for this year's harvest have not been released. But farmers - especially women and young people who earn their main income growing tomatoes - say they will need state subsidies to stay in business after this hard year. "We think we deserve some financial support from the government in periods like this, and not just promises as announced by the minister of agriculture," said Michael Ajang, a member of the tomato vendors' association in Yaounde.— Reuters



SAN FRANCISCO: A Boeing 787 of Japan Airlines (JAL) is seen at the gate at San Francisco International Airport (SFO).— AFP

JAL logs \$885m quarterly loss on pandemic

TOKYO: Japan Airlines yesterday said it suffered a deep quarterly net loss of \$885 million as the coronavirus pandemic halted air travel around the world. The air carrier said its net loss for April-June came to 93.7 billion yen, plummeting from a quarterly profit of 12.9 billion yen seen a year ago.

The company changed its accounting method starting this quarter. But the latest data registered as the biggest loss, under a different accounting method, since the company was relisted on the Tokyo Stock Exchange in 2012, after it filed for bankruptcy in 2010. Quarterly sales dived 78.1 percent to 76.4 billion yen, JAL said.

The company did not issue annual forecasts, citing deep uncertainty surrounding the pandemic.

"The worldwide spread of COVID-19 infection has imposed severe restrictions on international travel globally, causing international passenger demand to almost disappear," the company said in a statement. It added that passenger traffic for its international segment collapsed 98.6 percent on-year, while domestic passenger traffic fell 86.7 percent.

"Upon the declaration of the state of emergency on April 7 in Japan, domestic passenger demand also fell rapidly and in an unprecedented manner as inter-prefecture travel was strongly discouraged by the government," it said. JAL said the pickup of international travel remained "unforeseeable".

The lifting of Japan's emergency declaration and the nation's recent push to promote domestic travel have improved domestic demand a bit, the company said.

However, the company said: "Japanese society is still struggling to work out how to resume economic activities with infection prevention measures, thus it is expected it will take more time for domestic passenger demand to make a full recovery." JAL's announcement came only days after its chief domestic rival ANA Holdings said it saw a record net loss of 108.8 billion yen and an operating loss of 159.0 billion yen for the April-June quarter.— AFP

CLINIC PAGE

Kuwait Times
248 33 199

PEDIATRICS

These services include, but are not limited to, the below:

- Emergency cases around the clock
- Diagnosis and treatment of acute cases
- Pediatric nutrition
- Preventative medicine and vaccinations
- Chronic conditions such as asthma, epilepsy, cerebral palsy & other conditions
- Hereditary diseases and conditions
- Developmental conditions such as autism spectrum disorder and global developmental delay

1808088 taibahospital.com
@taibahospital

PEDIATRICS

Dr. Mohamed Gharib
Pediatrics & Neonatology Specialist

Dr. Kareem Farrouh
Pediatrician

Dr. Mohamed Abouelmaati
Pediatrician

Dr. Hazem Al Foukhy
Pediatrician

Dr. Mohammed Mustafa
Pediatrician

Dr. Mohammed Ali Selim
Pediatrician

Dr. Ahmed Abou Zeid
Pediatrician

Dr. Ali Al Nashar
Pediatrician

Dr. Abdelhamid Tharwat
Pediatrician

1808088 taibahospital.com
@taibahospital

DR. FAHAD AL-MUKHAIZEEM

Consultant Pediatrician

Consultant Pediatrician-Canadian & American Board in Pediatrics-Canadian Board in Pediatric Emergency

Tel.: 22269369 - Fax: 22269368
Al-Jabriya - Block 1A - St.1 - Mazaya Building - 15th Floor - Clinic B

Dr. Hamoud Abdullah Alarouj

ENT Consultant, Laryngologist

- ◆ Kuwait Board of Otolaryngology.
- ◆ Laryngology Fellowship, McGill University- Canada.
- ◆ Fellow of the European Board of Otolaryngology – Head & Neck surgery.
- ◆ Member of the American Academy of Otolaryngology Head & Neck Surgery.
- ◆ Member of the British Laryngological Association.
- ◆ Member of the European Laryngological Society.
- ◆ Member of the Canadian Society of Otolaryngology Head & Neck Surgery.

Experienced In:

- Management of benign and malignant vocal cord lesions.
- Vocal cord augmentation.
- Diagnosis and treatment of spasmodic dysphonia.
- Adenotonsillectomy using latest techniques.
- Myringotomy and ventilation tube insertion.
- Surgery for the deviated nasal septum.
- Endoscopic sinus surgery.
- Diagnosis and treatment of allergic rhinitis.
- Tympanoplasty.
- Diagnosis and treatment of vertigo.
- Thyroid surgery
- Diagnosis and treatment of snoring.

2536 0000
www.royalehayat.com

ROYALE HAYAT HOSPITAL

Ophthalmology Services

Dr. Rany Essam Mitwally
Senior Registrar

Dr. Ahmed Hosni Abd Elhamid
Consultant

Dr. Abeer Khattab
Specialist

Cataract Surgery
Glaucoma
Retina
General Ophthalmology
Follow-Up All Treatments

1828282
WhatsApp Us
+965-6000 2184

To advertise on this Page
Call: 24833199 ext:101,102 or Direct line: 24835616 / 24835617
or email: ads@kuwaittimes.com

Dr. Abdullah Al Haddad

Surgery Department
Consultant General Surgery, Laparoscopic & Colo – Rectal Surgeon

1802 555

daralshifa
Email: aalhaddad@daralshifa.com

Dr. Hani Halder

General Surgery Consultant

American Board Certified in General Surgery
Member of the Society of American Gastrointestinal & Endoscopic Surgeons (SAGES)
Higher specialization in Hepato-Pancreato-Biliary surgery & Organ Transplantation
Member of many prestigious surgical societies.

- ◆ Day case surgeries
- ◆ Diagnosis, treatment and follow up of all surgical emergencies
- ◆ Surgery for morbid obesity (sleeve, gastric bypass)
- ◆ Hernia repair
- ◆ Surgery for reflux disease
- ◆ Minor surgeries (lipoma, sebaceous cyst, ingrowing nail)
- ◆ Hemorrhoids, fistula & anal fissure surgeries
- ◆ Breast surgeries
- ◆ Thyroid & adrenal surgeries
- ◆ Cholecystectomy & laparoscopic appendectomy
- ◆ Liver, pancreas & bile ducts surgeries

http://www.international-clinic.com
Tel: 1886677

DR. FAHAD S BUHAIMED

Consultant Cosmetic Dermatologist & Hair Transplant, NY

ACADAMIC CERTIFICATES:

- o Dermatology board certified.
- o Fellowship training program in cosmetic dermatology and hair transplant, New York, USA.
- o Member of American cosmetic dermatology society.
- o Referee reviewer of International journal of Dermatology.

SPECIALIZED IN:

- o Dermatology & Cosmetic Treatments.
- o Laser Treatments.
- o Hair Transplant & Restoration.
- o Body & Face Contouring.
- o Injectable Fillers & Botox.

SHARQ, Ahmad Allaber st., Building 6B, Floor 13.
Tel.: (+965) 22060777.
@Drbuhaimed, @Renovebb, @dardonabb
Email: drbuhaimed@beautybeyond.com.kw

DR. WALEED S BUHAIMED

Consultant of General Surgery
Laprosopic and Bariatric Surgery

Academic Certificates – Training

- ◆ Kuwait Board of General Surgery.
- ◆ (IFSO) member .
- ◆ Faculty member of (BEST).
- ◆ Member of Kuwait Surgical Association.

Scope of clinical Practice.

- ◆ Bariatric surgeries.
- ◆ Gallbladder stones surgeries.
- ◆ Abdominal wall and hernia surgeries.
- ◆ G.I. surgeries.
- ◆ Thyroid and para - thyroid surgeries.
- ◆ Anal surgeries.

email: wbuhaimed@gmail.com
Tel.: 965 22269411/ Mob.: 965 99212228
Jabriya, 4th Ring Road, Block 1A Floor 9-Clover Center Mazaya Building

Dr. Ahmad Alaeddine

Head of Cardiology departmenta at Dar Al Shifa hospital

- Consultant Interventional and conventional cardiologist.
- Specialised in the Diagnosis and treatment of all adult cardiac diseases, including those cases that need urgent intervention in Cath lab (primary angioplasty).

1802 555

daralshifa

Classifieds

Tuesday, August 4, 2020

Kuwait Times
 Now you can browse
www.kuwaittimes.net
 e-mail: info@kuwaittimes.net

الطيران المدني
Civil Aviation



Tel: (+965) 161 Ext: 66819 - 66817
 Fax: (+965) 24348714
www.met.gov.kw

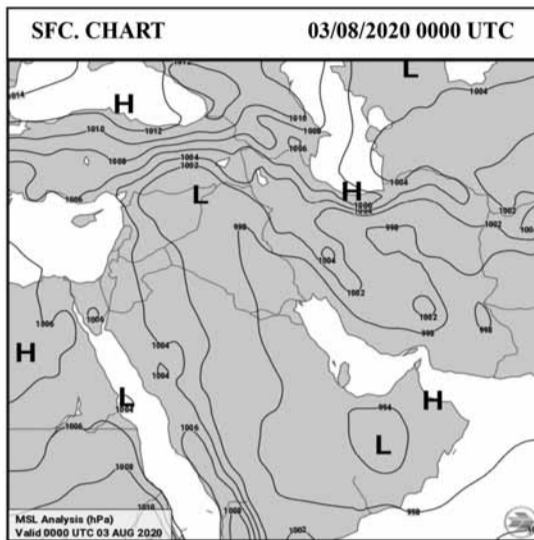
Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Very hot with light variable wind to light to moderate freshening at times north westerly wind with speed of 08 - 40 km/h and some high clouds will appear.

BY NIGHT: Hot to rather hot with light to moderate north westerly wind with speed of 12 - 35 km/h.

WEATHER WARNING: No Current Warnings

STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	47 °C	36 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	49 °C	30 °C
ABDALY	50 °C	30 °C
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C
JAHRA	50 °C	33 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	44 °C	32 °C
SALMIYAH	44 °C	35 °C
AHMADI	- °C	- °C
NUWAISIB	47 °C	30 °C
WAFRA	50 °C	29 °C
SALMY	48 °C	31 °C



DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Tuesday	08/04	Very hot with a chance for rising dust over open areas	48 °C	30 °C	VRB-NW	08 - 45 km/h
Wednesday	08/05	Very hot	48 °C	30 °C	NW	12 - 38 km/h
Thursday	08/06	Very hot	47 °C	31 °C	NW	12 - 40 km/h
Friday	08/07	Very hot with a chance for rising dust over open areas	47 °C	32 °C	NW-VRB	15 - 45 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	03:42
Sunrise	05:10
Zuhr	11:54
Asr	15:30
Sunset	18:39
Isha	20:04

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	42 °C
MIN. Temp.	33 °C
MAX. RH	77 %
MIN. RH	29 %
MAX. Wind	SE 39 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

CHANGE OF NAME

Old name: Talib Ali Roomani, New name: Talib Ali Rumaney, Passport no. J5552849. (C 5753) 4-8-2020

Hospitals

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

To Whom It May Concern



We inform you that Mr. Berat Mete Dilan Turkish Nationality - Civil ID :276081209419 Purchasing and Customs Manager in Kolin Construction left the company. For those who have any claims or dues on him has to review the company within 3 days of the date of publication of the advertisement. The company is not responsible with any claims after that date.

For review contact on mobile: 94124082
 Email: uyilmaz@kolin.com.tr

Airlines

Kuwait Airways	171
Jazeera Airways	177
Turkish Airlines	1884918
FlyDubai	22414400
Qatar Airways	22423888
KLM	22425747
Royal Jordanian	22418064/5/6
British Airways	22425635
Air France	22430224
Emirates	22921555
Air India	22456700
Air India EXPRESS	22438185/4
Sri Lanka Airlines	22424444
Egypt Air	22421578
Swiss Air	22421516
Saudia	22426306
Middle East Airlines	22423073
Lufthansa	22422493
PIA	22421044
Bangladesh Airlines	22452977/8

Word Search

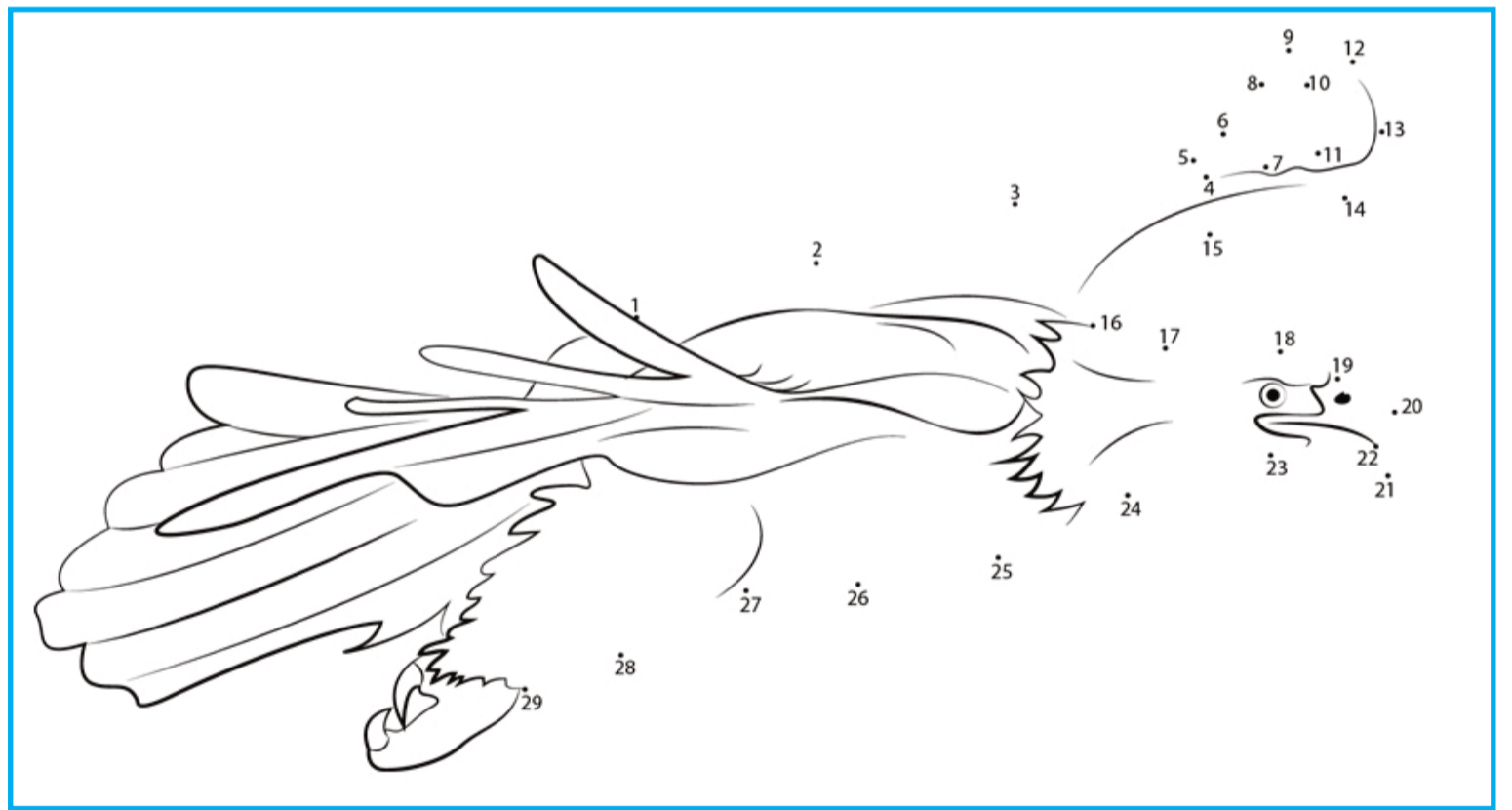
Alien Life Word Search



- Abduction
- Alien
- Area Fifty One
- Close Encounter
- Conspiracy
- Dimension
- Earthling
- Extraterrestrial
- Flying Saucer
- Galaxy
- Green
- Invasion
- Light Speed
- Martian
- Outer Space
- Planets
- Ray Gun
- Sci-fi
- Sighting
- Spacecraft
- Telepathy
- Transporter
- Traveler
- UFO
- Voyage



Join the Dot



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Travel arrangements may have to be put off because of unexpected developments that keep you where you are, Aries. You may be worried about the consequences, but don't waste your energy. You'll be able to make the necessary trip and accomplish whatever you're hoping to do - just not today. Worry will only stress you out. The only productive way to deal with this is to keep moving.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Expected calls or deliveries may prove more trouble than they're worth, Cancer. You could get involved in endless games of phone tag, and deliveries might come when you're out. This can be avoided if you're prepared. Make sure everyone knows what you're expecting so they can watch for it. Tell people the best times to phone and be available at those times. Don't worry. You'll manage.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Beware that creative efforts involving modern technology, such as computer graphics, recording, or film, might suffer from "too many cooks." Everyone has a different idea of how things should be handled. If this is your project, make sure everyone knows you're the boss. If you have partners, discuss the situation rationally with them. Don't sabotage your enterprise because of disagreements. Talk it over.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

This isn't a good day to travel, Capricorn, especially by air. Long lines at the ticket counter, endless delays, and lost luggage could be the result. This may not even be a good day to plan a trip, although you can consider your options. If you must fly today, get to the airport early, travel light, and take something good to read. That will make it bearable.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You may feel especially lonely, overworked, and passionate today, Taurus, and therefore longing for the company of your romantic partner. But responsibilities involving you both could well be keeping you apart. This could be more than frustrating - it could make you gloomy. Don't let that happen. Concentrate on your work and finish before evening. You'll see your friend then if possible.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

A temporary delay in receiving some expected funds might force you to postpone a much-needed purchase, Leo. Don't make yourself crazy over this. It isn't worth the stress. The delay is disheartening, but it isn't a cancellation. Your money will arrive, and you'll be able to go ahead with your plans. In the meantime, keep yourself busy. Hang in there.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

In spite of the leaps and bounds you've taken over the last several months, Scorpio, a slump could set in as you start to doubt your ability to attain your goals. A disheartening and unexpected setback may have occurred, but you've never let this sort of thing stop you before. Don't fall into this trap now. Brace yourself, reassess your methods, and get back in the saddle.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

A friend or colleague involved in an enterprise with you could be inhibited in some way by lack of money, Aquarius. This might involve some unexpected adjustment on your part, perhaps finding someone else to temporarily fill in. It's a pain, but you and your colleagues will manage, and your friend should have it together in time. Find a way to work around the situation. Hang in there.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Upsets in the home could occur today, Gemini. You and other members of your household are on edge and liable to snap at the least provocation. Someone could get all flustered over a minor problem and storm out. Don't worry. At day's end everyone should see events in their proper perspective, and all be friends again. Hang in there.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Some older people, perhaps your parents, might be too vocal in their assessment of how you're handling a situation, Virgo. You're particularly sensitive today, and far less tolerant of criticism than usual. Don't lash out. Causing a rift won't solve anything. Change the subject and take whatever course of action you feel is best.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Are you waiting to hear some important news, Sagittarius? Significant career matters may be involved. This isn't a good day to sit around waiting. Your call will probably come late, when you least expect it. Turn on your voicemail, get dressed, and go out and do something else for a while. Otherwise you could well drive yourself crazy hoping for the news. Hang in there.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Career responsibilities may require a temporary separation from a love partner today, Pisces. This is apt to be upsetting and rather disheartening, but there's likely nothing you can do about it except work as quickly as you can so that you can finish and get back to your partner. Make sure your friend knows what's going on. You don't want to cause any more upset.

Lifestyle | Features

HUMANITY ON MARS? TECHNICALLY POSSIBLE, BUT NO VOYAGE YET

Robotic landers and rovers have been touching down on Mars since the 1970s, but when will humanity finally set foot on the Red Planet? Experts believe the technical challenges are nearly resolved, but political considerations make the future of any crewed mission uncertain. NASA's human lunar exploration program, Artemis, envisions sending people back to the Moon by 2024 and using the experience gained there to prepare for Mars.

Plans have been proposed for a crewed exploratory mission of our neighboring planet since before NASA was created in 1958, but have never taken off. In the spring of 1990, then president George Bush Sr announced the most audacious promise to date—a man on Mars before July 20, 2019, the fiftieth anniversary of the first lunar landing. The commitment clearly never came to pass, and similar goals articulated by presidents George W Bush, Barack Obama and Donald Trump have not led to concrete programs.

"I have seen maybe 10,000 graphs, charts, proposing various ideas about how to get to Mars, for humans," G. Scott Hubbard, an adjunct professor at Stanford and former senior NASA official, told AFP. "But putting the money behind it to make it a reality has not occurred." The mission itself would last two or three years. Today, Elon Musk's SpaceX and

Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin are building heavy rockets capable of sending tens of tons toward Mars.

Alone, and far

For the seven-month journey, twenty years of living and working in the International Space Station (ISS) has reassured scientists about the dangers posed by radiation and by weightlessness, such as muscle atrophy. The body does not emerge unscathed, but the risks are deemed acceptable. Then there is the stay on Mars itself, which would last 15 months so that the planets are once more on the same side of the Sun.

The surface temperature will average -63 degrees Celsius, and though radiation is a factor, suits and shelters exist that would shield astronauts. In case of medical emergencies, distance would make an evacuation impossible. What mishaps should astronauts anticipate? First of all fractures, but plaster casts would often suffice, says Dan Buckland, an engineer and emergency room doctor at Duke University, who is developing a robotic intravenous needle with support from NASA.

Diarrhoea, kidney stones and appendicitis are generally treatable, except for 30 percent of appendicitis cases which must be operated and could therefore be fatal. With extensive screening of astronauts' genetics and family history, you



This illustration obtained July 20, 2020 shows NASA's Mars 2020 rover as it uses its drill to core a rock sample on Mars. — AFP

can greatly reduce the probability of having a crew member who develops cancer over the course of a three-year mission. "I have not found a showstopper for going to Mars, in terms of a health condition," said Buckland. One major issue would be protecting the habitats and vehicles from the ravages of the fine dust that covers the surface.

"Mars is unique in that there's also a concern about dust storms," said Robert Howard of the NASA Johnson Center. These hellish planet-wide tempests can block out the Sun for months, rendering solar panels useless. Small nuclear reac-

tors would therefore be needed. In 2018, NASA and the Department of Energy successfully completed a demonstration project, the Kilopower Project. Ultimately, the goal will be to manufacture materials on site using mined resources, probably with 3D printing machines. Development is embryonic, but the Artemis program will be a testing ground.

Colonies?

Musk has proposed colonizing Mars, with a first expedition to build a factory that converts Martian water and carbon dioxide from the atmosphere into oxygen

and methane fuel. "Becoming a multi-planet species," he said in a 2017 speech, "beats the hell out of being a single-planet species."

Robert Zubrin, president of the Mars Society, likewise advocates for the creation of "new branches of human civilization." That no progress has been made since humanity last walked on the Moon in 1972 is, to him, shameful. "It was as if Columbus had come back from the New World the first time and then (king and queen) Ferdinand and Isabella had said, 'so what, we're not interested,'" he said. Not everyone is convinced. "Enough of the nonsense!" said exobiologist Michel Viso from CNES, the French space agency.

"We have an amazing planet with an atmosphere, with oxygen, with water...It's criminal, you don't have the right to fool people into thinking there is a 'Plan B,' a 'Planet B,' that we will have a Martian civilization." Whether humanity installs a colony or permanent bases, the most important obstacle, for a lasting human presence on Mars, will be to convince people to accept a higher level of risk than for the Moon or the ISS, argues Buckland. In the long run, not everyone will return. — AFP

Bollywood star Bachchan discharged after catching coronavirus

Bollywood superstar Amitabh Bachchan said Sunday he had been discharged from hospital, three weeks after being admitted with "mild" coronavirus symptoms after testing positive for the disease. The news came as powerful Indian Home Minister Amit Shah revealed he had tested positive for coronavirus, which is infecting tens of thousands of people a day and killing hundreds-in the world's second most-populous country. More than 1.7 million people have now been infected in India, giving it the world's highest toll behind the United States and Brazil, and more than 37,000 have died. Bachchan's actor-son Abhishek, who was admitted at the same time, will remain in hospital, while his daughter-in-law, actress and former Miss World Aishwarya Rai, and granddaughter Aaradhya, were discharged last week.

They were the highest-profile family in India to contract the virus in a country that worships movie stars. "I am back home. I will have to be in solitary quarantine in my room," Bachchan wrote on Instagram, saying he had tested negative. He thanked his family, fans and "the excellent care and nursing" at the hospital, saying they "made it possible for me to see this day". At the time he said he had "mild" symptoms. Bachchan's discharge came as Home Minister Amit Shah-Prime Minister Narendra Modi's right-hand man-said he had tested positive for the virus. "On getting initial symptoms of coronavirus, I got myself tested and my report



In this file photo, Indian Bollywood actor Amitabh Bachchan takes part in a launch event for the water conservation effort "Mission Paani" in Mumbai. — AFP

is positive," Shah tweeted. "My health is fine, but on the advice of doctors I'm getting myself admitted to a hospital."

The 55-year-old-the first national government cabinet minister to test positive-called on everyone in contact with him over the past two days to get tested and isolate. It was not clear if Shah had met Modi or other senior cabinet ministers in recent days. He was admitted to a hospital in Gurgaon, just outside the capital New Delhi, local media reported. B.S. Yediyurappa, chief minister of the southwestern state of Karnataka which has a population of more than 60 million people, late Sunday also tweeted that he had tested positive. —AFP

BEYONCE DELIGHTS FANS WITH STYLIZED VISUAL ALBUM 'BLACK IS KING'

Pop royalty Beyonce on Friday released her much-hyped visual album "Black Is King," an aesthetically ambitious video billed as a companion to her 2019 album of songs inspired by Disney's live-action remake of "The Lion King." The highly stylized visual narrative released on the Disney Plus streaming platform runs an hour and 25 minutes and, akin to "The Lion King," tells the story of a young boy who navigates an onerous world, finding himself far from his family. The work is an ode to the black experience rife with vibrant imagery celebrating the African diaspora, an aesthetic exploration of black history, power and success that also references colonialism, economic disparity and racism.

Beyonce had described the work as a "labor of love," that now serves "a greater purpose" than its original role as a companion piece to "The Lion King: The Gift," given the current sociopolitical climate. Mass anti-racism protests ignited following the police killing of a black man, George Floyd, in May as the coronavirus pandemic ravages the United States, disproportionately infecting people of color. "Many of us want change," Beyonce wrote on Instagram, rare personal words from the guarded celebrity. "I believe that when Black people tell our own stories, we can shift the axis of the world and tell our REAL history of generational wealth and richness of soul that are not told in our history books."



In this file photo taken on July 9, 2019 US singer/songwriter Beyonce arrives for the world premiere of Disney's "The Lion King" at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood. — AFP

Lush visuals

Powered by lush visuals and Beyonce's soaring vocals, "Black Is King" places heavy emphasis on notions of family and motherhood along with more philosophical threads of origin and legacy. A-listers including the superstar's hip hop mogul husband Jay-Z, actress Lupita Nyong'o, jack-of-all-trades Pharrell Williams and model Naomi Campbell also make appearances, as well as daughter Blue Ivy and rare footage of her twins, Rumi Carter and Sir Carter.

The film follows Beyonce's venerated 2016 visual album "Lemonade," which emphasized black womanhood against

the backdrop of America's heritage of slavery and culture of oppression. Since that Grammy-winning work Beyonce has prized the visual at the forefront of her art, no longer focused on dominating the pop charts. Simultaneously one of music's most private but most-watched stars, the 38-year-old uses her massive social media platform to curate her image and promote her work imbued with broad social commentary on topics including gender and race.

But Beyonce also has faced criticism, especially from outside the United States, for deploying what some call stereotypical visuals of "African tradition"-face paint and feathers, for example. Many social media users noted that Disney Plus is not accessible in African nations, and that while Beyonce has performed some shows on the continent, her tours haven't included dates there in years. "Someone with the range must unpack how our beloved queen Beyonce is reducing blackness and Africanness to aesthetics and the western imaginations of our existence," tweeted one user, Paballo Chauke. "They must also speak about how it's now profitable to do such gimmicks." Still, the Bey Hive-Beyonce's legion of ardent fans-voiced elation over the release of "Black Is King," which quickly became a top trending hashtag. — AFP

Plague to protein: Israeli firm seeks to put locusts on the menu

From biblical plague to modern day protein, one Israeli firm wants to make locusts a sustainable food choice in the Holy Land and beyond. As for whether or not the insects are kosher, the answer is not so simple. At Hargol Foodtech's farm in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, a rectangular enclosure that once served as a chicken coop is filled with thousands of locusts, a grasshopper species that has a highly destructive swarming phase.

Contained in a series of meticulously stacked, climate-controlled mesh cages, the insects are served wheatgrass through their three-month life-cycle, before being cooled, killed and baked. Hargol's chief executive Dror Tamir told AFP that he grew up hearing stories of how locusts destroyed the fields of his kibbutz in the 1950s. Yet the Yemenite Jews in the area did not view locusts as crop-ruining pests, but as an edible source of nutrients, Tamir recalled.

Grasshoppers the 'solution'

As an adult, Tamir became a food and nutrition entrepreneur increasingly con-

cerned about the environmental cost of providing the world's growing population with enough animal protein. Tamir said he founded Hargol-Hebrew for grasshopper-six and a half years ago after realising the insects were the solution. The company's goal is to be "the first in the world to grow grasshoppers on a commercial scale, and provide the world with a healthier and more sustainable source of protein". Ram Reifen, a professor of human nutrition at Hebrew University, agreed that the planet is facing growing food supply challenges. With Earth's population expected to hit 10 billion by 2050, raising livestock to feed the planet will become increasingly unsustainable, given the massive water and land resources required. "The fear is there will be a scarcity of protein," Reifen told AFP.

'Yuck' factor

Tamir said that unprocessed locusts consist of more than 70 percent protein and contain all amino acids, along with other nutrients. "What they do lack is saturated fat and cholesterol," he said. "They have the good stuff. They don't have the



A worker at the Hargol grasshoppers breeding farm holds a grasshopper at the farm in the Kidmat Tzvi settlement in the Israeli-annexed Golan Heights.



Dror Tamir, founder and the CEO of Hargol grasshoppers breeding farm, eats a grasshopper at his farm in the Kidmat Tzvi settlement in the Israeli-annexed Golan Heights.



A worker at the Hargol grasshoppers breeding farm watches grasshoppers at the farm in the Kidmat Tzvi settlement in the Israeli-annexed Golan Heights. — AFP photos

bad stuff." According to his own estimate, around 2.5 billion people-mainly in developing nations-consume insects as part of their regular diet. And, the "most widely-eaten insects in the world are grasshoppers," Tamir said. But, he added, "when trying to target North American and European customers, it's really hard to overcome the 'yuck' factor". To make their product more palatable to Westerners, Hargol turns locusts into powder, which can be mixed into various foods.

Tamir said they were about to launch sales of locust-enhanced pancake mix and smoothie powders worldwide. Some goods produced in the Golan Heights face export restrictions, including strict labeling requirements, because most of the international community does not recognize Israeli sovereignty in the area. But Tamir said that while the locusts are grown in the Golan and another site in the Galilee, the powder is produced elsewhere within Israel, enabling him to avoid export restrictions. Investor support has helped sustain the company before sales

tick up, he added.

But is it kosher?

In the Bible, locusts appear in the Old Testament Book of Exodus as one of the Ten Plagues unleashed on the Egyptians to force the Pharaoh to free the Israelites from slavery. In Leviticus, there is a passage stating that certain kinds of grasshopper, including locusts, are kosher. Jews in Yemen and North Africa have been eating locusts for generations, but European, or Ashkenazi Jews have not.

Tamir said he hoped that he could bring locusts into mainstream Israeli cuisine by getting a kosher certification for his product from the country's chief rabbin. Rabbi Eliezer Simcha Weisz, a member of the Chief Rabbinate Council, Israel's top religious adjudication body, told AFP the "phenomenal issue" of whether locusts are kosher had been discussed at "great length". And while the Torah designates some species as kosher-including the one raised by Tamir-it forbids others, he said.—AFP



In this file photo French actor Gerard Depardieu poses during a photocall for the second season of the French TV show "Marseille" broadcasted and co-produced by US streaming video giant Netflix, in Marseille, southern France. — AFP

Prosecutors ask for Depardieu rape case to be reopened

Paris prosecutors said Saturday they had asked for an investigation into rape allegations against French actor Gerard Depardieu to be reopened after an earlier probe was dropped last year. An actress in her 20s accuses Depardieu of assaulting and raping her in his Paris home in August 2018. After she reported her allegations against the celebrated actor-who is 71 and who denies any wrongdoing-prosecutors in the southern city of Aix-en-Provence opened a preliminary investigation which they then passed on to their Paris colleagues.

The Paris probe was dropped after nine months in early 2019 after investigators failed to assemble enough proof to proceed to formal charges. But now the actress has launched proceedings by acting as an "injured party" which under French law almost always leads to a case being examined by an investigating magistrate. —AFP

Lifestyle | Features



This photo shows staff members wearing face shields next to "Pop up flower" by artist Takashi Murakami during a media preview of "STARS: Six Contemporary Artists from Japan to the World" at the Mori Art Museum in Tokyo. — AFP photos



This photo shows Mami Kataoka, director of the Mori Art Museum, posing for a photo in front of art by Yayoi Kusama titled "Women wait for love, but men always walk away" (right) and "Shedding tears to the season" (left), after an interview with AFP at the Mori Art Museum in Tokyo.

ART IN A PANDEMIC: TOKYO SHOW TESTS IF FANS WILL COME

It's a blockbuster exhibition, featuring some of the biggest names in Japan's contemporary art scene. But will people flock to galleries in the midst of the global coronavirus pandemic? That's the question on the mind of Mami Kataoka, director of the influential Mori Art Museum, which reopens on Friday after a five-month hiatus with one of its most high-profile Japanese art shows in years. "We live in a time when we are asked, 'What is the role of museums and what is the role of art?'" Kataoka told AFP at a press preview of the "STARS" exhibit this week.

The exhibition was supposed to open in April, running through the summer to attract visitors in town for the Olympics, with works by leading Japanese art figures like Yayoi Kusama and Takashi Murakami. But the coronavirus has

forced a year-long delay of the Games, and the museum closed its doors in February as infections began to climb in Japan. "In this situation, it's difficult to manage (a museum)," Kataoka said.

The exhibition is going ahead despite the challenges, and even as the city's governor has warned of a second wave of infections in the capital. The star-studded exhibition features well-known works such as Murakami's "Miss Ko2" sculpture imbued with Japanese "otaku" subculture, as well as Kusama's abstract Infinity Nets paintings. It also showcases works by Hiroshi Sugimoto, Lee Ufan and Yoshitomo Nara, who is now preparing a major retrospective in Los Angeles. Kataoka said the show features artists who burst onto the global art scene after struggling for years in relative obscurity. Some represent mini-

malist styles and others favour less traditional aesthetics, drawing from animation, pop culture and subcultures.

"I was grateful... that this museum was able to reopen with this powerful exhibit of works by artists with long careers," Acclaimed installation artist and sculptor Tatsuo Miyajima told reporters that the pandemic will test what art people feel they need to see in person. "We now only go to places and see people we really need to see and visit," said Miyajima, who is exhibiting at the show. "I think there will be a selection process and museums are not exempt from that. People will come to see things that they truly need to see."

Japan has seen a smaller virus case-load than many countries, with around 33,000 infections and just over 1,000 deaths. But Tokyo is seeing a spike in

cases, and authorities have warned more measures may be needed if infections rise further. Exhibit visitors will be asked to book in advance, wear masks and sanitize their hands frequently. In a bid to recoup costs, the museum is raising prices and stretching the exhibit run longer. Despite the challenges, Kataoka is convinced fans who do come will find themselves pleasantly surprised. "Visitors will be able to experience the show in this uncrowded space. I think you'll see an improvement in the quality of viewing experience." — AFP



A visitor taking pictures of "Voyage of the Moon (Resting Moon)" by artist Yoshitomo Nara.



In this file photo taken on June 11, 2020 Italian Carabinieri pose near a piece of art attributed to Banksy, that was stolen at the Bataclan in Paris in 2019. — AFP

The investigation that led police to stolen Banksy in Italy

A stolen cutter, CCTV footage, phone taps, loose-tongued suspects... this is how an artwork by famed street artist Banksy painted on the door of the Bataclan club in Paris was discovered in Italy 18 months after being stolen. At 4:00 am on January 26, 2019, three men wearing hoodies and masks take a cutting tool to the metal door of the Bataclan. It is not just any old door, but the emergency exit of the famous Parisian music venue where 90 people were murdered by Islamic State gunmen on November 13, 2015. The stenciled white image is of a "sad young girl" in homage to the victims of the Bataclan attack.

It is all over in just a few minutes: the thieves load the door into the back of the Citroen van, whose number plate has been made illegible, according to captured CCTV footage. "It was an important investigation" for the officers, some of whom had worked on the Bataclan attack, a source close to the case tells AFP. By "honing in" on phones located in the vicinity of the Bataclan at the time and then along the route taken by the getaway van, tracked using surveillance cameras, police are able to identify and tap the lines. A year later, police detain three men suspected of breaking into a DIY shop in the Isere department in southeastern France.

A cutting tool is among the stolen objects and one of the suspects boasts of having been involved in a break-in in Paris. With a link now established between the suspects and the theft of Banksy's "the sad young girl", police use wire-taps and surveillance to track down the receivers of the stolen artwork. According to the investigators' findings, the artwork is taken to first to Isere, then to the south of France and from there on to Italy.

'Like trying to re-sell the Mona Lisa' In Italy, the painting is initially hidden

in a hotel in Tortoreto, in the central region of Abruzzo. But when the hotel undergoes renovation work, it is relocated to an abandoned farm in Sant'Omero, some 15 kilometers (nine miles) away. The hotel's owner, an acquaintance of one of the men suspected of receiving stolen goods, Mehdi Meftah, says he did not know what the bulky package contained. Police decide to detain the whole gang, but the arrests are hampered by the coronavirus lockdown, the source tells AFP. In a joint operation with Italian police, the investigators seize "the sad young girl" in Abruzzo on June 10.

The attendant publicity forces police to speed up the arrests and a total of nine people are detained in France in the following days. Two are charged with robbery in an organized gang and another four with receiving stolen goods, including Mehdi Meftah. The 39-year-old, with his bouncer-like looks and tattoos, founded the luxury T-shirt brand "BL1.D", which has an 18-carat gold ingot sewn into the neckline. He is suspected of ordering the theft. "His accomplices say he wanted to keep the door for one of his houses," says the source close to the investigation, acknowledging that trying to re-sell such an artwork would be "very difficult". "It would be like trying to re-sell the Mona Lisa," his lawyer, Yves Sauvyre, tells the weekly newspaper, Journal du dimanche, denying his client had ordered the theft. "He was presented with a fait accompli. He agreed to take the door in order accepted to help out old acquaintances. He didn't pay a penny," the lawyer says. At the moment, the artwork, handed back to France by the Italian authorities, is under seal and is being guarded by Paris police. — AFP

Surviving selfies: Japan's purikura photo booths cling on

A pair of Japanese schoolgirls primp their hair before a long mirror, preparing for the perfect shot. But they are not taking a smartphone selfie, they are using a "purikura" photo booth. Old-style photo booths have staged something of a comeback in parts of the world in recent years, for their nostalgic value in the smartphone era. But the purikura—an abbreviation of the Japanese pronunciation of "print club"—offers much more than a simple strip of passport photos. Featuring a dizzying array of retouches, enhancements and adornments, they remain hugely popular 25 years after they debuted in Japan, particularly with teenage girls and young women enamoured of their "kawaii" or cute output.

And despite the competition from smartphones and increasingly sophisticated retouching apps, at least one Japanese firm is banking on the purikura's enduring appeal and rolling out a new model this year. Nonoka Yamada, 17, has been a purikura fan for almost a decade and told AFP she and friends use them several times a week. "All the girls in my class take purikura," she said as she prepped for her picture at a department store in Tokyo's Shibuya district. "The first time I used one I was eight, and the camera lens was too high so I had to stand on my tiptoes," she laughed. Purikura offer more than a simple smartphone selfie, she added. "It lets you make yourself look cute, you can change your face," she said. "I want to put the pictures on Instagram... the images are good-quality with good lighting."

Surviving the selfie era

The first purikura was the brainchild of

Japanese firm Atlas, which launched the product in partnership with Sega in July 1995. The booths quickly became a popular feature at Japanese gaming arcades, where long lines of schoolgirls waiting to have their photos taken transformed the previously male-dominated arcade customer base. Other companies quickly jumped into the market, which by 1997 was worth more than \$950 million a year.

But the selfie era took a toll, with users increasingly able to take and retouch photos for free with their phones, rather than paying about 400 yen (\$3.80) for a sheet of generally around 16 photos. Some manufacturers went under, while others abandoned the purikura business for more profitable ventures. Today, just one manufacturer remains: Furu, a former affiliate of the Japanese electronics firm Omron. "In 1997 we launched our first machine using Omron technology, which offered caricature faces. It was a total flop," admitted Furu spokeswoman Yuki Hikita. "It had nothing to do with what young girls wanted, probably because it was developed by middle-aged men."

The company began consulting customers directly and credits focus-grouping with its longevity. In recent years, the market has stabilised, with about 10,000 purikura dotted around the country-down from the 1997 peak of 50,000. And while the booths are less pervasive these days, they remain popular—a Furu phone app for receiving purikura photos had 19 million registered users in March.

'Spreading purikura culture'

Yuka Kubo, an independent researcher who studies the purikura phenomenon, has traced how the booths

evolved over time. Early models featured little more than cutesy borders around photos, with the first limited retouching tools debuting around 1998. Facial recognition technology incorporated in 2003 allowed specific features to be altered, particularly the eyes. "That was the start of the fashion for enormous eyes," said Kubo, referring to a popular feature giving customers the doe-eyed gaze of anime characters.

"It started a competition between manufacturers, driven by demand from girls, over who could offer the biggest eyes," she said. In recent years retouching options have become more sophisticated, offering tints and shades to give the appearance of perfect skin or a slimmer face. And while smartphones and apps offer retouching features, Hikita said there was still room for purikura. "To take a good selfie with a phone, you need a bit of skill," she said.

With purikura, "everything is automatic, with professional equipment and lighting, like a studio photo". The coronavirus pandemic has meant new measures to keep customers safe, including disinfectant at every booth, but it has not kept fans away. "Customers are already coming back, much faster than we'd expected," Hikita said. And in a sign of the sector's enduring appeal, Sega announced this month that more than two decades since it launched the first model-it would introduce a new version later this year, with the goal of "spreading purikura culture". — AFP



This photo shows teenagers displaying the printed images they took at a Japanese style photo booth known locally as "purikura", or print club, in Tokyo. — AFP photos



Teenagers editing their photos at a Japanese style photo booth known locally as "purikura", or print club.



Teenagers using a Japanese style photo booth known locally as "purikura".



Teenagers getting the printed images they took at a Japanese style photo booth known locally as "purikura".

Photo of the Day



Abdo Feghali performs during Red Bull Car Park Drift Qualifier at Sirbb Circuit. — Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

Paralympics: New schedule unveiled with minor changes

TOKYO: Tokyo 2020 organizers yesterday unveiled the new schedule for the coronavirus-postponed Paralympics next year, with only minor modifications to the original calendar for the event. The historic decision to delay the 2020 Games over the pandemic means the Paralympics are now scheduled to run from August 24 to September 5, 2021.

The program will feature 539 events across 22 sports, with modifications made only to start and finish times for some events, Tokyo 2020 said at a press conference. "Having the schedule fixed is a big step for athletes. We would like to continue our work to create a safe and secure Games," Tokyo 2020 Games delivery officer Hidemasa Nakamura told reporters.

The postponement of the Games has created a massive headache for organizers, as they navigate everything from securing venues to devising coronavirus countermeasures. So far specific measures to prevent infection have not been announced, with decisions expected sometime this autumn. For the Paralympics in particular, officials said they are mindful that they must cater to the needs of individual athletes and spectators with a range of different health and physical requirements.

Tokyo organizers said they are also working with the International Paralympic Committee to assess how the viral pandemic has affected athletes in various countries. Japanese Paralympian and taekwondo fighter Mitsuya Tanaka told reporters at the briefing that the pandemic has deeply affected athletes. "In taekwondo, we go face to face. We have restrictions during sparring, for example. Compared to the time before the coronavirus, we cannot practice like we used to," he said. —AFP

Blue Jackets shut out Leafs in Game 1 of qualifying series

Coyotes tally 3 in first, fend off Predators in opener

TORONTO: Cam Atkinson scored early in the third period and the Columbus Blue Jackets got a historic performance in net to defeat the Toronto Maple Leafs 2-0 in the opener of a best-of-five qualifying series in Toronto on Sunday night. Joonas Korpi, making his career playoff debut, stopped 28 shots to earn the first playoff shutout in the history of the Blue Jackets. Atkinson gave Columbus a 1-0 lead at 1:05 of the third period with his eighth career playoff goal on a shot from the top of the right circle after a breakout down the wing. David Savard earned an assist. Alexander Wennberg added an empty-net goal at 19:41 of the third period. Frederik Andersen made 33 saves in the Toronto goal.

WILD 3, CANUCKS 0

Alex Stalock made 28 saves for the shutout victory and Jared Spurgeon collected three points as Minnesota topped Vancouver in Game 1 of their Western Conference qualifying round series in Edmonton. Game 1 was just Stalock's second playoff start and fifth overall postseason appearance of his nine-year NHL career. The Wild didn't reveal their starting goaltender until close to game time, leaving the Canucks guessing as to whether Stalock or the more playoff-tested Devan Dubnyk would be in net. Spurgeon had two goals and an assist, setting a career best for points in a playoff game. The forward scored one of the Wild's two power-play goals as well as an empty-net goal in the final minute of play. Eric Staal had two assists for the 10th multi-point playoff game of his career. The veteran forward has 48 points (20 goals, 28 assists) over 59 career playoff games.

AVALANCHE 2, BLUES 1

Nazem Kadri's buzzer-beater with one-tenth of a

second remaining in the game was the difference as Colorado claimed a thrilling win over St. Louis in a Western Conference round-robin clash in Edmonton. With the Avalanche on a power play and buzzing around the net with all kinds of chances, Kadri pounced on a loose puck in the slot and fired it home just before the clock hit zero in both teams' first clash since the NHL resumed play after the 4 1/2-month pause due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It took a lengthy review before it was declared to be a good goal, and served as a thrilling finish as both clubs began gearing up for the upcoming Stanley Cup playoffs. Despite the Avalanche holding a drastic edge in play, Blues forward David Perron opened the scoring with a power-play goal at 16:46 of the opening frame. Colorado defenseman Ryan Graves finally solved Blues goalie Jordan Binnington and cued the comeback when he evened the count at 5:33 of the third period.

COYOTES 4, PREDATORS 3

Michael Grabner scored a short-handed breakaway goal in the second period which proved to be the difference in Arizona's victory over Nashville in Game 1 of their best-of-five NHL qualifying series in Edmonton. Phil Kessel and Taylor Hall had two assists each for the Coyotes, who also got first-period goals from Oliver Ekman-Larsson, Christian Dvorak and Clayton Keller. Filip Forsberg scored twice for the Predators and Ryan Ellis added a goal. Roman Josi added two assists for the Nashville crew.

FLYERS 4, BRUINS 1

Michael Raffl collected a goal and an assist to lift Philadelphia past Boston in the opener of the Eastern Conference round-robin tournament in



TORONTO: William Nylander #88 of the Toronto Maple Leafs and Riley Nash #20 of the Columbus Blue Jackets collide in the third period in Game One of the Eastern Conference Qualification Round prior to the 2020 NHL Stanley Cup Playoffs at Scotiabank Arena in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. — AFP

Toronto. Scott Laughton, Nate Thompson and defenseman Philippe Myers each scored a goal and Carter Hart made 34 saves for the Flyers, who had won nine of 10 before the shutdown in March. Chris Wagner scored the lone goal for the Bruins, who are jockeying with the Flyers,

Washington Capitals and Tampa Bay Lightning to determine the Eastern Conference's seeding of its top four clubs. Boston goaltender Jaroslav Halak made 25 saves while making his first playoff start since 2015. He got the nod in place of Tuukka Rask, who was ill. — AFP

Bowling association holds virtual meeting

KUWAIT: President of International and Asian Bowling Associations, Chairman of Kuwait Bowling Club Sheikh Talal Al-Mohammad thanked all members of the executive bureau of the International Association of the game for their constructive cooperation in order to enhance the game.

He said the international bowling community is working in total consensus between all members in manner that helps in achieving ambitions that aim at spreading the game further around the world.

Sheikh Mohammad said the International Bowling Association's executive bureau held a virtual meeting (online) and amended some rules to allow for flexible dealings with any emergency or pandemic such as the current situation.

The bureau adopted the candidacy for executive posts by the



Sheikh Talal Al-Mohammad

contenants to be direct without having to refer to the heads of contenants which allows for more freedom to those who find themselves competent and meet the conditions to declare his candidacy without restrictions.

Sheikh Mohammad said the bureau decided to give players a seat through elections by all players worldwide, adding that this will attract those with developed ideas and who will reflect the hopes and visions of players about the future of the game.

MLB Cardinals expect more COVID-19 cases after latest tests

NEW YORK: The St. Louis Cardinals, already facing multiple COVID-19 cases that wiped out their weekend Major League Baseball games, expect more positive results from testing Sunday, ESPN reported. The Cardinals said in a statement they do not expect an update on test results before Monday and will remain at a hotel in Milwaukee, where three planned games against the Brewers were called off due to their cases.

ESPN reported that someone with the team said the last round of tests are "not good," and that unnamed sources expect multiple new positives from the latest test results.

The Cardinals have had one player and three staff members test positive for COVID-19, and inconclusive results for another player and three staffers.

That follows 20 positive tests reported for the Miami Marlins and more for ballpark employees of the Philadelphia Phillies, who hosted the Marlins in the clubs' opening MLB games of the season. The Marlins

and Phillies didn't play the past week but are set to resume MLB competition in the next few days with those whose test results allow under MLB safety protocols. A season of 162 games per team was expected to start in March, but the coronavirus pandemic cut the season to 60 games per club. MLB plans to stage all games in empty home ballparks, with teams traveling between cities.

New York Mets outfielder Yoenis Cespedes has decided not to play the remainder of the season due to COVID-19 concerns, general manager Brodie Van Wagenen said. Cespedes left his hotel room in Atlanta without notifying the club, something his agent did later Sunday. "This is a challenging time for everyone. And so we will support him in that decision," Van Wagenen said. "It was surprising, without question. At the same point, we have to go forward." Most teams continued to play Sunday as normal, with some record-setting efforts.

RECORD BY TIGER PITCHER

Detroit Tigers left-handed relief pitcher Tyler Alexander struck out the first nine batters he faced in the opener of Sunday's doubleheader against Cincinnati, breaking the old MLB reliever's streak mark of eight by former New York Yankees pitcher Ron Davis against the California Angels in 1981.

Alexander was one shy of matching the record of 10 consecutive strikeouts set by

Tom Seaver of the New York Mets in 1970. "I normally don't try to strike people out," Alexander said after the Tigers lost 4-3 to the Reds. "But I would say after the fifth strikeout I was trying to strike people out." Alexander was one strike from retiring Mike Moustakas for a second time for his 10th in a row, but wound up hitting him instead to end the run. "I tried to strike him out," said Alexander. "But I ran it up and in and hit Moustakas in the wrist."

New York Yankees slugger Aaron Judge hit a home run in his fifth consecutive game on Sunday, becoming the first Yankee with such a homer streak since Alex Rodriguez in 2007. Judge tagged a three-run blast off Boston left-hander Matt Hall in the second inning. Los Angeles Angels pitcher Shohei Ohtani, who couldn't manage to secure an out and allowed five runs in his season debut last weekend, struggled in throwing only 1 2/3 innings Sunday in the club's 6-5, 11-inning loss to Houston.

The Japanese star, known for his ability to pitch and bat in his 2018 MLB debut campaign, underwent tendon replacement surgery and did not pitch in 2019. Ohtani retired the Astros in the first inning on only eight pitches, but he struggled with control in the second inning, walking three batters to load the bases, striking out two Houston hitters, and then walking two more to force in two Astros runs. Ohtani is batting .148 with two homers and seven runs batted in as a designated hitter, pitching only on Sundays before and after a rest day. — AFP

Sports

Brentford, Fulham clash in high-stakes battle to reach Premier League

Brentford's story has captured the imagination of neutrals

LONDON: Brentford and Fulham will slug it out for a place in the Premier League today when the London rivals clash in a Championship play-off final worth an estimated £170 million (\$220 million) to the winners. The rewards for promotion mean the Wembley showdown is often called the richest match in world football. After 73 years outside the English top-flight, unfashionable Brentford are within touching distance of an unexpected berth among the elite.

In contrast to their west London neighbors, Fulham are hoping for an immediate return to the Premier League after last season's relegation.

It is Brentford's story that has captured the imagination of neutrals. After spending 59 out of 60 seasons in the third or fourth tiers before reaching the Championship in 2014, the Bees have risen well above their traditional status thanks to innovative owner Matthew Benham. Benham has introduced an analytics-influenced approach overseen by two directors of football, ensuring the club make the most of their resources, which are meagre in comparison with the Championship's wealthier teams.

It has proved a successful formula as Brentford unearthed gems such as Neal Maupay, Ezri Konsa, Chris Mepham and Jota before selling them on for significant profits. Ollie Watkins, Said Benrahma and Bryan Mbeumo are the latest stars off the production line. That trio took Brentford to the brink of automatic promotion last month before successive defeats against lowly Stoke and Barnsley forced them to settle for a third-place finish.

IT MEANS EVERYTHING

An impressive 3-1 win over Swansea in the play-off semi-final second leg overturned a 1-0 first-leg

deficit and emphasised the quality nurtured by Brentford's Danish boss Thomas Frank. Frank's team-building philosophy takes inspiration from New Zealand's All Blacks, while his willingness to think outside the box has seen him employ a "head



Successful formula

of set pieces and individual development". Winning promotion would be the perfect way to say farewell to Griffin Park-Brentford's home since 1904 — as they prepare to move into a new arena nearby next season. Brentford beat Fulham 1-0 and 2-0 earlier this season and their captain Pontus Jansson knows what it would mean to get that lucrative third victory.

"It's quite obvious, for the club it means everything," Jansson said. "This is what we're fighting for as a club for a lot of years, especially this year. "We know the financial thing of playing in the Premier League, it's one of the biggest fees, if not the biggest, in the world. "It's a dream hopefully come true to get through to the Premier League." Fulham would love to spoil the Brentford fairytale, but their bid to get back to the top tier would be damaged if Serbia striker Aleksandar Mitrovic is unable to return from a hamstring injury.



MANCHESTER: File photo taken on January 26, 2020 Fulham's English manager Scott Parker gestures on the touchline during the English FA Cup fourth round football match between Manchester City and Fulham at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester, north west England. — AFP

Mitrovic, the Championship's top scorer with 26 goals this season, missed both legs of Fulham's 3-2 aggregate play-off semi-final victory over Cardiff. Fulham manager Scott Parker is cautiously optimistic about Mitrovic's chances of featuring at Wembley. "I'm hopeful he was close to playing the

second leg," Parker said. "We pushed and pushed. The medical team did everything they could but he just wasn't ready. It would have been too great a risk to involve him. "He'll be working now, working over the next few days. And we'll just do everything we can to try to have him ready." — AFP

Five-star Celtic begin record quest in style

GLASGOW: Odsonne Edouard fired a hat-trick as Celtic began their quest for an unprecedented 10th successive Premiership title in style with a comprehensive 5-1 win over Hamilton on Sunday. The Premiership flag was unfurled in an empty Parkhead and goals from the French striker and right-back Jeremie Frimpong put the Hoops 2-0 up just after the half-hour mark. Hamilton midfielder Scott Martin reduced the deficit with a deflected strike but Edouard notched twice early in the second half.

Substitute Patryk Klimala added a late fifth to fire out a warning to the rest of the top flight, but most especially their only credible title rivals, Rangers,

who narrowly beat Aberdeen on Saturday. After the low-key flag ceremony the players took the knee in support of Black Lives Matter and Hamilton, who had given the champions a guard of honor, played their part in an open first half. Celtic's 20th-minute breakthrough came following a sweeping attack initiated by right-back Frimpong, with Edouard continuing the move before tapping in a cutback from Greg Taylor.

The Hoops left-back was also heavily involved in Celtic's second goal, taking a pass from Callum McGregor and fizzing it across goal to be knocked in by Frimpong. But the visitors were back in the game minutes later when Celtic failed to properly clear a set-piece and Martin's drive from the edge of the box struck McGregor and then Christopher Jullien before eluding the scrambling Scott Bain. Within minutes of the restart Edouard scored again.

The Frenchman ended another sweeping move when he delightfully chipped in from James

Forrest's cross from the right and his third came when he was on hand to stab the ball in from close range after Hamilton goalkeeper Ryan Fulton parried a Ryan Christie strike. A fifth goal for Celtic came in the closing minutes when Jullien sent Polish striker Klimala racing into the box and he rolled the ball into the far corner for his first competitive Hoops goal. Celtic manager Neil Lennon praised his side, saying it was a "brilliant return" after the five-month coronavirus lockdown.

But he said it was "pivotal" that Edouard stayed at the club. "Odsonne's got off to a brilliant start, three striker's goals," he told BBC Radio Scotland. "We don't want him to go anywhere. That's what's pleased me over the last 12 to 18 months, his goal return as well as all the other things he brings to the game." Rangers won their opener 1-0 at Aberdeen at Saturday. There were also wins for Hibernian and St Mirren, while Dundee United drew 1-1 with St Johnstone. — AFP

Lampard calls for 'fair' treatment for tired Chelsea

LONDON: Frank Lampard has called on the Premier League to give Chelsea a fair start to next season, saying the September 12 launch date is "too early" for his players. The Blues lost Saturday's FA Cup final 2-1 to London rivals Arsenal but are still not finished with the current campaign. Lampard's side take on Bayern Munich on Saturday in the rescheduled second leg of their Champions League round-of-16 tie, trailing 3-0 from the first leg.

Even if they exit the competition, Chelsea will have just 35 days before the new season is due to begin. Manchester City are also still in the Champions League, the final of which is scheduled for August 23, while Manchester United and Wolves are involved in the Europa League, which ends on August 21.

It is understood that when Premier League clubs agreed a September 12 start date, it was also clear there would need to be at least a 30-day break for Chelsea and any of the other teams playing in the end-of-season European competitions. Lampard lost Willian and Ruben Loftus-Cheek on the eve of the FA Cup final to injury and Cesar Azpilicueta and goalscorer Christian Pulisic during the game to hamstring problems.

"Even in a worst-case scenario, we don't go through against Bayern. The 12th feels too early for me for the players to start playing again," said the Chelsea boss. "The players need a break. That is why we have pulled two hamstrings and had players



LONDON: Chelsea's English head coach Frank Lampard reacts during the English FA Cup final football match between Arsenal and Chelsea at Wembley Stadium in London, on August 1, 2020. Arsenal won the match 2-1. — AFP

pull out of the game before this." Lampard implored the Premier League to make sure clubs start the next season with a level playing field. "I would like to think the Premier League would look seriously at

that," he said. "Hopefully they give us a fair start next season. We deserve to be (given a fair start) as a Premier League club competing in the Champions League." — AFP

Minnesota, Portland Timbers advance to MLS semi-finals

MIAMI: Diego Valeri and Andy Polo scored second-half goals Saturday to lift the Portland Timbers into the semi-finals of the Major League Soccer is Back Tournament, while Minnesota United also claimed a last-four berth. The Timbers rallied to eliminate New York City FC 3-1 while Robin Lod and Jacori Hayes scored seconds apart in the first half in Minnesota's 4-1 romp over the San Jose Earthquakes.

Portland advanced into a Wednesday semi-final

against the Philadelphia Union while the Loons booked a berth Thursday against Orlando City with the other spot in the August 11 final at stake. The tournament-played without spectators in a quarantine bubble at Disney World in Orlando, Florida marks the league's return after shutting down due to the coronavirus pandemic in March after only two matches per club.

The Minnesota-Orlando matchup gives Loons manager Adrian Heath, a 59-year-old Englishman, a chance at revenge against the side that sacked him as manager in 2016 with a team that has impressed him. "This is the best group of people we've had in the club, in terms of actually doing what the staff want, doing what is expected of them, and being a really good teammate, even when it's not going great for yourself, and that's what football is all about," Heath said.

In the nightcap, Paraguayan midfielder Jesus Medina scored on a penalty kick in the 27th minute for NYCFC but the Timbers answered before halftime, Argentine midfielder Sebastian Blanco striking back in the 43rd minute to equalize 1-1 at the break. Valeri, an Argentine midfielder who entered at halftime, put Portland ahead to stay in the 65th minute and Peruvian midfielder Polo scored in the 76th minute, seconds after stepping onto the field. In the opener, Finnish midfielder Lod opened the scoring in the 20th minute and US midfielder Hayes found the back of the net in the 21st to put Minnesota ahead 2-0 at halftime.

The Earthquakes answered on Magnus Eriksson's penalty kick in the 50th minute but Minnesota restored a two-goal margin in the 56th minute on a goal from Paraguayan striker Luis Amarilla. US midfielder Marlon Hairston netted a

Australian women stars slam timing of India's T20 Challenge

SYDNEY: Some of Australia's top women's cricketers yesterday blasted a decision by India to schedule its T20 Challenge during the Big Bash League as a "huge shame" and "sad for the game". Indian cricket bosses on Sunday said the women's T20 Challenge will take place in the United Arab Emirates, comprising three teams with four matches during the playoff week of the cash-rich and globally popular men's Indian Premier League (IPL).

That would see it clash with the Women's Big Bash League (WBBL), widely considered the top women's Twenty20 tournament, which is due to be held between October 17 and November 29. It would effectively mean Indian players will not be available for the WBBL while overseas stars face having to pick between the competitions.

"So during the WBBL... cool," Australian wicketkeeper Alyssa Healy tweeted sarcastically. "So the Indian players who've already signed wbl contracts will do what? And all the international marquee players that will be in aus for wbl? Good luck with it..." Fellow Australian Jess Jonassen, the world's top-ranked one-day bowler, was equally bemused, saying "I have no words for this", while batting stalwart Rachael Haynes said "If true, it's a shame". — AFP

ICC urged to address 'contract breaches' and non-payment

NEW DELHI: A third of international male cricketers have suffered breaches of contract or non-payment from events sanctioned by the game's global governing body or its member nations, the international players' federation said yesterday. The Federation of International Cricketers' Associations (FICA) said after the release of its 'Men's Global Employment Report 2020' that the International Cricket Council had a duty to protect those working within its regulatory framework.

The report cited examples such as Bangladesh players not receiving their share of prize money from an ICC event, and their counterparts in Zimbabwe, another ICC full member, still waiting for their board to pay their contracts. It also listed unresolved payment issues in Twenty20 and 10-overs leagues in several minor cricket-playing nations including Canada, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar. "Systematic contract breaches and non-payment of players are issues that urgently need addressing," FICA Chief Executive Tom Moffat said. "The ICC has an obligation to protect people working within its regulatory frameworks and it's time something was done about this issue. "We continue to urge decision makers to work with FICA at global level, and players' associations at domestic level, to develop joint solutions to issues ... many of which are likely to be exacerbated by the current global situation." The ICC was not immediately available for comment on the report. FICA also called for an end to "blanket bans on players from certain countries playing abroad" and limitations on the number of overseas league contracts a player may hold. — Reuters

14 Blue Jackets shut out Leafs in Game 1 of qualifying series



15 Brentford, Fulham clash in high-stakes battle to reach EPL



15 Lampard calls for 'fair' treatment for tired Chelsea



ORLANDO: D.J. Wilson #5 of the Milwaukee Bucks grabs the rebound against the Houston Rockets during a game at The Arena at ESPN Wide World of Sports in Orlando, Florida. — AFP

Westbrook, Rockets outlast Giannis, Bucks

High-scoring Magic rout Kings, 132-116

MIAMI: Russell Westbrook sank four free throws inside the final 28.5 seconds and the Houston Rockets topped the Milwaukee Bucks 120-116 on Sunday at the ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex near Orlando. Westbrook scored a team-high 31 points while adding eight assists, and his clutch effort at the charity stripe enabled the Rockets (42-24) to outlast the Bucks (54-13) down a back-and-forth closing stretch. Danuel House Jr. converted two free throws with 14 seconds left as the Rockets finished 27 of 31 from the line.

Giannis Antetokounmpo totaled 36 points, 18 rebounds and eight assists for his 15th 30-15-5 game this season while Khris Middleton (27 points, 12 rebounds) and Brook Lopez (23 points, 12 rebounds) posted double-doubles for the Bucks, who posted a 65-36 rebounding advantage and limited the Rockets to 34.4 percent (21 of 61) shooting from behind the 3-point line yet lost the game. Milwaukee did commit 22 turnovers including a bad pass by Antetokounmpo that House picked off prior to his clinching free throws-which the Rockets converted into 30 points in the victory. James Harden offset a poor shooting performance (5 for 14) with seven rebounds, seven assists and a game-high six steals to complement his 24 points. House produced 16 points while Robert Covington chipped in 15 points, seven rebounds and three steals for the Rockets.

BOSTON CELTICS 128 - PORTLAND TRAIL BLAZERS 124

Jayson Tatum scored a game-high 34 points and

Jaylen Brown added 30 to lead Boston past Portland. Brown scored 22 points in the second half, including a 3-pointer with 32.3 seconds left that stretched Boston's lead to 125-119. Gordon Hayward added 22 points for Boston, going 4-for-5 on 3-pointers. Damian Lillard and Jusuf Nurkic led Portland with 30 points each. Lillard added a season-high and game-high 16 assists. The Blazers rallied from a 24-point second-half deficit, taking a fourth-quarter lead, but they trailed by three points with three seconds left when Nurkic turned the ball over while attempting a long inbounds pass.

BROOKLYN NETS 118 - WASHINGTON WIZARDS 110

Caris LeVert scored 34 points as host Brooklyn made all the plays down the stretch and recorded a pivotal victory over Washington at HP Field House near Orlando. The Nets (31-35) moved seven games ahead of Washington (24-42) in the Eastern Conference. LeVert helped the Nets close out the game with an 18-10 run over the final five-plus minutes. Joe Harris added a season-high 27 on 10 of 13 from the field, Jarrett Allen collected 22 points and 15 rebounds while Chris Chiozza contributed 14 as Brooklyn shot 42.2 percent. Thomas Bryant led Washington with 30 points and 13 rebounds. Troy Brown Jr. nearly collected his first triple-double with 22, 10 rebounds, and eight assists. Ish Smith added 14 while Robinson contributed 12 as Washington

shot 45.5 percent from the floor.

ORLANDO MAGIC 132 - SACRAMENTO KINGS 116

Terrence Ross scored 25 points off the bench, Nikola Vucevic posted a double-double of 23 points and 11 rebounds, and Orlando cruised past Sacramento in a seeding game. The Magic (32-35) maintained their half-game lead for the Eastern Conference's No. 7 seed with a commanding performance against the Kings (28-38). Orlando jumped ahead early, made 18 of 38 3-point shots and grew its lead to as many as 36 points in the third quarter. Harry Giles III led the Kings with 23 points off the bench. The Magic, however, lost forward Jonathan Isaac, who suffered a torn left ACL. with 9:19 remaining in the fourth quarter. Isaac, who has started 32 games this season, was averaging 11.9 points, 6.8 rebounds, 2.3 blocks and 28.8 minutes in 34 games this season.

SAN ANTONIO SPURS 108 - MEMPHIS GRIZZLIES 106

DeMar DeRozan hit a pair of free throws with 1 second to play and San Antonio survived to beat Memphis and close in on the eighth and final playoff spot in the Western Conference. The victory allowed San Antonio (29-36) to pull to within two games of the eighth-place Grizzlies in the standings. The Spurs leapfrogged Portland, which lost to Boston on

Sunday, into ninth place in the West with six games to play. The Spurs must hold that spot in the standings and be within four games of Memphis at the end of the seeding games to clinch a spot in the play-in tournament at season's end. Dejounte Murray scored 21 points and took 10 rebounds to lead a balanced San Antonio attack. Derrick White added 16, DeRozan had 14 points, Lonnie Walker IV and Rudy Gay scored 12 points, and Patty Mills tallied 10 for the Spurs. Ja Morant led Memphis (32-35) with 25 points.

PHOENIX SUNS 117 - DALLAS MAVERICKS 115

Devin Booker's 30 points helped Phoenix come back from a 15-point deficit and stun Dallas, which clinched a Western Conference playoff spot when the eighth-seeded Memphis Grizzlies lost earlier in the day. The Suns (28-39) moved to within four games of the eighth playoff spot. Cameron Johnson added 19 points and 12 rebounds, and Ricky Rubio tallied 20 points and nine rebounds for Phoenix, which is 2-0 in the NBA restart. A driving layup from Dallas' Luka Doncic with 39.9 seconds to play cut what was a nine-point Suns' lead to 117-115. Kristaps Porzingis missed a potential go-ahead 3 with four seconds left, and the Mavericks couldn't get a shot off before the final buzzer. Doncic led Dallas (40-29) with 40 points and 11 assists, with Porzingis adding 30 points and eight rebounds. — Reuters

Kyrgios pulls out of US Open, urges players not to be 'selfish'

SYDNEY: An emotional Nick Kyrgios pulled out of the US Open Sunday, for "the hundreds of thousands of Americans who have lost their lives", while pleading with players who attend to not be selfish and act responsibly. His decision follows fellow Australian and world number one Ashleigh Barty last week withdrawing from the Grand Slam in New York, citing "significant risks" from the coronavirus pandemic.

"Dear Tennis, I will not be playing this year at the US Open. It hurts me at my core," Kyrgios, who has consistently called out fellow competitors for not taking the virus seriously enough, said in a video posted

on Twitter. "But I'm sitting out for the people, for my Aussies, for the hundreds of thousands of Americans who have lost their lives, for all of you." More than 150,000 people have died from COVID-19 in the United States, with over 4.5 million infections since the beginning of the pandemic.

The opinionated Kyrgios, ranked just 40 but a major drawcard, last month blasted the ATP as "selfish" for pressing ahead with plans for the US Open, which is scheduled to start on August 31. He tempered criticism of organisers in a passionate letter read during the video, saying he had "no problem" with it being held, citing the need to keep people such as restaurant workers, cleaners, and locker room attendants in work.

But Kyrgios had strong words for some of the top names in the game, in a veiled jab at those who took part in Novak Djokovic's recent ill-fated Adria Tour exhibition, where there was minimal social distancing and players went nightclubbing. "Tennis players, you

have to act in the interests of each other and work together," said the Australian. "You can't be dancing on tables, money-grabbing your way around Europe or trying to make a quick buck hosting an exhibition—that's just so selfish. "Think of the other people for once, that's what this virus is about. It doesn't care about your world ranking or how much money you have in the bank. Act responsibly."

'Stupidity' blasted

Djokovic, Grigor Dimitrov, Borna Coric and Viktor Troicki all tested positive for COVID-19 after the Adria Tour and Kyrgios has since waged a running battle with some of those who played, including Alexander Zverev and Dominic Thiem, blasting their "stupidity" and risky behavior. The US Tennis Association (USTA) on Friday said they were confident in their safety plans for the event, which will take place in a bubble quarantine setting without spectators.

The tennis season has been at a standstill since

mid-March due to the virus outbreak worldwide, with Wimbledon cancelled for the first time since World War II. Calendars have been reshuffled with the WTA tour scheduled to restart on Monday in Palermo, Italy, although a player, who has not been officially identified, tested positive for coronavirus and pulled out. The men are set to get back under way at the Western and Southern Open, a tune-up event for the US Open from August 20-28 in a quarantine environment without spectators at Flushing Meadows.

World number one Djokovic, the reigning Wimbledon and Australian Open champion, and second-ranked Rafael Nadal, the current US Open champion, were among entries for that event, signaling their likely intent to play the Grand Slam. Serena Williams was also confirmed, but missing from the entry list was Barty, world number two Simona Halep, the current Wimbledon champion, fifth-rated Elina Svitolina and last year's US Open champion, sixth-ranked Bianca Andreescu. — AFP