



2 Amir's health showing 'remarkable improvements,' PM tells parliament



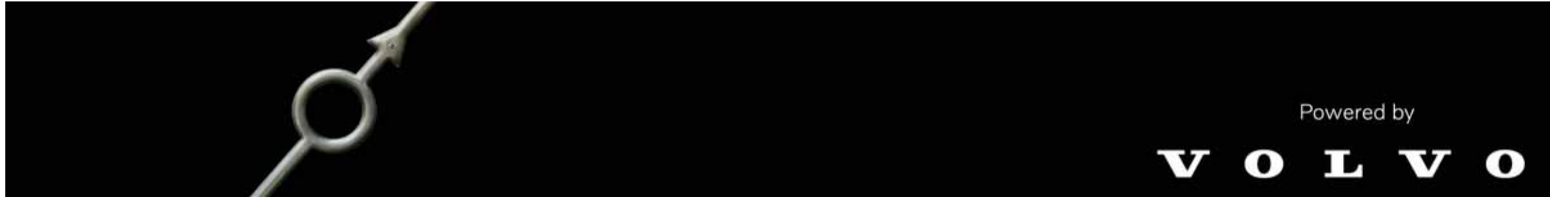
8 Trump gives TikTok 6 weeks to sell itself to US company



13 Disabled Gaza couple makes dolls to give their children 'decent life'



14 Even the PM's a fast bowler: Pak cricket's need for speed



Manila orders millions to stay home as global virus cases soar

WHO warns there may never be a COVID-19 'silver bullet'



MANILA: Armed police stop motorists at a checkpoint as they conduct identity checks during a new round of lockdown measures for the COVID-19 outbreak along a road in the Philippine capital yesterday. — AFP

MANILA: Millions of people in the Philippines were ordered to stay home yesterday as global coronavirus infections kept soaring, with the World Health Organization warning against relying on a vaccine "silver bullet" to end the pandemic. More than 18 million people worldwide have been infected with the virus since it first emerged in China late last year and it shows no sign of slowing down.

Brazil is driving a surge in Latin America and the Caribbean where infections have topped five million. South America's largest country has recorded 2.75 million cases, and close to half the region's more than 202,000 deaths. Only the United States has been worse affected. Desperate to contain the spread and relieve pressure on overwhelmed hospitals, some countries such as the Philippines have resorted to re-imposing economically painful restrictions on travel and businesses.

More than 27 million people on the main island of Luzon, including the capital Manila, went back into a partial lockdown for weeks from yesterday. People have been told to stay home unless they need to go out to buy essential goods, for exercise or for work after the number of recorded infections surged past 100,000. With only 24 hours' notice of the shutdown, many found themselves stranded in Manila and unable to get back to their hometowns after public transport and domestic flights were halted.

"We've run out of money. We can't leave the airport because we don't have any relatives here," said Ruel

Damaso, a 36-year-old construction worker trying to return to the southern city of Zamboanga. "We will have to stay here for two weeks until we get our flights back."

The world's hope of ending the current cycle of outbreaks and lockdowns rests on a vaccine. Russia said Monday it aimed to launch mass production of a vaccine in September and turn out "several million" doses per month by next year. But Vitaly Zverev, laboratory chief at the Mechnikov Research Institute of Vaccines and Sera, said it was "impossible to ensure a vaccine's safety in the time that has passed since the beginning of this pandemic". "You can make anything, but who is going to buy it?"

The WHO warned that governments and citizens should focus on what is known to work: testing, contact tracing, maintaining physical distance and wearing a mask. "We all hope to have a number of effective vaccines that can help prevent people from infection," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told a virtual press conference. "However, there's no silver bullet at the moment - and there might never be."

"The basics of public health" are most effective for now, Tedros added, saying that wearing a mask in particular was sending a "powerful message to those around you that we are all in this together". Infections are surging in some countries around the world, but Tedros insisted that however bad the situation was, past examples such as South Korea showed it could be turned around. — AFP

MP against return of expats from virus-hit countries

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: MP Saleh Ashour yesterday criticized a decision by the government to allow people from coronavirus-infected and banned countries to enter Kuwait if they stayed in a third country for 14 days. The lawmaker charged that the decision is yet another proof that the government has failed to manage the coronavirus crisis and that it has been making random decisions before carefully studying their impacts.

After reopening Kuwait International Airport to commercial flights, the civil aviation authority barred passengers from 31 countries after criticism by MPs and online activists. Later, the civil aviation authority said passengers from the barred countries can still return to Kuwait provided they stay for at least 14 days in an allowed country and produce a negative coronavirus test that was taken within the past 72 hours, changing the requirement from 96 hours.

Ashour warned that such decisions will allow hundreds of thousands of expats to return to the country, raising the risk of spreading the virus in Kuwait. Major nations among the barred countries are India, Egypt and the Philippines, which have the largest expat communities in Kuwait, estimated at close to two million. Other barred countries include Iraq, Iran, Syria, Lebanon, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

The Cabinet is expected to decide whether to keep the current six-hour night curfew or lift the curfew altogether after a large drop in new coronavirus cases in the past few days. The decision of the Cabinet will depend on recommendations by a ministerial committee headed by Interior Minister Anas Al-Saleh, and which also includes the health minister.



Saleh Ashour

Alafco reaches deal with Boeing in MAX dispute

DUBAI: Kuwaiti aircraft leasing company Alafco will buy fewer aircraft from Boeing after reaching an agreement to end its legal claim over a cancelled 737 MAX order, it said yesterday. Alafco was suing the

US planemaker for \$336 million over accusations it wrongly refused to return advance payments on a cancelled order for 40 of its troubled 737 MAX planes. The Kuwaiti lessor will now buy 20 aircraft from Boeing, instead of 40, with new delivery dates, it said in a bourse filing.

Additional details of the agreement could not be disclosed due to confidentiality clauses, it said. Alafco said it was "looking forward to a long-lasting and mutually beneficial relationship with Boeing". Alafco did not immediately respond to emailed requests for comment. Boeing declined comment. Boeing sus-

pending deliveries of its narrow-body 737 MAX jet in March last year, when the Federal Aviation Administration grounded the aircraft after the deaths of 346 people in crashes of two 737 MAX planes operated by Lion Air and Ethiopian Airlines.

The crisis over the grounding of the once top-selling 737 MAX has cost the US planemaker more than \$19 billion, slashed production and hobbled its supply chain, with criminal and congressional investigations still ongoing. Alafco's owners include Kuwait Finance House, Gulf Investment Corporation and state airline Kuwait Airways, according to its website. — Reuters

Eatery offers 'COVID curry' to customers

JODHPUR, India: An Indian restaurant is hoping to win back customers afraid of eating out during the pandemic with a special "COVID Curry" and "Mask Naans". "This has been a really tough time for us and for our entire sector," Yash Solanki, owner of the vegetarian Vedic eatery in the western city of Jodhpur, told AFP. The fried vegetable balls have been shaped to look like the "crowned"

coronavirus, while the accompanying breads look like surgical masks.

Solanki said that they had also added, and advertised, that their COVID curry had extra Indian herbs and spices that are good for people's health. "Even with recently relaxed curbs, the fear still dominates. People are still very reluctant to eat out," Solanki said. Almost 800 people are dying daily from coronavirus in the world's second-most populous nation, with around 50,000 new infections reported every 24 hours. The country has had 1.8 million cases, the third-highest in the world behind the United States and Brazil, and more than 38,000 deaths. — AFP



JODHPUR, India: A waiter carries 'Covid Curry' and 'Mask Naan,' two coronavirus-themed dishes, to serve to customers at a restaurant on Monday. — AFP

Beach SOS leads to rescue on isle

SYDNEY: Three Micronesian sailors stranded on a tiny island in the remote Western Pacific were rescued after Australian and US warplanes spotted a giant "SOS" they had scrawled on the beach, officials said. The Australian Defense Force said it found the men Sunday on tiny Pikelot Island, about 190 km from where they set sail three days earlier. The men blew off course and ran out of fuel in a seven-meter skiff between two of the 600-plus islands and atolls that make up Micronesia.

Alerted by the Pacific Rescue and Coordination Centre in Guam, US and Australian military aircraft joined the search for the missing vessel and spotted their SOS message Sunday. A helicopter dispatched from Australia's HMAS Canberra flew to the island with food and water and found the three men in good condition. — AFP



PIKELOT ISLAND, Micronesia: An Australian army helicopter lands near the letters "SOS" on a beach where three men were found in good condition after being missing for three days. — AFP

Local

Premier tells parliament Amir's health showing 'remarkable improvements'

Govt to make adjustments on decisions as much as possible



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah arrives to attend a National Assembly session yesterday. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem attends the session.



Mask-clad MPs attend the parliament's session.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah told lawmakers yesterday that the health of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is witnessing "remarkable improvements." In his intervention during a parliamentary session at the National Assembly, he also recalled the painful 30-year memory of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. "Kuwaitis were a symbol of unity and cohesion as they overcame all difficulties," he said, applauding "our brothers and friends" worldwide, who helped liberate the country in 1991.

Separately, he affirmed the government's readiness and transparent approach to discussing its coronavirus efforts, expressing his surprise at the inclusion of a request to discuss the matter within the three-article parliamentary grilling against the finance minister. "We will talk about what we did wrong and what we might be wrong about," he said, "about what we do not know, what we will learn about and what we will overcome - clearly."

"For all of you know that the whole world is dealing with a health crisis, nobody knows the extents of which but God. The government is ready to benefit from parliamentary suggestions in regards to the matter," he added. "As long as we are human, we will surely make mistakes. We will review (our decisions)," he said. "We will make adjustments as much as possible, and we will face up to and assume our responsibilities," he added.

Other matters have come to the fray in the midst of the pandemic issue, which he said the government would do all in its power to address "without hesitation."

Nine letters

The National Assembly approved nine letters on different topics during the session, among which was a letter from head of the parliamentary committee on health and social affairs MP Talal Al-Jalal, requesting extension of the committee's work period to submit a report on the safety of using 5G network, regarding people and the environment. Also, head of the parliamentary committee for youth and sport MP Nabeel Al-Fadhel requested extension to investigate monetary and administrative violations, to submit the final report by end of August. The assembly also approved a letter from MP Yousef Al-Fadhala, where he called on the Cabinet to grant rewards not only for those who worked in the frontlines to fight the coronavirus, but for everyone who worked during this crisis.

The other letters included tasking the parliamentary committee on human resources with presenting a report on evaluating senior officials and extending work period for internal affairs and defense committee to present a report on traffic. Moreover, it included the report of legislative and legal committee amendments on work in the oil sector and re-tasking the public utilities committee



A general view showing lawmakers in attendance at a parliament session in the National Assembly yesterday.

with presenting a report on food security within two months.

Meanwhile, the assembly received a letter from His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, thanking Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem and MPs for congratulating His Highness on the success of his surgery. It also received a let-

ter from His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, thanking Speaker and MPs for their Eid Al-Adha greetings for His Highness the Amir. His Highness Sheikh Nawaf also thanked the Speaker and MPs for sending their greetings for him on Eid Al-Adha, in another letter. — KUNA

High school teachers back to work



KUWAIT: Around 11,000 high school teachers returned to work yesterday for the first time in five months, where they started preparing to give online classes to grade 12 students in public and Arabic private schools. Teachers were trained on the online platform that will be used to give online classes to grade 12 students for the 2019/2020 second semester starting next week until September 17. The Ministry of Education had announced on July 16, 2020 ending the 2019/2020 school year for all grade except for grade 12, and setting October 4, 2020 to start the 2020/2021 school year with online classes. — Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh



Chinese embassy celebrates 93rd anniversary of PLA

KUWAIT: The Chinese Ambassador to Kuwait Li Minggang celebrated the 93rd anniversary of the people liberation army of China online. Talking on the occasion, he said that President Xi Jinping said that we should have the right historical perspective. What he means is that we should review the past, draw lessons from history and grasp the historical trend. In the last century, the world went through tests of fire and blood, endured wars and enjoyed peace. In the 21st century, it is important that we draw lessons from history and do our utmost to safeguard world peace and promote development.

China will unswervingly follow the path of peaceful development, firmly pursue an independent foreign policy of peace, pursue a national defense policy which is purely defensive in nature and implement a military strategy of active defense. China's armed forces will remain a staunch force in maintaining world peace and stability.

Recent years have witnessed fast growing cooperation between China and Kuwait armies which has become an important part of our bilateral relations. I sincerely hope that China and the Kuwait, and the militaries of our two countries will keep in mind the big picture of world peace and development.

From the 7th to 10th of July 2018, at the invitation of Chinese President Xi Jinping, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah paid a successful state visit to China. During the visit, the two heads of state agreed to establish a strategic partnership between the two countries to open a new chapter of China-Kuwait relationship.

Over the past two years since the establishment of China-Kuwait strategic partnership, bilateral cooperation in various domains has grown in depth with fruitful and satisfactory results. This year has witnessed the ever-stronger China-Kuwait strategic partnership and mutual beneficial cooperation in our joint fight against COVID-19. President Xi Jinping and His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah exchanged letters to express solidarity and support for each other. During the critical moments in China's battle against the epidemic, Kuwait extended a helping hand and donated medical supplies to China, and in return, China has provided necessary facilitation to Kuwait in procuring medical supplies from China. Furthermore, China dispatched a medical expert team to aid Kuwait's COVID-19 response efforts, and invited officials and medical experts of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Health and the Kuwaiti Army to attend several video conferences held by the Chinese side to discuss COVID-19 response and exchange experience.

Local

Kuwait Amir's health improving, Prime Minister tells Cabinet

Govt urges citizens to acquire travel insurance



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



Interior Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh attends the meeting.



Health Minister Dr Basel Al-Sabah attends the meeting.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's health is "noticeably improving," His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah said Monday. His Highness the Prime Minister was assuring the ministers, while chairing a Cabinet meeting, about the health condition of His Highness the Amir, Deputy Premier, Interior Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh said in a statement. He conveyed regards of His Highness the Amir who also thanked everybody for inquiring about his health condition, said Saleh who added that ministers prayed to Allah Almighty to bless His Highness the Amir with wellbeing and his safe return to his country in near future.

Meanwhile, the government congratulated His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on occasion of Eid Al-Adha. Furthermore, the Cabinet recalled the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait that took place on August 2, 1990, and prayed to Allah to bless souls of martyrs. The government, said Saleh, expressed utmost pride in the steadfastness of the Kuwaiti people against the Iraqi aggression, and renewed gratitude for friends who contributed to the liberation of Kuwait and return of

legitimacy. The Cabinet, said Saleh, also congratulated Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz for a successful surgery and wishing him lasting wellbeing.

Health measures

In the meantime, the government called on the



Ministers recall martyrs' sacrifice

public anew to abide by the health and preventive measures for their own safety and wellbeing. During its virtual meeting, the Cabinet urged citizens wishing to travel to acquire health insurance to cover costs of treatment in case of infections or accidents, Saleh said. He added that citizens and expatriates returning to Kuwait should provide a PCR test 72

hours before their arrival date, and that they should spend 14 days in home quarantine following their arrival. The government took note of a regulation by the civil aviation directorate (DGCA) about non-Kuwaiti passengers from 31 countries who were not allowed to enter Kuwait whether flying directly or via transit from other countries unless they met certain criteria.

DGCA further explained that non-Kuwaiti passengers would be allowed to fly to Kuwait if they stayed in third countries for at least 14 days. After 14 days, they must conduct PCR tests for the COVID-19 virus 72 hours before departure time, and provide an approval certificate proving a negative result and not being infected with the coronavirus, the DGCA added in a press statement. Those passengers, added DGCA, should also stay for additional 14 days in home quarantine following entry into Kuwait. The list of those countries banned from entering Kuwait includes 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. — KUNA



Finance Minister Barrak Al-Sheetan attends the meeting.



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Kuwait informatics award focuses on pandemic awareness

KUWAIT: The eighth edition of Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah Award for Informatics will focus in its 20th year on the ongoing global pandemic and awareness on how to best maintain physical and mental health and strengthen the immune system to fend off disease and ailments. The competition's title this year 'Your Health' stems from the conviction that prevention is better than the cure, head of the organizing committee Bassam Al-Shemmeri explained, saying that the award interacts with emerging conditions in Kuwait and other nations.

Smart technologies and digital platforms have become a means to raise necessary health awareness regarding the health emergency across countries, he added. Emphasizing further, he said the prize is an interactive educational awareness competition, which has achieved extensive interactive success internationally in its previous editions, and is being held across digital platforms. It is open to those wishing to participate from Kuwait, the Arab region or the rest of the world, with applications open for 20 days as of August 1, 2020.

The competition includes 10 multiple-choice questions in the applicant's preferred language of Arabic or English, which if answered correctly, enable an entry into a draw, the event's coordinator Dr Abdullah Al-Ali added. The questions have been formulated in an simple way, which aim to encourage research and benefit. Some 30 winning applicants will enter the draw for a total \$30,000 (\$1,000 each) and a certificate from the prize committee at an award ceremony - the dates of which will be later determined. —KUNA

Last minute flight ban decisions cause confusion in Kuwait, abroad

Travel agents plan packages that cover 14-day stay in third country

KUWAIT: The total number of flights in the two days after commercial flights resumed at Kuwait International Airport dropped to 25 out of a projected 100 after aviation authorities expanded Kuwait's flight ban list to include 31 countries. Only nine commercial flights arrived on August 3 and 11 a day before, while eight flights departed Kuwait on August 3 and 12 the day before, Al-Rai daily reported yesterday. "Flights are ongoing according to schedule excluding those to and from the 31 banned countries," Directorate General of Civil Aviation's official spokesman Saad Al-Otaibi is quoted in the report as saying.

The DGCA on Sunday released an updated countries' ban list for inbound and outbound flights after commercial flights resumed on August 1 for the first time in months due to the COVID-19 outbreak. The list includes the following states to and from which commercial flights have been 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.

Bad timing

"The government's decision, which came in response to parliamentary threats and demands to ban flights from countries that remain under high COVID-19 risks, was met with public approval, but its timing raises many questions," the report reads quoting informed sources who questioned the reason behind making such a decision on the day of flights' resumption although the date was set over a month earlier. "The timing caused a great deal of confusion both in Kuwait and in concerned countries where passengers queued at airports, flights already in route were ordered back and airlines had to reschedule flights that had been set upon official Kuwaiti decisions," the sources noted.

Furthermore, the sources criticized the government's official spokesperson Tareq Al-Mezrem for his statement on the issue when he said that "most countries' policies on passengers' arrival or departure are variable and unpredictable," arguing that it is illogical to wait until the very same day of flights' resumption to make a decision to ban flights, especially since, according to them, the listed countries had not witnessed any dramatic health changes over the two days prior. The sources further noted that the latest fiasco was not the first the government had made a confusing decision since COVID-19 outbreak, and warned that the latest ban could have "many financial and legal consequences."

Travel packages

Meanwhile, Al-Rai also reported that a number of

local travel agents have started planning for the return of expatriates from countries included in the ban list, by offering special inclusive packages that cover the cost of their stay in a third-party country, PCR test fees, flight tickets and others.

DGCA had announced on Sunday that non-Kuwaiti passengers would be allowed to fly to Kuwait if they stayed in third countries for at least 14 days. After 14 days, they must conduct a PCR test for COVID-19 and provide an approval certificate proving a negative result and not being infected with the coronavirus. The validity of such certificate should not exceed 72 hours between the test date and arriving date to Kuwait.

In this regard, informed sources quoted in Al-Rai's report said that the package would at least double the travel cost for passengers compared to returning directly from their own countries, adding that the average flight ticket cost would be around KD 320. The sources added that the companies are currently considering options for third-party countries where passengers from the banned countries can stop over before flying to Kuwait taking into consideration the cost of a ticket to a transit destination, visa fees, hotel costs for 14 days, PCR fees and the ticket's price to Kuwait.

In related news, well-informed health sources told Al-Rai that MOH announcement of only 388 new COVID-19 cases on Monday reflects some positive indicators despite the drop in the number of coronavirus swab tests taken compared to previous periods. The sources explained that the drop in swab test numbers happened due to a notable decrease in the number of individuals checking into hospitals with suspected COVID-19 symptoms. "Such indicators show that the situation is generally improving, especially since people showing suspected infection symptoms do not hesitate to visit health facilities for tests and receive proper treatment," the sources pointed out.

Expats' replacement

In other news, a local report published yesterday suggested that the majority of state departments have recently started replacing expatriate manpower with Kuwaiti citizens, namely those doing non-technical jobs, as several departments started taking serious and decisive related measures. In this regard, Al-Rai reported quoting informed sources that within those serious measures, some expats who have already signed their second contracts since they've been hired started receiving termination notices and stressed that the process would be done gradually to avoid negative impact on work. "Over 50 percent of expats in their second terms will be terminated within the coming three months," the sources predicted, noting that expats who had been working for companies executing government contracts and then transferred their residencies to work for various ministries would be terminated.



KUWAIT: Travellers arrive at Kuwait international Airport on August 1, 2020. Commercial flights resumed at Kuwait International Airport after months of shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Meanwhile, chairman of the parliamentary human resources development committee MP Khalil Al-Saleh stressed that the committee has taken effective measures on replacement and solving the demographic imbalances. "All parliamentary proposals to handle both issues have been prepared and the government was urged to submit its own related projects being the body that possesses all the needed data and statistics," Saleh explained, adding that a meeting would be held next week to prepare a report to be submitted to the parliament, regardless of whether the government submitted its own proposal or not. Further, Saleh urged relevant government bodies to accelerate the process of terminating non-technical expat government employees and replace expats with citizens wherever applicable.

Surgical intervention

Separately, Al-Qabas revealed yesterday that a National Assembly panel and the Ministry of Justice have jointly rejected a proposal to allow medical staff to obtain approval from a man's wife for medical or surgical intervention. Currently, women are not allowed to sign documents to allow for medical or surgical intervention for their children or husbands, but five lawmakers submitted a draft law in January this year to grant women this right. However, Al-Qabas reported yesterday that the parliament's legislative committee is so far refusing to amend the existing law, while the Justice Ministry only approves allowing mothers to sign documents for medical or surgical intervention for their children, while denying wives the right to do the same for their husbands. The report indicates that the parliamentary committee is finalizing its report with a recommendation to grant this right to mothers only "in a step that revives debate on women's rights in Kuwait."

News in brief

Food bank supplies meat to needy

KUWAIT: Some 1,230 impoverished families were the beneficiaries of a national endeavor to distribute meat to the local community, as per Islamic tradition amid the Eid Al-Adha holiday, Kuwait's food bank said on Monday. The families, whose woes have been exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic, were ecstatic to have been the recipients of such gracious aid, the bank's Vice Chairman Meshaal Al-Ansari told reporters. These altruistic deeds are all the more meaningful especially in the midst of these trying times, he added.

Bank timings

KUWAIT: Kuwait Banking Association announced that working hours for the banking sector after the Eid Al-Adha holiday are set as follows: Bank branches: from 8:30 2:00 pm. Bank branches inside malls: from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm.

Homicide investigation

KUWAIT: Ahmadi detectives launched a homicide investigation in the death of a Kuwaiti man in his twenties who was found dead in an apartment in Abu Hlaifa. Upon discovering the body, detective, paramedics and forensic medicine staff were immediately dispatched to the crime scene, Al-Rai reported quoting sources. A suspected homicide case was filed and further investigations are still in progress.

Fishing trip gone wrong

KUWAIT: A man sustained various injuries when he fell on wave breakers while fishing at the Gulf Road's seafont. Rescue teams from Salmiya marine fire station rushed to the scene and took the man to Mubarak hospital for treatment, Al-Rai reported quoting a security source.

Oil price up

KUWAIT: The price of Kuwaiti oil rose 66 cents to \$43.74 per barrel on Monday compared to \$43.08 pb they day before, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said yesterday. Globally, Brent increased by 63 cents to \$44.15 pb as West Texas Intermediate rose 74 cents to reach \$41.01 pb.

Municipality shuts down 46 shops for precaution breaches



KUWAIT: A Kuwait Municipality inspector stands outside an Ahmadi restaurant that was closed for providing dine-in services.

KUWAIT: Kuwait Municipality said on Monday it closed down 46 shops during the Eid Al-Adha holidays for breaching precautionary health guidelines issued by authorities. Some 1,142 warnings were handed out amid inspection visits to 1,197 shops, read a statement. These rounds aimed to fend off street vendors, unlicensed butchers, livestock outlets and those found in breach of coronavirus measures. They resulted in 206 fines being released, for businesses found not adhering to these measures, namely the need to wear safety gloves and masks to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Also, inspection rounds uncovered a total 73 illegal livestock merchants, with 42 fines released for illegal street vendors. A total seven unlicensed butchers have also been handed over to authorities. Municipality efforts also saw the disinfection and sanitization of 74,954 containers of various sizes and the comprehensive disinfection of mosques throughout the country. —KUNA



Ministry of Commerce and Industry inspectors write notes during an inspection tour at the Kabd vegetable market to monitor prices and ensure compliance with ministry decisions.

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TikTok's lovers fume as Trump threatens

Jittery Hong Kong authors seek safety in Taiwan after security law

Page 7

Page 6



SOPORE: A woman inspects the rubbles of the houses of her relatives that were blasted by mortars fired by Indian soldiers during a firefight with rebels, at Sopore north of Srinagar. — AFP

Desperation, misery in Indian Kashmir

Himalayan territory is a flashpoint between bitter nuke-armed rivals

SRINAGAR: The year-long clampdown in Indian-administered Kashmir imposed to tighten New Delhi's grip on the disputed region has shattered its economy and deepened the desperation of its people. Hundreds of thousands of jobs have been lost as the military-enforced measures - compounded by a second wave of restrictions related to the coronavirus pandemic-turned daily life in the Muslim-majority region into an obstacle course of razor-wire roadblocks.

Medical workers say the relentless restrictions have exacerbated a mental health crisis among Kashmiris, already scarred by decades of conflict, while the death toll from military operations against separatist fighters is heading for a 10-year high. And as the first anniversary approached of the August 5 decision by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist government to strip Indian Kashmir of its semi-autonomous status, the pressure was renewed with a two-day curfew imposed across the entire region.

Police vehicles fitted with megaphones patrolled the city of Srinagar, with officers ordering residents to remain indoors. The Himalayan territory is a long-running flashpoint between bitter nuclear-armed rivals India and Pakistan, which control parts of it but claim it in full. Modi's move to strip Indian Kashmir's special status was backed by a massive security operation that poured troops into city streets, imposed an internet blackout for months and saw the arrest of hundreds of politicians and activists.

The impact on Kashmir's already fragile econo-

my was enormous, shuttering shops and small businesses that then took another hit as the coronavirus hit India hard and triggered a nationwide lockdown. Nazir Ahmed Sheikh was one of the victims. He has not worked since losing his job as a bus conductor when the region's economy ground to a near-halt.



Hundreds of thousands of jobs lost

And despite Kashmir's long and brutal experience with conflict, the 50-year-old says it was never this bad. "I have been through many curfews and shut-downs," Sheikh said. "But this lockdown is the most crushing shock I have known."

Coronavirus crisis

Half a million jobs were lost in Indian Kashmir by the end of 2019, according to the Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Harris Dullo, who runs an outdoor advertising and branding business, said he is struggling to keep his 25 employees on the payroll by selling sanitizers and other coronavirus-related products. "Uncertainty is increasing by the day and I might have to lay off my workers," he said.

"The bank interest burden is mounting and it will be difficult to cope." Indian Kashmir has reported more than 20,000 infections since March, with nearly 400 deaths. A spike in cases last month triggered another temporary lockdown.

The communications blackout has been eased only partially, and doctors in Kashmir say the restrictions are hurting efforts to counter the pandemic by impeding access to virus information shared online. Indian authorities had promised stability and development last year when they stripped Kashmir of its semi-autonomous status, but analysts say there is little sign of progress or injection of resources to help the economy. "Without investment... it is hard to see how the promise of development can be kept," said Ashutosh Varshney, a specialist on South Asian affairs and security at Brown University.

'Pushed to the wall'

Separatist militants launched a full-blown revolt against Indian rule in 1989, a conflict that has left tens of thousands dead, and prompted the deployment of hundreds of thousands of Indian troops. The Modi government insists that the action last year was needed to halt the conflict, boost development and give justice to the minorities forced to leave Kashmir. But many Kashmiris say they are being punished for their defiance of Indian rule and the broad support enjoyed by separatists who seek independence or a merger with Pakistan.

A civil society panel that visited the region said Monday that the people of Kashmir had "lost faith" in India's political leadership. Nearly half of Kashmir



SRINAGAR: People ride at a check point during a curfew in Srinagar yesterday. — AFP

adults suffer from some form of mental illness, according to surveys, and doctors-banned from speaking publicly-say the situation has worsened since August last year because of the crackdown and the virus lockdown. A psychiatrist at a government-run hospital in Srinagar said his team had seen an "exponential increase" in suicidal tendencies, panic attacks and post-traumatic stress disorder in recent months. — AFP

A year of upheaval in Kashmir under direct rule from New Delhi

SRINAGAR: Volatile Indian-administered Kashmir has endured a tumultuous year since Prime Minister Narendra Modi revoked its autonomy last August. Ahead of today's one-year anniversary, AFP examines the background to the contentious move, the harsh security crackdown and its aftermath, and a deadly June border clash with China.

Why is Kashmir such a powder keg?

India and Pakistan have fought two wars over the former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir since it was divided in 1947, and both still see it as fully their own-although China also controls small parts, and claims more. A referendum mandated by a UN resolution in 1948 has never taken place. For the past three decades, a revolt against Indian rule-backed by Pakistan, Delhi alleges-and a muscular response has left tens of thousands dead, mostly civilians. India and Pakistan regularly exchange fire across their de-facto frontier, and in February last year a suicide bomber killed 40 Indian troops-pushing the two nations to the brink of another war.

What did Modi want to achieve?

Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party has long seen Muslim-majority Kashmir's special status-with partial autonomy and its own flag and constitution-as a historical wrong. That status had "given nothing but terrorism, sepa-

ratism, nepotism and big corruption" Modi said. But his "historic decision" would bring prosperity and peace. His change put Kashmir under direct rule from New Delhi and downgraded the state by splitting it into two union territories-Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh.

What happened on the ground?

An accompanying security operation was swift and heavy, with New Delhi sending in tens of thousands of troops to join the estimated half a million already there. Seven million people in the Kashmir Valley were put under complete security lockdown for weeks, with freedom of movement severely restricted and gatherings banned. Landlines, mobile phones and internet access were cut for months. Around 7,000 people were taken into custody-including three former chief ministers. Hundreds remain under house arrest or behind bars, mostly without charge. Young men told AFP and other foreign media that they were detained and tortured by soldiers. Authorities deny the allegations.

What was the reaction abroad?

India insists the security measures were temporary and has bristled at foreign criticism of what it calls a purely internal matter. But beyond sharp words from Malaysia, Turkey and UN rights chief Michelle Bachelet-and some unease in Brussels and Washington-international reaction has been muted. This is despite strenuous efforts by Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan-who likened Modi to Adolf Hitler-to see India criticized at the United Nations. Pakistan was backed by China, which was irked by the change to Ladakh's status, calling it "unacceptable" and worsening Beijing's long-prickly ties with India. In June, 20 Indian troops were killed in a clash with Chinese soldiers on their Ladakh border, the first combat deaths there since the 1970s. — AFP

UK's care homes to get a million masks

LONDON: Care homes in Britain will receive one million free surgical masks this week courtesy of two NHS doctors and a Hollywood actress. The two doctors - Sanjay Purkayastha and GP Anu Patel - launched a new organization called I World Medical that aims to support healthcare in London and provide necessities like PPE masks, hospital gowns and other medical equipment.

Their efforts - backed by Hollywood star Thandie Newton and the Daily Mail's new health focused charity Mail Force - will result in providing enough masks for 130 care homes across London. In addition to providing PPE, the duo are using the new platform to pool data and new ideas, ranging from a process for recycling masks to clothes which kill the virus.

"We have to look at everything because COVID-19 is not going away and nor are we," Sanjay told the Daily Mail. Sanjay is a general surgeon with the Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust, a senior consultant in gastrointestinal medicine, a university lecturer and senior clinical lead for St



Mary's Lindo Wing (best known as the birthplace of royal babies).

"It's so touching to see the passion that Sanjay and Anu have. The most breathtaking heroes come from unexpected places, and they'll never expect an ounce of praise. They're always too busy trying to solve the next problem. We'd be nothing without them," Newton told the Daily Mail.

International

Lebanon foreign minister resigns in protest at crisis management

There are many bosses and contradictory interests

BEIRUT: Lebanon's foreign minister Nassif Hitti has resigned in protest at the government's failure to tackle a spiraling economic crisis, warning that if there is no will to reform "the ship will sink". "I have decided to resign today as foreign minister," Hitti said in a statement, charging that the government had shown no will to initiate changes demanded by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). "I participated in the government under the logic of serving one boss, which is Lebanon," the 67-year-old veteran diplomat added.

"But I found that in my country there are many bosses and contradictory interests. If they don't unite in the interest of the Lebanese people ... then the ship, God forbid, will sink with everyone on board," he added, warning that Lebanon risked becoming a "failed state". His successor was named within hours as Charbel Wahbe, a former ambassador and advisor to President Michel Aoun, in an unusually swift move for a country where political appointments usually take months.

Lebanon is mired in its worst economic crisis since its 1975-1990 civil war, with runaway inflation and bank capital controls fuelling poverty, despair and angry street protests. Prime Minister Hassan Diab's government, formed in January and billed as an administration of technocrats, has struggled to secure international financial support. Hitti's resignation comes after France's top diplomat Jean-Yves Le Drian during a visit last month scolded Lebanon's leadership for failing to move to save the country from collapse.

The UN's Special Coordinator for Lebanon Jan

Kubis tweeted Monday that Hitti's resignation sent "quite a message." "Will this cry of deep frustration move #Lebanon to finally work on reforms, on measures taking care of the Lebanese, sinking every day deeper into poverty and desperation?" he wrote. The outgoing foreign minister too urged officials to "reconsider many of their policies and practices so that the nation and its citizens are given priority over all other considerations".

'Total confusion'

Lebanon is grappling with a steep decline in the value of the Lebanese pound, with nearly half the population now living below the poverty line and more than a third of the workforce unemployed. The free-falling economy has sparked mass protests since October against a political class widely accused of being incompetent, corrupt and serving sectarian rather than national interests. The government, which defaulted on its sovereign debt for the first time in March, has

If there is no will to reform 'the ship will sink'



pledged an ambitious raft of reforms and two months ago entered into bailout talks with the IMF.

However, the negotiations have stalled, with two top members of the government's own team resigning, allegedly in frustration at its lack of commitment to reform. The government says it needs more than \$20 billion in external funding, which includes \$11 billion pledged by donors at a Paris conference in 2018 that was never delivered due to lack of reforms. Hitti's resignation shows "that Lebanon is in a state of total confusion", said Hilal Khashan, a professor at the American University of Beirut.



BEIRUT: Lebanon's Foreign Minister Nassif Hitti is pictured wearing a face mask due to the coronavirus in his office in the capital Beirut. Hitti has announced his resignation due to the government's mishandling of the country's worst crisis in decades, as premier Hassan Diab's under-fire cabinet struggles to secure international support. —AFP

"This government of so-called technocrats has to always refer back to those who put it in office before it can act on any matter," he said, meaning that it "is not autonomous". The latest round of political wrangling came as Human Rights Watch warned that the "acute economic and political crisis" in Lebanon is "endangering people's basic rights." "Lebanon's people are being robbed of basic rights every day while politicians squabble over the size of the country's financial losses and hamper efforts at reform," said Aya Majzoub, the group's

Lebanon researcher.

Diab's cabinet was formed with the backing of the powerful Shiite movement Hezbollah and its political allies, including the Free Patriotic Movement, founded by Aoun. Lebanese media cited several reasons for Hitti's resignation, including reports that he was displeased with how Lebanese officials were encroaching on his prerogatives and handling diplomatic ties. Hitti was reportedly sidelined from a meeting between Le Drian, Diab and several cabinet ministers. —AFP

News in brief

Heavy rain batters Mumbai

MUMBAI: Authorities in the Indian city of Mumbai issued a red alert yesterday and warned people not to venture out after heavy overnight rain in the financial hub brought flooding and travel chaos. Some suburbs have seen more than 300 mm of rain in the 24 hours and more heavy rain is expected over the next two days, said India Meteorological Department (IMD) official KS Hosalkar. The department issued a red alert for the city for the next two days and civic authorities advised people not to venture out unless absolutely necessary. Trains, already running skeleton services due to the novel coronavirus lockdown, were suspended in several places because of flooding and traffic was disrupted on some of the city's main roads. A landslide swept down a slope onto a main road in a northern suburb, media reported. —Reuters

'Press freedom' trial opens

ALGIERS: The trial opened Monday of Algerian journalist Khaled Drareni, who has become a figurehead of press freedom in the North African country, with the prosecution calling for a four-year prison term. The prosecutor at the Algiers court also called for Drareni's two co-accused to be jailed for four years, as well as all three facing heavy fines and being stripped of their civic rights, judicial sources said. Drareni, 40, who ran the Casbah Tribune website and was a correspondent for French-language television channel TV5Monde, was arrested in March while covering an anti-government protest. He is accused of "inciting an unarmed gathering" and undermining the nation's "territorial integrity", charges he denies. —AFP

Academic in Iranian jail

SYDNEY: The family of a British-Australian academic jailed in Iran on spying charges said yesterday they were "reassured" after Australian officials found her well during a consular visit. Australian ambassador Lyndall Sachs visited Kylie Moore-Gilbert on Sunday at Qarchak prison, amid heightened concerns for the academic's health and welfare. Moore-Gilbert was recently moved to the women's prison, which is in an old chicken-processing factory outside Tehran. A group of her friends last week launched a public campaign to win her freedom, saying that Australia's strategy of quiet diplomacy had failed. Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade said Moore-Gilbert was "well" and "has access to food, medical facilities and books". —AFP

Senegal newspaper ransacked

DAKAR: Supporters of a Senegalese Muslim religious and political leader ransacked a newspaper after it reported Monday that the public figure was ill with COVID-19, the newspaper said. Les Echos reported Monday on its front page that the Tijaniyya brotherhood's leader Serigne Moustapha Sy, who also heads the PUR party, was "stricken by COVID-19" and admitted to the main hospital in the capital Dakar. The party denounced the report as lies and issued a veiled warning to the newspaper. An official at the newspaper, Cheikh Oumar Ndao, told AFP that four or five had assailants arrived at the publication around 1:00 pm on Monday. "They asked for the author of the article on Moustapha Sy, issued threats and damaged equipment," including seven computers and a TV set, Oumar Ndao told AFP. In a statement reacting to the newspaper's story, PUR's national secretary for youth, —AFP

Spanish ex-king Juan Carlos heads for exile under corruption cloud

MADRID: Spain's former king Juan Carlos, who is facing investigation at home and abroad for corruption, announced Monday that he will go into exile. The 82-year-old revealed he would leave the country in a letter to his son, the current King Felipe VI who accepted his decision and thanked him, the royal palace said in a statement. "Guided by the conviction to best serve the people of Spain, its institutions, and you as king, I inform you of my decision at this time to go into exile outside Spain," Juan Carlos wrote.

"It's a decision I take with deep anguish, but great peace of mind," he added. He did not say where he would go. Probes are under way in Switzerland and Spain where media regularly publish details of the murky management of funds allegedly paid to the former head of state by Saudi Arabia. Spain's Supreme Court announced in June an investigation to determine the legal responsibility of the ex-monarch but because of the immunity he holds only for acts committed after his abdication.

The suspicions focus on \$100 million (85 million euros) alleged to have been paid secretly into a Swiss bank account in 2008. After a series of media revelations, Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez spoke out in July saying "the entire Spanish population are receiving disturbing information which is

TikTok lovers fume as Trump threatens

SAN FRANCISCO: A TikTok star pounds a beat as she weaves lyrics mocking the idea of US President Donald Trump banning the short-form video sharing app. The "Trump Freestyle" post Monday by @maya2960 quickly racked up more than a million views and 500,000 "likes" on the popular platform owned by China-based ByteDance. "Didn't think this through, little Donny, did you? Not much of a businessman," she rapped. "You can ban this app, there'll be a new one. There's supply where there's demand." The lyrics included a promise that TikTok users would not go down without a fight, citing First Amendment protections against government censor-

Belarus opposition rallies voters with a promise of change

MALADZHECHNA: At a small-town campaign rally held by the rising star of Belarus's political opposition, Elena stood among the unusually large crowd, wrapped in a red and white flag—the colors of the ex-Soviet country's emboldened opposition. Like many others at the gathering for opposition candidate Svetlana Tikhonovskaya, she preferred to give her first name only, for fear of drawing unwanted attention from the authorities. "I want to have freedom of expression. To go out on the street and speak freely and not be afraid anymore," the 42-year-old bread factory worker told AFP.

Several thousand people filled a small stadium in Maladzechna, a city of some 100,000 people northwest of the capital Minsk, to listen to Tikhonovskaya—who has emerged as the leading opponent to strongman Alexander Lukashenko. The crowd, packed with young people born after the 1991 collapse of the

troubling for us all, including me". The ex-king's lawyer Javier Sanchez-Junco, issued a statement Monday saying his client was not trying to escape justice by going into exile and would remain available to prosecutors.

Popular for decades

Juan Carlos ascended the throne in 1975 on the death of the fascist dictator Francisco Franco and ruled for 38 years before abdicating in favor of his son Felipe VI in June 2014. He was a popular figure for decades, playing a key role in the democratic transition from the Franco dictatorship which ruled Spain from 1939-1975.

The Royal House website, which published the letter, noted that Felipe wanted to stress the historic importance "of his father's reign "in the service of Spain and democracy". An inquiry opened in Spain in September 2018 following the publication of records attributed to German businesswoman Corinna Larsen, allegedly a former mistress of Juan Carlos. She claimed he had received a commission when a consortium of Spanish companies were awarded a high-speed railway contract to link the Muslim holy cities of Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia.

Larsen told Swiss investigators he had transferred her nearly 65 million euros in the Bahamas, "not to get rid of the money" but "out of gratitude and out of love", according to El Pais daily. Swiss media reported last March that Juan Carlos was paid 100 million dollars into a Panamanian foundation's Swiss bank account by late Saudi king Abdullah in 2008. The same month The Daily Telegraph in Britain reported

ship of free speech. Another video snippet racking up views was captioned "Me trying to convince Trump to let us keep TikTok" and showed a woman coloring her face orange and building a brick wall. American comedian Elijah Daniels used Twitter to bid farewell to his TikTok followers, giving "a big shout out to Donald Trump for mishandling the entire pandemic" but then taking away an app raising people's spirits.

Twenty TikTok stars, whose combined followings top 100 million people, posted an open letter to Trump on Medium arguing against banning the app. "A virtual world dominated by hate on Twitter is nothing compared to the snapshots of joy and comedy on TikTok," read the open letter. "So instead of eliminating TikTok, why not use this opportunity to spin off TikTok US in an IPO or sell it to a US company—let capitalism solve this issue, not the state."

Trump gave TikTok six weeks to sell its US opera-

Soviet Union and with no memory of the pre-Lukashenko era, waved flags and chanted "change" as 37-year-old Tikhonovskaya took to the stage in late July. "Now is the time when everyone must overcome their fear," she said. "Do you think I'm not scared? I'm scared every day. But I muster my courage, get over my fear and go to you and go for victory." The stay-at-home mother launched her presidential bid after her husband and popular blogger Sergei Tikhonovskaya was arrested and barred from challenging Lukashenko in the August 9 polls.

Their five-year-old daughter and 10-year-old son have been taken abroad for their own safety. Another leading rival, ex-banker Viktor Babaryko, was also imprisoned while a third, former diplomat Valery Tsepkalo, has fled the country fearing arrest. His fear is well-founded. According to the Viasna rights group, at least 1,100 people have been arrested since May during pre-election rallies. Despite the crackdown, Tikhonovskaya was allowed to run in her husband's place, and her bid to remove 65-year-old Lukashenko has galvanized his opponents.

A 'symbol'

Tikhonovskaya has drawn massive crowds at her



In this file photo, Queen Sofia of Spain (left) and Spain's former King Juan Carlos I (right) arrive for the funeral ceremony of Jean d'Aviano, Grand Duke of Luxembourg in Luxembourg City. —AFP

that Felipe VI was also a beneficiary of the foundation.

The king withdrew from his father an annual royal allowance of nearly 200,000 euros and renounced his inheritance "to preserve the exemplariness of the crown". Online outlet El Espanol reported that Swiss lawyer Dante Canonica told the Geneva public prosecutor's office he had been instructed to "create a structure" to hide the funds paid to Juan Carlos. "Wherever he goes, he will have to pay for what he has done," said 33-year-old publicist Inigo Inchaurrega, who was out walking his dog in Madrid. "It's a shame because he did a lot for Spain, but it is clear that at some time in his career he turned corrupt." —AFP

tions to an American company, saying Monday it would be "out of business" otherwise, and that the government wanted a financial benefit from the deal.

Some on TikTok suspect that the president's threat is connected to the platform's popularity among activists, such as those protesting racial discrimination. Legions of K-pop fans and TikTok users took credit for upending a Trump rally in June by block-reserving tickets with no intention of attending the event—which wound up with an embarrassingly low turnout.

Prior to the event in Tulsa, Oklahoma-hyped as a major relaunch ahead of the November presidential election—Trump's campaign chairman tweeted that more than a million tickets had been requested. But according to the local fire department, just 6,200 people turned up. "Now I don't think it's a coincidence after Tulsa was a flop: out of the blue, now suddenly you, want to go ahead and ban TikTok." @maya2960 rapped. —AFP



MINSK: Supporters of presidential candidate Svetlana Tikhonovskaya attend her campaign rally in the town of Maladzechna, some 70 km northwest of Minsk. —AFP

rallies throughout the country where she is accompanied by Maria Kolesnikova, Babaryko's campaign director, and Veronika Tsepkalo, the wife of the self-exiled opponent. The women wear t-shirts with a design featuring their signature gestures: Tikhonovskaya's punched fist, Kolesnikova's fingers in a heart shape and Tsepkalo's victory sign. —AFP

International

Prison raid mars relative calm in Afghanistan after ceasefire

At least 29 people were killed in a raid

JALALABAD: At least 29 people were killed in a raid on an Afghan prison claimed by the Islamic State group, officials said Monday, as the country waited to see if a government ceasefire with the Taliban would rupture after its formal expiration. Fighting finally ended at mid-afternoon at the jail in the eastern city of Jalalabad, where about 1,700 IS and Taliban inmates were being held.

IS's news outlet Amaq said its fighters were behind the raid that had started with a suicide car bomb attack, and saw more than 1,000 inmates escape before most of them were recaptured. The attack was the most violent incident since the Taliban and Afghan security forces held a three-day ceasefire over the Muslim festival of Eid al-Adha which ended Sunday. IS was not part of the truce which Afghan authorities hoped would pave the way for peace talks with the Taliban as early as this week.

An AFP correspondent who toured the prison after the attack ended saw bodies of some attackers and inmates lying in the prison compound. The entrance to the jail was blown up by the initial car bomb attack. Several cells were burnt and damaged, while some had prisoners inside. The Nangarhar governor's spokesman Attaullah Khogyani told AFP that 29 people had died in the fighting. Officials said a total of 10 attackers were also killed.

Meanwhile, the government accused the Taliban

of violating the ceasefire 38 times over the three-day truce. Interior ministry spokesman Tareq Arian said the insurgents had killed 20 civilians and wounded 40 by "carrying out terrorist and offensive attacks as well as using landmines". The Taliban rejected his charges. Under a deal signed by the Taliban and the United States in February, the "intra-Afghan" talks were supposed to start in March. Talks however were delayed amid political infighting in Kabul, and as an agreed prisoner swap dragged on.

Prisoner release

Islamic State group claims responsibility

Both Kabul and the Taliban have signaled they could be ready to start talks after Eid, and the Afghan government on Sunday offered to extend the ceasefire. The insurgents have not formally responded. The biggest hurdle to talks starting is a contentious prisoner swap stipulated under the US-Taliban deal. Under the exchange, Kabul is meant to free around 5,000 Taliban prisoners in return for 1,000 Afghan security personnel held captive by the insurgents.

The National Security Council said Sunday that more than 4,900 inmates have been freed, and the Taliban last week said they had already met their side of the commitment. Afghan authorities, however, have refused to free about 400 Taliban inmates accused of serious crimes such as murder and even attacks against foreign countries. A gathering of Afghan elders will decide their fate on August 7 in Kabul. Pres-



JALALABAD: Afghan soldiers arrive with their Humvee vehicle outside a prison during an ongoing raid in Jalalabad on August 3, 2020. — AFP

ident Ashraf Ghani's spokesman said.

Sediq Sediqqi said Washington had told Kabul that if it freed 4,600 Taliban prisoners the peace talks could begin. "We don't see any honesty and commitment from the Taliban for peace," Sediqqi told reporters. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, eager for a diplomatic win ahead of elections, discussed the prisoner issue by videoconference Mon-

day with Taliban chief negotiator Mullah Baradar, insurgent spokesman Suhail Shaheen said. The US State Department would not comment.

The rare respite from violence over Eid gave some Afghans the opportunity to safely visit relatives after long periods apart. "I managed to visit my village for the first time in two years," said Khalil Ahmad from volatile Uruzgan province. —AFP

Jittery Hong Kong's authors seek safety in Taiwan

HONG KONG: China's new security law has cast a threatening shadow over Hong Kong's dynamic book industry, with anxious publishers combing through back catalogues for potentially "subversive" material, and looking to Taiwan as a safe haven for printing fresh titles. The city has long been a refuge for intellectuals, free from the authoritarian grip of the Chinese mainland's communist leaders. But that status is at risk of crumbling as Beijing's new legislation sends fresh jitters through a publishing industry already wary of overstepping China's red lines.

"Major publishing and printing houses now dare not touch a project like ours," said Woody, one of a group of journalists putting together a book of interviews with witnesses of Hong Kong's explosive pro-democracy protests last year. The team were forced to review the entire contents of the title—"Our Last Evolution"—after Beijing served notice of the law in June, and three writers subsequently requested changes. "For the rest,

it's not that they don't have any fear, they just don't know what specifically they should worry about," he said, asking to use just a first name.

Beijing has made no secret of its dislike of the books that roll off printing presses in Hong Kong, often painting an unflattering and at times salacious picture of many Chinese officials. In 2015, five Hong Kong booksellers offering gossip-filled tomes vanished—including one from Thailand—before resurfacing in mainland custody making "confessions". One skipped bail and went public with a story of kidnapping and lengthy interrogations. He has since fled to Taiwan. The climate of fear has only intensified under the new law, which uses vague language to target secession, subversion, terrorism and collusion with foreign forces.

Public and school libraries have already started pulling books deemed inappropriate or legally risky, including those by prominent democracy activists such as Joshua Wong. Breakazine, a quarterly magazine exploring social problems in Hong Kong, cancelled publication of its latest issue and suspended production of the next one. It said it had obtained legal opinion and was forced to act due to "uncertainties" in the implementation of the new law.

The answer, say some publishers, is Taiwan, the nearby self-ruled democratic island that Beijing claims but has yet to bring under Communist Party rule. Taipei publisher Liu Gi said the "Our Last Evolution" team



HONG KONG: Customers browse in a bookstore in Hong Kong that stocks books with sensitive political titles that could potentially contravene the new national security law. — AFP

was one of a number working on books about the Hong Kong protests that came knocking on his door in June as the law was being formulated. Liu, who runs Alone Publishing as a one-man operation, said it signalled an ironic switch for Hong Kong, which previously served as a publishing haven for Taiwanese literature when the island endured decades of authoritarian rule.—AFP

'Unspeakable horror': Attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki

TOKYO: Japan this week marks the 75th anniversary of the atomic bomb attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which killed over 200,000 people and left many more deeply traumatized and even stigmatized. Here are some facts about the devastating attacks:

The bombs

The first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima in western Japan on August 6, 1945 by the US bomber Enola Gay. The bomb, weighing 13-16 kilotons, was nicknamed "Little Boy" but its impact was anything but small. It detonated about 600 meters from the ground, with a force equivalent to 15,000 tons of TNT, and killed 140,000 people. Tens of thousands died instantly, while others succumbed to injuries or illness in the weeks, months and years that followed. Three days later, the US dropped a second bomb dubbed "Fat Man" on the city of Nagasaki, killing another 74,000 people. The attacks remain the only time atomic bombs have been used in wartime.

The attacks

When the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, the first thing people noticed was an "intense ball of fire" according to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Temperatures at the epicenter of the blast reached an estimated 7,000 degrees Celsius, which caused fatal burns within a radius of about three kilometers. ICRC experts say there were cases of temporary or permanent blindness due to the intense flash of light, and subsequent related damage such as cataracts. A whirlwind of heat generated by the explosion also ignited thousands of fires that burned several square kilometers of the largely wooden city. A firestorm that consumed all available oxygen caused more deaths by suffocation.

It has been estimated that burn- and fire-related casualties accounted for more than half of the immediate deaths in Hiroshima. The explosion generated an enormous shock wave that in some cases literally carried people away. Others were crushed to death inside collapsed buildings or injured or killed by flying debris. "I remember the charred bodies of little children lying around the hypocentre area like black rocks," Koichi Wada, who was 18 at the time of the Nagasaki attack, has said of the bombing.—AFP

From Manhattan to Hiroshima: The race for the atom bomb

TOKYO: The atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki capped six years of top-secret work by scientists from Europe and North America. Here is an overview of how that process unfolded.

Einstein warning

In 1939, Albert Einstein signs a letter warning US president Franklin D. Roosevelt of the destructive potential of nuclear fission, which was discovered by the German chemist Otto Hahn. The letter says the process could result in "extremely powerful bombs of a new type". Roosevelt creates the Advisory Body on Uranium.

Pearl Harbor

On December 7, 1941, Japanese warplanes destroy much of the US Pacific fleet based at Pearl Harbor. The next day, the United States enters World War II.

The Manhattan Project

In August 1942, the US officially launches a top-secret programme to develop an atomic bomb. The project, which had been approved the previous year, comes to be known as the "Manhattan Project". Approximately two billion dollars are spent to achieve its goal. In 1943, Robert Oppenheimer is named scientific director of a secret lab at Los Alamos, New Mexico that is to build the bomb. The project includes top physicists from the US, Britain and Canada, in addition to several who fled the Nazi occupation of their homelands in Europe.

Potential targets

Around spring 1945, possible targets are evaluated and a list drawn up of Japanese cities that could be hit with an atomic bomb. At the top of the list is Japan's seventh-largest city, Hiroshima. Kyoto is rejected as a target owing largely to its historic and cultural importance.

Conventional bombs

On March 9-10, 1945, US warplanes carry out massive firebombing attacks on Tokyo and other major Japanese cities. Around 100,000 people die in the capital alone.

Battle of Okinawa

On March 26, the battle of Okinawa begins. More than 100,000 Japanese soldiers and a similar number of civilians die over the next three months, while 12,000 US soldiers are also killed. The battle is used by US officials to justify using atomic bombs, since an invasion of mainland Japan is forecast to result in an even higher cost. On April 12, Roosevelt dies and Harry Truman becomes president of the United States and learns of the "Manhattan Project".



This undated handout picture released by the Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory shows an atomic bomb of the type nicknamed 'Little Boy' that was dropped by a US Army Air Force B-29 bomber on August 6, 1945 in Hiroshima. — AFP

German surrender

On May 8, Germany surrenders, but fighting continues in Asia and the Pacific.

First American test

Between May and July, components of the atomic bombs are shipped to Tinian, an island in the Marianas chain from where B-29 bombers are able to reach Japan. On July 16, at 5:30 am, the "Trinity" test takes place near Alamogordo, New Mexico, demonstrating the awesome power of an atomic bomb and marking the dawn of the nuclear age. On July 25, Truman agrees to a mission to drop an atomic bomb on Japan. It included approval to drop additional bombs as soon as they became available.

Allied ultimatum

On July 26, in the Potsdam Declaration, Britain, China and the United States warn Japan that it must surrender or face "prompt and utter destruction". Japan decides to "ignore" the ultimatum, although the word used - mokusatsu - also translates as "no comment".

Hiroshima and Nagasaki

On August 6 the US B-29 bomber "Enola Gay" drops a 9,000-pound atomic bomb over Hiroshima at 8:15 am, killing 140,000 people by the end of December, according to a widely accepted toll. Truman tells Japanese leaders that if they do not surrender "they may expect a rain of ruin from the air, the like of which has never been seen on this Earth". On August 8, the Soviet Union declares war on Japan. On August 9, a second atomic bomb explodes over Nagasaki at 11:02 am, killing 74,000 people. On August 15, Japanese Emperor Hirohito tells his nation it has lost the war. He remains on the throne during post-war reconstruction of the country.

First Soviet bomb

On August 29, 1949, four years after Hiroshima and Nagasaki are destroyed, the Soviet Union successfully tests its own atomic bomb in Kazakhstan and becomes the world's second nuclear power.—AFP

75 years on, Japanese bomb survivors make final pleas for abolition

TOKYO: As Japan marks 75 years since the devastating attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the last generation of nuclear bomb survivors are working to ensure their message lives on after them. The "hibakusha"—literally "person affected by the bomb"—have for decades been a powerful voice calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons. There are an estimated 136,700 left, many of whom were infants or unborn children at the time of the attacks.

The average age of a survivor now is a little over 83, according to Japan's health ministry, lending an urgency as they share their testimonies and call for a ban on nuclear weapons. "What we hibakusha are saying is we can't repeat (a nuclear attack)," 88-year-old Terumi Tanaka, who survived the Nagasaki bombing, told AFP ahead of the anniversaries. "To this end, we have to let people know what we experienced, for them to hear the facts." Tanaka was 13 when the bomb hit his hometown. The attack on Nagasaki killed 74,000 people and came three days after a first bomb devastated the city of Hiroshima, killing 140,000. He has spent much of his life sharing his experience, hoping that explaining the horrors of nuclear weapons will convince people to support a ban.

But he recognizes that the community of those who lived through the attacks is shrinking, and their message will have to be passed on by others in the decades to come. "We will all pass away, eventually," he said. "We set up a group called No More Hibakusha Project, which works on preserving records as archives, including what we've written... so that (the next generation) can use them in their campaigns."

Nuclear ban

Tanaka worries at times that interest is fading, acknowledging that speeches by hibakusha often attract no more than a handful of people. "We do our best," he said. "But if no one comes, it's a swing and a miss." At 74, Jiro Hamasumi is among the youngest survivors of the attacks. His mother was pregnant with him in Hiroshima when the bomb struck. It killed his father, most likely instantaneously, and claimed several other relatives in the aftermath. "Not a day goes by when I don't think about my father," he said.

His knowledge of the attack comes from the accounts of his siblings, who described the dizzying flash and ear-splitting roar that formed the first indication the bomb known as Little Boy had detonated. His father was at work when the bomb hit, just a few hundred meters from the epicenter. Hamasumi's mother and siblings tried to reach his office the day after but were forced back by the "heat and smell of burned flesh". When they finally reached his father's office, they found only "something resembling his body". All they could retrieve were a few metal items that survived the flames—a belt buckle, a key and part of his wallet.

Born in February 1946, Hamasumi escaped the physical effects experienced by many children exposed to radiation in the womb. But the attack has defined his life, and he has spent decades campaigning against nuclear weapons. "To me, the nuclear umbrella only means the mushroom cloud," Hamasumi said. "Hibakusha want the United States to apologize to us, but the proof of the apology is nuclear abolition, we're not after vengeance."

Fading from memory

As the hibakusha age, they are passing the baton to young activists, many from Hiroshima and Nagasaki, who have grown up steeped in the memories of survivors. Mitsuhiro Hayashida, 28, is the grandchild of a Nagasaki hibakusha and organizes events for survivors to share their stories.

He also helps oversee an international online petition for a ban on nuclear weapons, which has garnered more than 11 million signatures. But he too worries that the attacks are fading from collective memory. "Today, the children and grandchildren of survivors, like me, are campaigning, but the weight of our words is probably less than half of the testimonies of survivors," he told AFP. "We really need the world to move towards nuclear abolition while atomic bomb survivors are alive." —AFP

Business

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 5, 2020

Trump gives TikTok 6 weeks to sell or shut down

‘It’s got to be an American company... it’s got to be owned here’

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump gave popular Chinese-owned video app TikTok six weeks to sell its US operations to an American company, saying Monday it would be “out of business” otherwise, and that the government wanted a financial benefit from the deal.

“It’s got to be an American company... it’s got to be owned here,” Trump said. “We don’t want to have any problem with security.” Trump said that Microsoft was in talks to buy TikTok, which has as many as one billion worldwide users who make quirky 60-second videos with its smartphone app. But US officials say the app constitutes a national security risk because it could share millions of Americans’ personal data with Chinese intelligence. Trump gave the company’s Chinese parent ByteDance until mid-September to strike a deal.



China accuses US of ‘outright bullying’

“I set a date of around September 15, at which point it’s going to be out of business in the United States,” he said. Whatever the price is, he said, “the United States should get a very large percentage of that price because we’re making it possible.” Trump compared the demand for a piece of the pie to a landlord demanding under-the-table “key money” from a new tenant, a practice widely illegal including in New York, where the billionaire president built his real estate empire. “TikTok is a big success, but a big portion of it is in the country,” he said. “I think it’s very fair.”

But Trump also threw a surprise new condition in any deal, saying the sale of TikTok’s US business would have to result in a significant payout to the US Treasury for initiating it. “A very substantial portion of that price is going to have to come into the Treasury of the United States, because we’re making it possible for this deal to happen,” Trump told reporters.

“They don’t have any rights unless we give it to them,” he said.

Sell or shut down

The pressure for a sale of TikTok’s US and international business, based in Los Angeles, left the company and ByteDance facing tough decisions. Trump has made TikTok the latest front in the ongoing political and trade battles between Washington and Beijing.

The app has been under formal investigation on US national security grounds because it collects large amounts of personal data on all its users and is legally bound to share that with authorities in Beijing if they demand it. Both its huge user base and its algorithm for collecting data make it hugely valuable.

But being forced by the US government to sell at least its US business or be shut down—and to then split the sale price with the US Treasury as Trump is demanding—was an almost unheard-of tactic.

Shutting down could force users to switch to competitors, and many content creators are already encouraging followers to follow them on other social media platforms. “The most obvious beneficiaries are Snapchat, Facebook and Twitter, with Snapchat likely being the biggest beneficiary,” said investment analysts at Lightshed Partners. Earlier Monday, ByteDance founder Zhang Yiming acknowledged the hefty pressure and said in a letter to staff, reported by Chinese media, that they were working around-the-clock “for the best outcome.”

“We have always been committed to ensuring user data security, as well as the platform neutrality and transparency,” Zhang said.

However, he said, the company faces “mounting complexities across the geopolitical landscape and significant external pressure.” He said the company must confront the challenge from the United States, though “without giving up exploring any possibilities.” According to Britain’s The Sun newspaper Monday, as a possible consequence of the pressure, ByteDance is planning to relocate TikTok’s global operations to Britain.

Pushing back

China’s foreign ministry pushed back Monday, calling Washington hypocritical for demanding TikTok be sold. “The US is using an abused concept of national security and, without providing any evidence, is making presumptions of guilt and issuing threats to relevant



“I set a date of around September 15, at which point Tik Tok’s going to be out of business in the United States,” US President Trump said Monday. —AFP

companies,” said spokesman Wang Wenbin. “This goes against the principle of market economy and exposes the hypocrisy and typical double standards of the US in upholding so-called fairness and freedom,” he added.

‘Outright bullying’

Meanwhile, China accused the United States yesterday of “outright bullying” over popular video app TikTok, after President Donald Trump ramped up pressure for its US operations to be sold to an American company.

“This goes against the principles of the market economy and the (World Trade Organization’s) principles of openness, transparency and non-discrimination,” said foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin.

A day earlier, President Trump gave TikTok six weeks to sell its US operations, in the latest escalation

to an ongoing political and trade battle between Washington and Beijing.

The app has been under formal investigation on US national security grounds, because it collects large amounts of personal data on users and is legally bound to share it with authorities in Beijing if they demand it. But Wang told a regular press briefing yesterday: “The US, without providing any evidence, has been using an abused concept of national security... unjustifiably suppressing certain non-US companies.”

He said the national security grounds for the US’s clampdown on Chinese firms “does not hold water”, adding that the companies conduct their business activities in accordance with international rules and US laws. “But the US is cracking down on them on trumped-up charges. This is all political manipulation,” said Wang, who warned the US not to “open Pandora’s box”. —Agencies



US ‘cloud’ supremacy has Europe worried

PARIS: Europe is sitting on a wealth of data that is the 21st century equivalent of a precious metal mine during the gold rush. But instead of exploiting it themselves Europeans may be allowing American tech giants to gain control of all the excavation equipment, some experts say, pointing to a flurry of European companies announcing deals with US tech players for cloud services.

Renault, Orange, Deutsche Bank, and Lufthansa recently plumped for Google Cloud. Volkswagen signed up with Amazon Web Services. The French health ministry chose Microsoft to house its research data. The cloud is a term for offering data storage and processing services externally so clients don’t need to invest as much in costly gear.

This trend has sparked concern particularly in Germany, which has a rich trove of data thanks to its powerful industrial sector. The EU is “losing its influence in the digital sphere at the moment it is taking a central role in the continent’s economy” warned a recent report by a group of experts and media leaders under the leadership of the former head of German software firm SAP, Henning Kagermann.

“The majority of European data is stocked outside of Europe, or, if stocked in Europe, is on servers that belong to non-European firms,” it noted.

‘Convenience or sellout’

A senior French official recently delivered an even more blunt assessment in a meeting with IT professionals. “We have an enormous security and sovereignty issue with clouds” said the official at the meeting, which AFP attended on the condition of respecting the anonymity of participants.

“In many cases it is convenience or a sellout” by European companies and institutions “because it is simpler” to sign up with US tech giants than find European options, said the official.

“However we have very good firms offering cloud and data services,” he added. One of the causes of concern for Europeans comes from the Cloud Act, a piece of legislation adopted in 2018 that gives US intelligence agencies access in certain cases to data hosted by US firms, no matter where the server may be physically located. “My company is American and I know very well what the implications are of the legislation,” said a Franco-American executive.

“And given what is happening in US policy debates, that situation won’t be getting better.”

Beyond the integrity of data, it is the capacity to analyze and exploit that information that worries many European experts and policymakers.

Processing power

If in Europe “we are just capable of generating data and need others to exploit it then we are going to end up in the same situation as countries with mineral resources that rely on others to process it and end up with meager economic benefits,” said the French official. The French and Germans unveiled in June the GAIA-X project that aims to develop a competitive European cloud offer.

Rather than encourage the development of a European champion-in the mold of Airbus in response to Boeing—that would offer the full gamut of services, the project takes a different tack. It aims to set standards so different firms could offer storage, processing, security and artificial intelligence services seamlessly. It would operate as a marketplace of sorts where each client could find the services they need without having to leave European jurisdiction.

It is hoped GAIA-X’s decentralized model might prove a better fit with the issues raised by treatment of data from connected devices. —AFP

Gloomy earnings hit European stocks, BP jumps

LONDON: European shares slipped yesterday as disappointing earnings reports from Diageo and Bayer took the shine off a jump in growth-linked cyclical stocks, while investors awaited signs of progress on more U.S. fiscal stimulus. The world’s largest spirits maker, Diageo Plc, slid 6.3 percent as it reported a bigger-than-expected decline in underlying net sales across all markets except North America, bucking a trend which has seen alcohol producers propped up by supermarket sales during lockdowns.

German drugs and pesticides group Bayer also fell 3.6 percent as moves to settle lawsuits over its Roundup weedkiller helped drive a 9.5 billion euro (\$11.2 billion) loss. Energy major BP by contrast jumped 7 percent as it used results to bring forward plans to speed its reinvention as a lower carbon company, funded in part by \$25 billion in asset sales by 2025.

Oil & gas led gains among industrial sectors with a 2.4 percent rise, while automakers and banks rose between 1.5 percent and 2 percent. The pan-European STOXX 600 slipped 0.2 percent overall, with UK and German stocks both down. After a stunning recovery since March lows that has seen the STOXX 600 climb nearly 36 percent, European stocks have wobbled in recent weeks on concerns about a resurgence in coronavirus cases.

“We’re already trading at high levels in equity markets, from here on it’s going to be more challenging,” said Elwin de Groot, head of macro strategy at Rabobank. “The economy has been recovering in the last couple of months, but it remains to be seen whether activity can make headway, given the geopolitical situation and in some areas new lockdowns, although targeted, are being implemented.”

Doubts over the progress of a US coronavirus aid package and a diplomatic tussle over Chinese tech companies’ operations in the United States also kept investors on edge. Banking-heavy Italian and Spanish indexes were both higher, as data showed Italy standing out as the main beneficiary of the European Central Bank’s efforts to support a virus-stricken euro zone economy. Of the 57 percent of companies listed on the STOXX 600 that have reported so far, nearly 62 percent have topped analysts’ much-reduced expectations for results, according to Refinitiv data.—Reuters

Branson space-bound in early 2021, says Virgin Galactic

WASHINGTON: Richard Branson could shoot into space on his Virgin Galactic aircraft as its first passenger early next year, the company said, potentially blazing a path for commercial flights.

The company has repeatedly pushed back the date it will take the first tourists outside earth’s atmosphere and said 600 people have forked out \$250,000 to reserve a seat.

Virgin Galactic said Monday it “expects to advance to the next phase of its test flight program” in the fall with two manned flights. “Assuming both flights demonstrate the expected results, Virgin Galactic anticipates Sir Richard Branson’s flight to occur in the first quarter of 2021,” the company said in a statement. The groundbreaking flight by Branson-Virgin Galactic’s founder would pave the way for commercial voyages to begin.

The program has been hit by serious snags, however, with a devastating crash in 2014 caused by pilot error delaying the development of passenger aircraft SpaceShipTwo.

Getting tourists into space is not a simple exercise. The spacecraft will be taken up by a special plane and released at high altitude. Seconds later, the spaceship-part plane, part rocket-will ignite its engine and blast upward with an acceleration of 3.5 g, meaning three and a half times that of Earth’s gravitational force. It will then cut off the engine, which will create a feeling of weightlessness for a few minutes as the spacecraft reaches its highest point, about 80 kilometers (50 miles) above the planet, and then begin its descent. It will glide to land at Spaceport America, built in the New Mexico desert. Branson has set a series of aviation and nautical adventure records, although he failed, despite numerous attempts, to become the first person to circumnavigate the globe non-stop in a balloon.—AFP



British billionaire Richard Branson could shoot into space on his Virgin Galactic aircraft as its first passenger early next year, the company said, potentially blazing a path for commercial flights.

Business

US firms leap over low profit hurdle in virus-hit quarter

Most companies beat analysts' forecasts this season

NEW YORK: A record high percentage of US companies are beating analysts' forecasts this earnings season, giving investors a glimmer of hope in what is still expected to be the slowest profit period since the financial crisis. More than halfway through second-quarter earnings, 82.1 percent of companies reporting have surpassed profit expectations, which would be the highest in the history of Refinitiv IBES data going back to 1994. What's more, the size of the beats is well above what is typical. S&P 500 companies have beaten earnings expectations by a whopping 21.7 percent, also set to be the highest on record since 1994, based on Refinitiv's data as of Friday.

The latest big boost to numbers came late last week, when results from Facebook and trillion-dollar market value companies Apple, Amazon.com and Google parent Alphabet surpassed forecasts.

In many cases, estimates had been lowered so much ahead of earnings season that they were easier to beat, strategists said. Still, the results bolster the case for investors betting that the impact of coronavirus-led lockdowns and layoffs on companies' bottom lines may not be quite as dire as previously believed. "What it's saying is there are pockets of absolute strength in corporate America," said Quincy Krosby, chief market strategist at Prudential Financial in Newark,

New Jersey. Tech results in particular suggest "there is spending going on globally," she said.

The S&P 500 is up nearly 4 percent since results began in mid-July, putting it 3.4 percent from its February record closing high. To be sure, the pace of the market's rebound off the March lows has slowed in recent weeks, with earnings coming in as the United States sees a resurgence in virus cases in many areas and economic numbers remain bleak.

Second-quarter S&P 500 earnings - expected to have dropped 33.8 percent from a year ago - are still set to be the low point for earnings this year and the biggest quarterly decline since the financial crisis.

Data on Thursday showed jobless claims rose last week, while the economy took its biggest hit on record in the second quarter. Strategists at BofA Global Research wrote in a recent note that while margins are "tracking a hair above expectations," they are still expected to collapse and comments from companies suggest more job cuts ahead. Still, some companies have managed better-than-expected results for the second quarter. Investors have been particularly keen to hear from technology companies, the most heavily weighted sector in S&P 500 earnings. With results in so far from 36 of the 71 tech companies in the S&P 500, second-



WASHINGTON: A Boeing 737 MAX jet comes in for a landing following a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) test flight at Boeing Field in Seattle, Washington. — AFP

quarter earnings for the S&P 500 tech sector now are seen growing 1.4 percent from a year ago versus an 8 percent decline estimated on July 1, Refinitiv's data shows. The S&P's healthcare index has also seen big improvements since July 1, thanks to strong results from UnitedHealth Group, drugmakers like Pfizer and others. Analysts now expect healthcare earnings to have increased 1.1 percent compared with a 15.1 percent decline forecast at the start of July, according to Refinitiv. "The

second quarter of 2020 was a quarter with more uncertainty in it than I have ever seen in my life. Managements for the most part suspended guidance, so had the world kind of flying blind as to what the second quarter would bring," said Peter Tuz, president of Chase Investment Counsel in Charlottesville, Virginia. And, "it's brought results that are generally better than the worst imaginable. ... Things are a little bit more positive than many people thought." — Reuters

Business Insight

Middle East: Downstream oil gets creative

By Dan Carter



Dan Carter

Wash with pressure points, the downstream oil industry in the Middle East is holding its own. The dramatic and rapid impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the subsequent recession, are the latest additions to what was already a complex market for downstream operators. Other drivers of uncertainty include the global energy transition towards a greener world and the volatile oil price.

However, this is not stopping national oil companies (NOCs) in their tracks. After decades of international oil companies (IOCs) taking the lead, NOCs are tightly holding onto their new spot on the global energy stage. Today, they are not only aligned with the business models of IOCs, but they are worthy competitors. One of the most notable changes are increased vertical integration and a burgeoning regional petrochemical market. State-owned oil firm Saudi Aramco recently acquired a 70 percent stake in petrochemicals giant Sabic, making it one of the largest petrochemical companies in the world.

4 key focus areas

Still, the pressure points are very real - and none will likely abate soon. So, NOCs must adapt in order to hit their growth goals. Four key areas have been identified in Woods' latest Whitepaper, 'Downstream Growth in the Middle East: How can NOCs deliver on their ambitious growth strategies in a transitioning energy landscape?' Each of the four key themes were shaped by the discussions of a roundtable of 25 high-level energy executives in Abu Dhabi.

First is the value of integration and how streamlined processes along the value chain can drive efficiency, therefore unlocking major economic potential. The second is the global gamechanger of digitalization. NOCs must ask and answer this question: How can the next generation of tools revolutionize your operations and balance sheets?

This feeds directly into number three: how to nurture talent and a new style of innovative thinking. The energy market is being overhauled, so curating a new type of workforce is non-negotiable. Finally, the fourth is how to navigate the rapidly changing environmental landscape amid talk of net-zero targets in a bid to make the Paris Agreement a reality. Decarbonization is undoubtedly the biggest shift in global energy markets in a century and NOCs must keep up.

Bright spots?

The region's abundant resources mean it will remain the world's biggest oil producing region up to 2040, accounting for 36 percent of global liquids, according to the 2019 BP Outlook. This geographic good fortune is accentuated by the region's position at the heart of the world's east-west trade routes. To the east, overall energy demand in Southeast Asia has grown by more than 80 percent since 2000, according to the International Energy Agency (IEA). To the west, more than 500mn people will be added to Africa's urban population by 2040, much higher than the growth seen in China's urban population in the two decades of its economic and energy boom. It appears to be a win-win for the Middle East.

The Middle East is also on the doorstep of two major shipping lanes - the Strait of Hormuz and the Suez Canal - that will help broaden NOCs' global footprint and influence. The Strait, for example, is the world's most important oil transit bottleneck, with its daily flow accounting for 21 percent of global petroleum liquids consumption, according to the Energy Information Administration (EIA).

Plus, NOCs' downstream operators have one of the lowest cost feedstocks worldwide, multiple, and extensive port infrastructure and strong government support. This provides a robust foundation for NOCs' regional and global expansions and their bid to ever improve energy security and commercial success. Despite the eruption of current distractions, NOCs and their stakeholders are determined to stay on track for continued growth and success worldwide. Note: Dan Carter is Global Technical Leader Oil & Gas Consulting, Wood

Oil giant BP plunges into \$16.8bn loss

LONDON: BP plunged into a net loss of almost \$16.85 billion in the second quarter, the British oil giant announced yesterday as the coronavirus pandemic ravaged demand for oil, sending prices tumbling.

"The ongoing severe impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to create a volatile and challenging trading environment," BP said in its earnings statement. "Looking ahead, the outlook for commodity prices and product demand remains challenging and uncertain," it added.

The quarterly loss after tax of almost \$16.85 billion (14.10 billion euros) compared with net profit of \$1.82 billion in the second quarter of 2019, BP said. "In particular, our reset of long-term price assumptions and the related impairment and exploration write-off charges had a major impact," said chief executive Bernard Looney.

Sony net profit jumps 53.3% but virus clouds outlook

TOKYO: Sony said yesterday its net profit surged 53.3 percent in the first quarter, but warned annual profits were likely to see double-digit falls as the coronavirus pandemic continues to cloud the forecast. The PlayStation giant said net profit for the April-June quarter reached 233.25 billion yen (\$2.2 billion), with "significant increases" in its game and network services and financial services segments.

The surge was also helped by a strong performance in equities, which pushed up the firm's pre-tax income. Operating profit, however, slipped 1.1 percent to 228.39 billion yen on sales of 1.97 trillion yen, up 2.2 percent.

While global demand for games downloads spiked this year as lockdowns forced people to stay at home, the pandemic has brought a string of negative factors for Sony, including a slump in manufacturing, music event cancellations and movie theatre shutdowns.

"Lockdowns have continued affecting Sony's production lines while hitting hard sales of its electronics

products and at theatre-release movies," Hideki Yasuda, an analyst at Ace Research Institute in Tokyo, told AFP ahead of the results. "It was quite a tough quarter for Sony, as negative factors outnumbered positive ones. Sony is still expected to recover gradually for the rest of the fiscal year but on the condition that a major second wave of the pandemic doesn't emerge."

If there is a serious resurgence of the virus, "it will be a different story", Yasuda warned.

It warned annual net profit for the year to March would drop 12.4 percent to 510 billion yen, with annual operating profit dropping 26.7 percent to 620 billion yen. Annual sales are seen edging up 0.5 percent to 8.3 trillion yen.

PS5 production on track

The much-anticipated next version of the PlayStation is expected later this year, which analysts say has helped to sustain the firm's share price. During the April-June period, the company's mainstay game segment saw sales rise 32 percent thanks to robust demand for titles and related services, with the segment's annual sales also on course to rise 26 percent. But the news elsewhere was less positive, with sales falling 12 percent in the music division and six percent in the movie segment. The firm's electronics products business registered a whopping 31-percent plunge in sales, hit by the pandemic and unfavorable

dated buildings, with little investment in building safety and modern ventilation," said a June report by pressure group Labor Behind the Label.

Some operators have even set up production in homes, as hinted at by one woman leaving a house carrying transparent bags packed with multi-colored fabrics, before a man loads them into a car.

'Nasty cocktail'

Around 75-80 percent of the city's textile production is intended for Boohoo, the British clothing group specializing in ephemeral and cheap "fast fashion", according to Labour Behind the Label.

With the pandemic coinciding with the summer holidays, many companies are said to have now shuttered their operations. But that appears to be a far cry from earlier in the lockdown, when there were reports of crowded workshops, despite the obvious health risks.

During the peak of the outbreak between March and May, "some workers tested positive for coronavirus and were told to still come to work with their colleagues," Meg Lewis, the NGO's campaign manager, told AFP. However, public health bodies have said that no single source has been pinpointed as responsible for Leicester's previously higher case numbers.

"The truth is there is no epidemiological evidence to suggest that the factories have been a major factor," said local councillor Adam Clarke.

He cites the "nasty cocktail" of population density, poverty and the high proportion of ethnic minorities,

Textiles industry faces scrutiny after Leicester outbreak

LEICESTER, UK: Earlier this summer Leicester, in central England, and its thriving textiles industry found itself in the spotlight for all the wrong reasons. As the government was starting to ease coronavirus lockdown measures, the city of around 355,000 people became a COVID-19 hotspot, prompting officials to reimpose the social distancing regime.

This in turn led to renewed allegations modern slavery is rampant in its textiles sector-and that it had continued to operate at full capacity during the pandemic, fuelling the local spread of the virus.

At an imposing, derelict-looking building in a district home to many fabrics factories, the sounds of sewing machines puncture the silence of the otherwise quiet street. Outside, a handful of employees load dozens of boxes onto a truck. Faded signs elsewhere in the neighborhood highlight the presence of many other clothes-making hubs and the extent of the industry in parts of Leicester. In total, the city has around 1,500 factories, employing around 10,000 workers. "Most factories in Leicester are small workshops, often housed in dilapi-



In this file photo, BP logos are seen at a BP petrol station in Hildenborough, southeast of London. — AFP

In order to raise much-needed cash, BP recently announced the sale of its petrochemical business to privately-owned rival Ineos for \$5.0 billion.

BP's previous CEO Bob Dudley kick-started a \$15-billion divestment program. In the past year, the energy major also agreed to sell its Alaska operations to Hilcorp Alaska for \$5.6 billion.

Together the disposals were aimed at recouping \$10 billion to finance BP's \$10.4-billion purchase of US oil and gas operations belonging to mining group BHP Billiton. — AFP



foreign exchange rates.

For the year ahead, much is riding on how the PS5 performs, Yasuda said. "But it's too early to assess the new console's popularity. No one can predict precisely how it will perform before its launch." Chief Financial Officer Hiroko Totoki told reporters that production of the new console was "going well towards the year-end sales season". But he acknowledged the challenging situation faced by the firm overall, with the pandemic and US-China tensions, including over Huawei, affecting its bottom line.

On the pandemic, Totoki said the firm "must adapt to the changing environment". "We regard fiscal 2020 as time to recover from the impact of the coronavirus and to prepare ourselves for the post-coronavirus business environment," he added. — AFP

who have been more impacted by COVID-19, as likely behind the city's virus woes.

Vulnerable populations

Investigations by Labor Behind the Label and several British media outlets found textile workers in Leicester could be earning as little as £2 (\$2.63, 2.20 euros) an hour-well below Britain's hourly minimum wage of £8.72. Boohoo has said it is "horrified" at the accusations and promised an investigation. This falls short of the demands of Lewis and her NGO, which wants the group to address its commercial practices. Some dresses are sold for less than £4.50 on its website.

Meanwhile, publicly discussing wages with workers appears taboo, amid fears over the ramifications for their insecure jobs. "No English", said one young woman, of Asian descent, before quickly walking away. "I can't discuss it," replied another young man when asked about the allegations of illegally low pay. "£10 (an) hour," he added, after a brief exchange with a colleague in a foreign language.

'Easy targets'

However, it is common to find textile jobs in Leicester that pay £3-4 hourly, according to an Uber driver and former clothing company manager who said he quit the role over the issue. "Now, (it's) all illegals," he added of the workforce of around 30 employees in his former company, noting they came predominantly from India and Bangladesh. — AFP

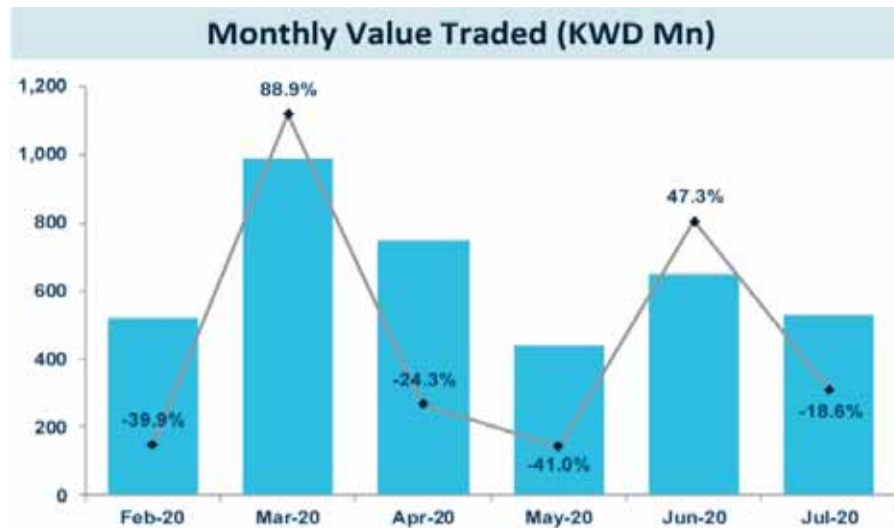
GCC markets gain for fourth consecutive month in July

Kuwait witnesses sharp drop in July with a decline of 3.2%

KUWAIT: GCC markets witnessed gains across all sectors during July-2020 resulting in a monthly gain of 2.9 percent for the S&P GCC Total return index. In terms of country performance, however, gains were mainly concentrated in Qatar and Saudi Arabia with the corresponding benchmarks gaining 4.1 percent and 3.3 percent during the month, respectively. On the other hand, Kuwait witnessed the biggest drop during the month with a decline of 3.2 percent for the All Share Market Index, followed by Dubai with a marginal decline of 0.7 percent. Nevertheless, in terms of YTD-2020 total returns, GCC equities remained in the red, declining by 9 percent YTD at the aggregate level.

In terms of sector performance, the Consumer Durable & Apparels sector witnessed the biggest gains, as markets opened up after Covid-19 lockdowns. The index gained 18.6 percent during the month, followed by Healthcare and Insurance benchmarks, with double digit gains of 13.7 percent and 12.9 percent, respectively. That said, large-cap sectors including Banks, Telecom and Energy witnessed only minimal gains during the month. The Telecom index was at the bottom of the chart with a gain of 0.2 percent, followed by Real Estate and Banks at 0.4 percent and 0.9 percent, respectively. The 2.0 percent gain in the Energy index highlighted stability in oil prices during the month. The laggards also were the major decliners in terms of YTD-2020 returns, with the exception of Telecom index that gained 1.3 percent until July-2020. Real Estate and Banks were at the bottom YTD with declines of 23.5 percent and 17.0 percent since the start of the year.

GCC market gains were largely in line with global markets with the MSCI World index gaining 4.7 percent during the month. Emerging Markets saw strong gains of 8.4 percent led by China's 10.9 percent gains. Commodities market was also in the green with oil prices up more than 5 percent in July-2020, but the 10.9 percent gain in gold price was the high-



light, as the safe-haven asset touched historical levels on continuing economic concerns.

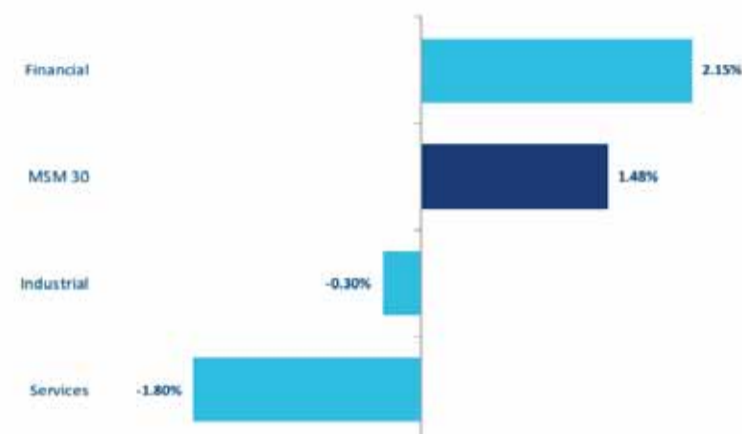
Kuwait
After seeing gains for three consecutive months, Kuwait witnessed the biggest decline in the GCC during July-2020 led by a broad-based decline during the month. The decline was also seen across the market structure with all the four indices seeing declines of close to 3 percent. Both the Premier Market index and the Main 50 index had identical declines of 3.4 percent and 3.3 percent, respectively, resulting in a 3.2 percent decline in the All Share Index. In the Premier Market, shares of only AUB Bahrain witnessed gains during the month at 6.3 percent while all the other constituents recorded declines. Declines during the month pushed Kuwaiti benchmarks further in the red zone in terms of YTD-2020 returns. The declines for the All Share index was the second lowest in the GCC after DFM at 20.9 per-



Qatar, Saudi eke out major gains

cent. The YTD-2020 decline was primarily on the back of the Premier Market stocks with the index declining 22.4 percent, whereas the Main Market index recorded a relatively lower decline of 16.8 percent by the end of July-2020. Within the Premier market, only Mezzan Holding was in the green with a YTD-2020 return of 16 percent whereas all the other constituents were in the red. The Basic Materials index was the biggest decliner during the month with a decline of 6.7 percent followed by Technology and Real Estate indices with declines of 5.9 percent and 5.3 percent, respectively. All the four stocks in the Basic Materials index declined with Boubyan Petrochemicals seeing the steepest decline of 12.4 percent. Shares in the company declined after news reports of an investigation in one of its investments in Kuwait. In the Real Estate sector, a majority of the stocks witnessed declines during the month that were partially offset by gain in stocks of Salhia (+3.4 percent), Injazat Real Estate (+3.8 percent) and

MSM Monthly Sector Performance



URC (+1.4 percent). In the banking sector, shares of all the Kuwaiti banks declined during the month with Gulf Bank seeing the biggest drop of 10.4 percent while sector heavyweights NBK and KFH declined by 3.9 percent and 5.6 percent, respectively.

There were only two sectors that saw gains during the month that included the Healthcare index at 2.2 percent gain and the Oil & Gas index at 0.4 percent gain. Banks and Telecom indices also declined during the month by 3.1 percent and 2.5 percent, respectively. Trading activity on the exchange once again declined during July-2020 after recovering in June-2020. Volume traded during the month declined by 28 percent to reach 2.6 billion shares

in July-2020 as compared to 3.6 billion shares in June-2020.

The aggregate value of shares changing hands during the month also declined by 18.6 percent to reach KD 528.7 million in July-2020 as compared to KD 649.4 million during June-2020.

AUB Bahrain once again topped both the monthly value and volume charts with 515.4 million shares changing hands valued at KD 96.5 million. Future Kid was the best performing stock in July-2020 with a gain of 14.9 percent followed by ATC and Tahsilat at 10.0 percent. On the decliner's side, Fujairah cement topped with a decline of 25 percent followed by REAM and Osoul Investment at 22.8 percent and 22.2 percent, respectively.

AUB congratulates winners of Al-Hassad quarterly draw

KUWAIT: In accordance with full preventive guidelines and measures set by health authorities, Ahli United Bank (AUB) held the Quarterly draw of 29 July 2020 of Al-Hassad Islamic account which is the very first draw account in Islamic banking in Kuwait and has won the "Best Savings Product in Kuwait 2019" by the prestigious Banker Middle East Magazine for the numerous unique features it provides. Al-Hassad Islamic account offers over 800 prizes, Over 12 month period and has reshaped the lives of thousands lucky winners.

The bank and announced the lucky winner of KD 25,000 as Sanat Humoud Al-Rasheedi.

The draws of Al-Hassad include several cash prizes, such as KD 100,000 each Eid and the grand quarterly draw of KD 250,000 prize which continues to be a key aspiration for customers who are wishing to fulfill their dreams. On top of that, Al-Hassad offers a monthly draw of KD 100,000, as well as 20 weekly prizes of KD 1,000 for each winner. In addition to this attractive package of rewards, Al-Hassad Islamic account incorporates a Wakala contract for projected annual profits, making this account beneficial to all customer segments that are aspiring to build their short and long-term savings through a unique savings account with many advantages.

Furthermore, for the first time in Kuwait, the AUB Al-Hassad presents the "Privilege Draw", which is a quarterly draw of KD 25,000 exclusively for Al-Hassad customers who maintained their balances for more than one year and have not won a prize in the past five years.

For all draws, the clients are eligible for one draw chance for each KD 50 deposited in their Al-Hassad account. It is worth mentioning that Al-Hassad Islamic account has won the "Best Savings Product in Kuwait 2019" by the prestigious Banker Middle East Magazine for the numerous unique features it provides. Such features include the simplest and easiest program, highest number of winners, largest prize value, unique draws during Eid Al-Fitr and Eid Al-Adha, loyalty multipliers, unique online account opening feature, transparent draws held during radio shows with live broadcast on the Bank's social media platforms.

NBK MONEY MARKETS REPORT

Dollar falls 5%, euro, pound jump in July

KUWAIT: The weakening US dollar trend continued last week with a worsening COVID situation in the US, an incomplete stimulus package and a nervous Federal Reserve. The US has now reported almost 4.5 million COVID-19 cases leading to a curb consumption sending the economy downhill.

Indeed, US consumer confidence fell more than expected in July amid the flare-up in infections across the country, which is threatening the economy's recovery from an unprecedented recession caused by the pandemic. The consumer confidence index dropped to a reading of 92.6 this month from 98.3 in June. Exacerbating the matter will be the potential loss in unemployment benefits proposed by the Republican \$1 trillion stimulus package. The proposal would slash the unemployment benefit from \$600 per week to \$200. Economists have credited the additional \$600 in weekly benefits for much of the rebound in economic activity since its implementation. The proposal, however, sparked immediate opposition from both Democrats and Republicans. Democrats complained it is too limited compared with their \$3 trillion proposal while some Republicans called the package too expensive. The US stimulus proposal will be an ongoing focus that is likely to involve days, or weeks, of negotiations before we get any clarity on how the final package would look like.

The US Federal Open Market Committee did little to offer any further guidance in their latest meeting last week. It reiterated its intention to "act as appropriate to support the economy" and kept policies unchanged. While the committee did extend several of its lending facilities, Fed Chair Jerome Powell emphasized the importance of fiscal policy in supporting the recovery hinting at Congress to find resolution. The overall message was dovish with Powell indicating that disinflationary pressures were likely weigh heavily going forward, that the recovery would not happen quickly keeping unemployment persistently high, and that the path of the economy will depend significantly on the course of the virus.

Looking at the effect of COVID-19 in numbers, the US economy suffered its biggest blow since the Great Depression in the second quarter of 2020. Gross domestic product collapsed at a 32.9 percent annualized rate last quarter erasing more than five years of growth. The bulk of the contraction occurred in April when activity ground to an abrupt halt after restaurants, bars and factories among others were closed to slow the spread of the virus. Economists say without the historic fiscal package of nearly \$3 trillion, the economic contraction would have been deeper adding more pressure on Con-

gress. The package offered companies help paying wages and gave millions of unemployed Americans a weekly \$600 supplement. The supplements added \$75 billion per month to household income and the loss of them would lead to significant drag on consumer spending. Altogether, the US dollar is on course for the largest monthly decline in a decade as investors worried about how the US economy would recover. Confidence in the currency was undermined further later in the week after President Donald Trump raised the possibility of delaying the nation's November presidential election. The dollar has depreciated nearly 5 percent in July with most of the drop coming in the last 10 days as new cases of coronavirus surged.

Euro higher in July

In contrast to the US dollar, the euro remains on its best run since 2017 as it continues to trade on dollar weakness. The gains were also attributed to Europe's decisive joint stimulus plan and a more successful pandemic response compared with the US. However, a stronger euro does not mean the euro-zone economy is outperforming. The latest euro-zone GDP reports for Q2 revealed that both Germany and France have been hit hard by the COVID shock. The French and German economies contracted by a record -13.8 percent and -10.1 percent respectively in Q2. Furthermore, similar to the US, disinflationary pressure from the hit to demand will keep pressure on the ECB to deliver further policy stimulus.

Pound jumps

Keeping up with the weaker dollar trend, the British pound also saw significant gains taking past the key \$1.30 level. However, Brexit-related risks and the economic fallout from the coronavirus pandemic kept investors cautious on the currency's longer-term outlook. While the pound is up 5.3 percent against dollar this month, it is only 0.5 percent higher against the euro. The lack of movement in the EUR/GBP cross shows that markets are still worried about an orderly exit of the UK from the EU. The fact that negotiations have yet to make meaningful progress on post-Brexit trade arrangements suggests continued weakness from the pound against the majors.

Japan

While the Europeans were seemingly unfazed by the recent gains in their respective currencies, Japan's export-driven economy has been struggling for years with a strengthening yen. Japanese Finance Minister Taro Aso described the yen's recent rise as "rapid" signaling concern that a strong currency could further hurt exports with an economy already in recession because of the novel coronavirus. "The government and the Bank of Japan will keep a close watch on underlying market and economic trends and tackle as one as needed," a ministry spokesman told reporters after a routine meeting with officials from the central bank and the Financial Services Agency



EasyJet dives into loss but upbeat on recovery

LONDON: EasyJet flew into an expected loss during its third quarter as the coronavirus pandemic kept the bulk of planes grounded, the British no-frills airline announced yesterday.

The group reported a pre-tax loss of £324.5 million (\$419 million, 355 million euros) in the three months to June, its third-quarter. This compared with profit of £174 million a year earlier.

But EasyJet, which returned to the skies on June 15 with a very limited schedule, said it had been encouraged by the level of recent customer demand. "Our bookings for the remainder of the summer are performing better than expected and as a result we have decided to expand our schedule over the fourth quarter to fly about 40 percent of capacity," said chief executive Johan Lundgren.

The carrier had previously forecast 30 percent capacity. EasyJet shares soared eight percent in early London trading yesterday following the trading update. However at just short of 550 pence, its stock price remained hugely down on its pre-pandemic level of around 1,500 pence.

EasyJet, whose entire fleet was grounded on March 30 owing to the pandemic, carried just 117,000 passengers in the final two weeks of June. That compared with more than 26 million passengers flown between April and June 2019. "We have now completed more than one month of restart operations and are seeing encouraging performance across the network with a continued focus to undertake only profitable flying," the airline said yesterday. "In July, EasyJet flew just over two million passengers."

The group in May announced plans to axe up to 4,500 jobs, or almost one third of its staff, owing to the dramatic slump in demand that has caused airlines worldwide to take similar measures. — AFP

Classifieds

Wednesday, August 5, 2020

Kuwait Times
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 e-mail: info@kuwaittimes.net



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

Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

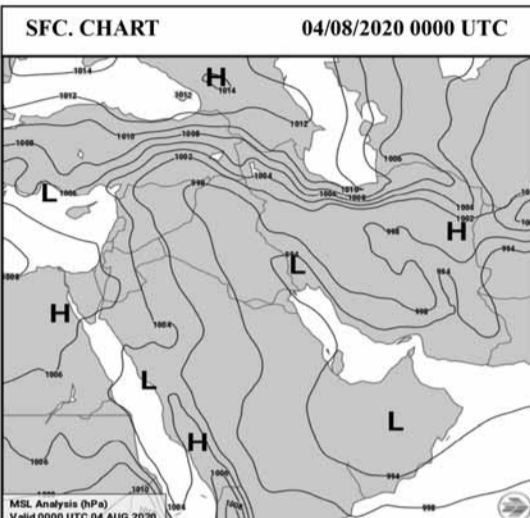
BY DAY: Very hot with light to moderate freshening at times north westerly wind with speed of 15 - 45 km/h with a chance for rising dust over open areas.

BY NIGHT: Hot to rather hot with light to moderate north westerly wind with speed of 12 - 35 km/h and some high clouds will appear.

WEATHER WARNING: No Current Warnings

STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	48 °C	36 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	49 °C	33 °C
ABDALY	49 °C	30 °C
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C
JAHRA	49 °C	34 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	47 °C	33 °C
SALMIYAH	42 °C	36 °C
AHMADI	- °C	- °C
NUWAISIB	44 °C	32 °C
WAFRA	48 °C	31 °C
SALMY	47 °C	29 °C

DAY	DATE	WEATHER	MAX. Temp.	MIN. Temp.	Wind Direction	Wind Speed
Wednesday	08/05	Very hot	48 °C	32 °C	NW-VRB	08 - 26 km/h
Thursday	08/06	Very hot	47 °C	33 °C	VRB-NW	08 - 30 km/h
Friday	08/07	Very hot	49 °C	31 °C	NW	10 - 38 km/h
Saturday	08/08	Very hot with a chance for rising dust over open areas	50 °C	34 °C	NW	20 - 45 km/h



PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	03:42
Sunrise	05:10
Zuhr	11:54
Asr	15:30
Sunset	18:37
Isha	20:02

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	49 °C
MIN. Temp.	30 °C
MAX. RH	54 %
MIN. RH	07 %
MAX. Wind	N 43 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

All times are local time unless otherwise stated. UP:0

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

He left the company for those who have any claims or dues on 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

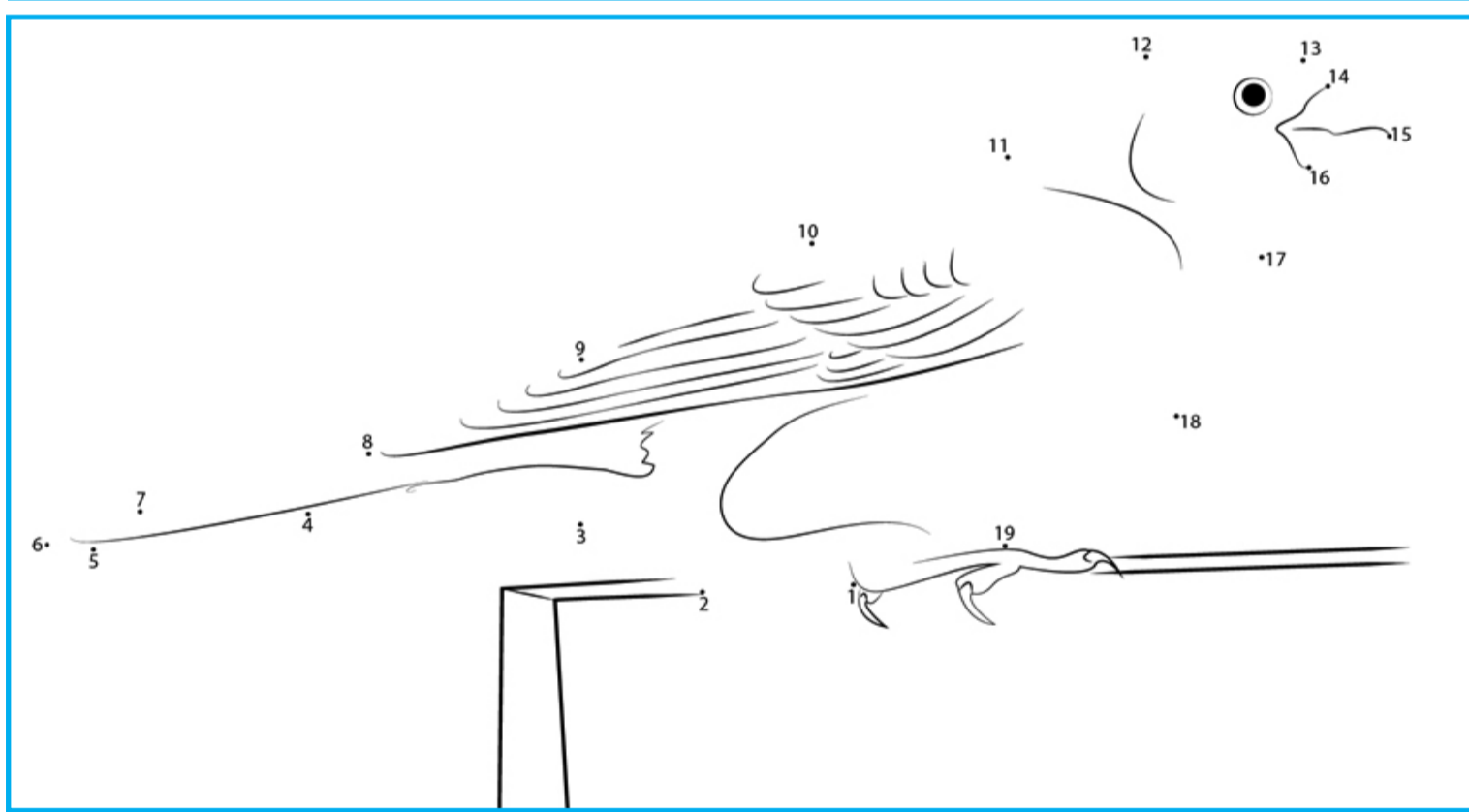
Kuwait Airways	171
Jazeera Airways	177
Turkish Airlines	1884918
FlyDubai	22414400
Qatar Airways	22423888
KLM	22425747
Royal Jordanian	22418064/5/6
British Airways	22425635
Air France	22430224
Emirates	22921555
Air India	22456700
Air India EXPRESS	22438185/4
Sri Lanka Airlines	22424444
Egypt Air	22421578

Word Search

BASEBALL Word Search

ASSIST	GROUND BALL	PARK
AT BAT	HELMET	RUN
BUNT	HITS	SAVES
CARD	LEAGUE	SCORE
CHAMPION	LINEUP	STARTING PITCHER
CLUB	LOSE	STEAL
DECK	MITT	TAG
DOUBLE HEADER	NINE	THROW
FIRST	NO-HITTER	UNIFORM
FOUL	OUT	WALK

Join the Dot



STAR TRACK

<p>Aries (March 21-April 19) The emotional swings that you could feel today might put a damper on your fantasy world, Aries. Remember that it's up to you to nurture these dreams. Try not to let the emotional tides of the day affect your long-range strategy for realizing your most treasured visions. Spend time by yourself if that makes you feel better. Don't give up.</p>	<p>Cancer (June 21-July 22) Be passionate about the thing you love the most, Cancer. Instead of trying to eat every single thing at the buffet table, just pick one or two items that you like the best and eat them with great enjoyment. Feel free to take some for later. Don't let anyone talk you into a dish that doesn't appeal to you. You're the only one who knows what you truly hunger for.</p>	<p>Libra (September 23-October 22) You're in a unique position to understand all sides of the issues, Libra. While this is apt to give you a tremendous advantage over those who still have their heads stuck in the sand, this knowledge also gives you a greater responsibility to others. You intuitively know what's best, and now you must find a way to bring others around and help them see it from your perspective.</p>	<p>Capricorn (December 22-January 19) You may feel a need to add some fantasy to your daily routine today, Capricorn. Do you have someone in mind you'd like Cupid's arrow to strike? Well, don't rely on a cherub to do your work for you. Get out and do some target practice of your own so you'll be prepared when you see the object of your desire across a crowded room. Keep things light and cheerful.</p>
<p>Taurus (April 20-May 20) People around you are apt to be touchy, Taurus, so be careful how you interact with them. You'll find that they can see beyond any sort of facade and easily detect dissension within the ranks. Be honest about your opinion, regardless of how you think it will be received. This is your best approach to a certain situation, especially since the truth will surface no matter what.</p>	<p>Leo (July 23-August 22) You may feel like a skipping record, Leo. You've been scratched and mistreated, and now you continue to repeat the same thing over and over until you've driven your point home. This isn't your doing, so don't be concerned if you hear protests that you're sending others over the edge. This may be the very thing necessary for all of you to advance to the next step.</p>	<p>Scorpio (October 23-November 21) You may be feeling rather anxious, Scorpio. Perhaps you have a big date coming up and your mind is buzzing with how to make the best impression. Remember that the harder you try, the further away you'll push the object of your desire. The most important part of impressing another is having confidence. Relax. Try not to get too caught up with yourself.</p>	<p>Aquarius (January 20- February 18) Your psychic sense is apt to be keen as you fill your mind with fanciful scenarios, Aquarius. These pictures in your head aren't as farfetched as you might think. Today would be a good day to listen to your inner guidance - the aspect of yourself that's keyed into hearing subtle important messages. Not everyone can pick up on them.</p>
<p>Gemini (May 21-June 20) While other people may be confused and distressed, you're actually the one with all the answers, Gemini. Indeed, you're best equipped to deal with the difficult situations that are likely to arise on a day like this. You have the ability to see through thick walls that others erect as barriers. Nothing will stop your penetrating eyes from seeing someone else's deceit.</p>	<p>Virgo (August 23-September 22) There could be some tough forces questioning your most cherished dreams, Virgo. Be careful about confronting someone who wants to poke holes in your idealism. You could end up feeling like a punctured balloon that's slowly deflating. Do whatever you can to avoid the aggression at work to bring you down. Don't let others get to you.</p>	<p>Sagittarius (November 22-December 21) This could be one of those days in which you feel like you just can't get anything right, Sagittarius. In an effort to appease other people, you may think you have to make some adjustments that make you feel uneasy. This uncomfortable feeling could turn into nervousness, restlessness, and eventually anger. Don't feel like you need to be the one to make any sacrifices at this time.</p>	<p>Pisces (February 19-March 20) You may be having a difficult time getting your opinions across to others, Pisces. For some, your ideas may seem too self-centered. For others, you may come across as insensitive to the situation. Do your best to understand what others are telling you. Don't be surprised if you don't receive the loving strokes that you feel you deserve. This is a day for you to observe and learn.</p>



Newlyweds Iraqi Kurds Salar Chomany and Soma Mohammed sit in a tent during a trekking ceremony at Mount Halgurd, in Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan region, on the first day of their honeymoon. — AFP photos



Newlyweds Iraqi Kurds Salar Chomany and Soma Mohammed pet a horse during a trekking ceremony at Mount Halgurd, in Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan region, on the first day of their honeymoon.



Newlyweds Iraqi Kurds Salar Chomany and Soma Mohammed holding hands.



Newlyweds Iraqi Kurds Salar Chomany and Soma Mohammed walk together during a trekking ceremony at Mount Halgurd, in Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan region.



Friends of newlyweds Iraqi Kurds Salar Chomany and Soma Mohammed take part in a trekking ceremony at Mount Halgurd.



Newlyweds Iraqi Kurds Salar Chomany and Soma Mohammed hugging each other during a trekking ceremony.



Newlyweds Iraqi Kurds Salar Chomany and Soma Mohammed hugging each other during a trekking ceremony.

Mountain lovers wed above the clouds in Kurdish Iraq

Avid mountaineers Salar and Soma met while trekking in Iraqi Kurdistan, so it was only natural they would get married amid its majestic peaks, some 2,000 meters (6,500 feet) above sea level. After a ceremony above the clouds, they spent their wedding night in a tent then embarked on a honeymoon ascent of Mount Halgurd, Iraq's second highest mountain at 3,607 meters. Salar Chomany, 34, has traversed the remote region's dramatic ridges and valleys for 12 years and turned his passion into his profession, working as a

guide for energy companies exploring the region near the Iranian border.

Soma Muhammed, 28, a student of Educational Sciences in the mountain town of Koysinjaq, is also an avid trekker. The wedding guests donned hiking boots, thick jackets and sunglasses, happy to escape the sweltering heat in the plains below where summer temperatures have topped 50 degrees Celsius (120 degrees Fahrenheit).

At the joyous ceremony, guests braved the thin and chilly air to dance in circles around the

bride and groom in a traditional Kurdish "dabkeh" dance. The newly-weds finally fell asleep in their tent after a feast of fresh fruit and cheese from the village below. The next morning they strapped on their backpacks and headed up toward the snow-covered summit, for the first time enjoying their shared passion for the mountains as husband and wife. — AFP



Friends of newlyweds Iraqi Kurds Salar Chomany and Soma Mohammed (not seen) take part in a trekking ceremony at Mount Halgurd.



Wrestlers perform during the Chinampalucha event organized by Mexican wrestlers in the chinampas of Xochimilco in Mexico City. — AFP photos



Wrestlers perform during the Chinampalucha event.

Pandemic pushes Mexico's 'lucha libre' wrestlers outdoors and online

Driven from their spectator-filled stadiums by the coronavirus, Mexico's "lucha libre" wrestlers have taken their flamboyant costumes and acrobatic maneuvers to an unlikely new battleground immersed in nature. As dawn breaks over the capital, a dozen burly fighters board a boat in Xochimilco, a maze of canals and artificial islands created centuries ago by the area's indigenous peoples. The pocket of green in the sprawling smog-plagued metropolis is now the scene of high-flying moves, blows and insults that will be broadcast online.

The goal is to raise funds to save the wildly popular mix of sport and entertainment. Lucha libre is an integral part of Mexican popular culture, but like many activities it is now facing financial disaster because of the coronavirus. In the absence of the usual crowds of fans, the hubbub of the wrestlers' arenas has been replaced by birdsong in the nature reserve on the edge of the city. "Because of the pandemic, we couldn't do it indoors. So we decided to take it to this magical place," 24-year-old wrestler Ciclonico tells AFP.

The muscle-bound fighter's face is covered by a mask representing an axolotl, an amphibian endemic to Xochimilco similar to a salamander. Hanging from a tree, a green ball shaped like the novel coronavirus offers a reminder of the health crisis shaking the country, which is approaching 50,000 confirmed deaths and 450,000 cases among a population of 128 million. Mexico now has the world's third-highest



Mexican wrestler Gran Felipe Jr. gets ready to perform.

official death toll from the disease.

'Healthy distance'

The show begins, narrated by two commentators gushing with the same passion as if they were in the Arena Mexico, the high cathedral of lucha libre. Emotions are running high when Japanese wrestler Yoshioka tries to tear off the mask of Thunderstorm—the ultimate humiliation. The referee, who had asked the wrestlers to keep a "healthy distance", intervenes with a shout of "Not the mask!".

Then it is the turn of X-Devil and Big Philip Jr. to fall backwards on a plastic table that shatters under their combined weight. Amidst the tranquil surroundings, the bellowing rings out even

louder, particularly when Shocker lets rip with a common Mexican insult involving Mr. Jerry's mother. But it is not quite the same without the shouts, insults and applause of the spectators. "You feel an emptiness, a hole, because the public motivates you, they make the energy," says Shocker. "Yes, I miss it a lot."

This veteran fighter, who relies on money from his taco business to survive, admits that returning to the ring was hard after putting on weight during the lockdown. "Yes, I have struggled (against the economic crisis), but thank God there is food to eat, which is the most important thing, and good health which is essential," he says.

So "when they told me about this project I said 'go ahead'. I feel comfortable. Yes, I get tired, apart from that I put on a lot of weight, but the body recovers," he adds. He is not the only one who feels the excitement of returning to the ring: Magic Eagle has also missed the adrenaline rush. "It's good. I feel liberated," says the strongman, who combines wrestling with his job as a construction worker. Confident of the event's success, the organizers plan to keep using their new arena deep in nature and next time hope to attract more spectators by holding it at night. The show will air on Saturday at a price of 30 pesos (\$1.35) and the money will be distributed among the wrestlers. — AFP



Wrestlers gesture from a typical 'trajinera' (boat), on arrival at the Chinampalucha event.

Lifestyle | Features



Nihad Jarboa, 37, and his wife Zeinab, 35, Palestinians living with a physical handicap since their childhood, sit on their wheelchairs as clients try on cartoon-inspired costumes stitched by them, at their home in the Rafah refugee camp in the southern Gaza Strip. — AFP photos



Zeinab Jarboa, 35, prepares a meal as her husband Nihad, 37, looks on, at their home in the Rafah refugee camp in the southern Gaza Strip.



Nihad Jarboa and his wife Zeinab sit on their wheelchairs as they stitch cartoon-inspired costumes at their home, as their daughter Rahaf looks on, in the Rafah refugee camp in the southern Gaza Strip.



Nihad Jarboa (left) and his wife Zeinab (second right) Palestinians living with a physical handicap since their childhood, are pictured at their home with their children Rahaf (third right), 10 and Eyad (right), 7, in the Rafah refugee camp in the southern Gaza Strip.



Zeinab Jarboa, sits on her wheelchair as she stitches a cartoon-inspired costume.



Nihad Jarboa is surrounded by children and volunteers, one of them dressed in a costume made by him and his wife Zeinab, at a center for children with chronic disease in the Rafah refugee camp in the southern Gaza Strip.

DISABLED GAZA COUPLE MAKE DOLLS TO GIVE THEIR CHILDREN 'DECENT LIFE'

With skilled fingers, disabled Gazan couple Nihad and Zeinab Jarboa have supported themselves by sewing finely detailed dolls and costumes, but coronavirus has hurt their already meagre income. Making a living is a challenge for all residents of the Israeli-blockaded Palestinian territory, which is ruled by the Islamist movement Hamas and where the poverty rate exceeds 50 percent. But the Jarboas face added adversity. Nihad, 37, has been physically disabled since childhood while Zeinab, 35, had both feet amputated after contracting a rare disease while giving birth

to her second child. Both use wheelchairs, further limiting their work options in the Gaza Strip, where the unemployment rate is above 50 percent, according to official statistics.

The Jarboas have perfected a craft of making dolls and costumes inspired by cartoon characters. They generate a modest income by selling the dolls and by sending costumed performers to nurseries and schools. Before the pandemic, "we sold around 20 to 30 dolls a month at 10 (\$2.90 dollars) shekels a piece", Nihad told AFP. They also charged about 20 shekels (around \$6) each to send

actors to perform at events. "But everything stopped with the pandemic," he said. Access to Gaza was already tightly controlled by Israel and Egypt before the virus, which has left 78 confirmed infections and one dead in Gaza. Hamas has imposed lockdown restrictions since March, including bans on gatherings and the closure of schools and mosques.

Won't 'give up'

Maher al-Tabaa, an economist at Gaza's chamber of commerce, said COVID-19 has further weakened Gaza's fragile economy. "Unemployment and

poverty rates are expected to increase," Tabaa told AFP, adding that 80 percent of the population was already dependent on food aid. Even though some restrictions have been lifted, the Jarboas said they have only received two requests for shows while doll sales are down 75 percent. "We won't give up, even if it's hard," said Zeinab as she prepared tea on a stove in their one-bedroom apartment in Rafah refugee camp of southern Gaza. "Things are harder with coronavirus (but) I am strong enough," she said, her hair covered with a pink scarf. "I want to raise my children so they have a decent life."

Like nearly 50 percent of Gaza residents, the Jarboas receive food aid from the United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA). Over 700,000 Palestinians fled or were expelled from their land at Israel's creation in 1948. Survivors and descendants are considered refugees by the UN. But UNRWA's support is "not enough to buy food", said Zeinab as she sewed a brightly coloured costume inspired by Donald Duck. — AFP



Congolesse artist and refugee Richard Lusakumunu looks at paintings as he displays them on a table.



A refugee girl draws during a painting workshop in an atelier at the refugee camp of Diavata near Thessaloniki.

Golden Globes voters hit with antitrust lawsuit

The exclusive group of film journalists that awards the Golden Globes was accused Monday of sabotaging non-members while gorging on lavish perks and unparalleled access to Hollywood stars. An antitrust lawsuit filed against the Hollywood Foreign Press Association said the organization illegally monopolized entertainment reporting in Los Angeles while creating near-impossible barriers to entry for new members. "All year long, HFFPA members enjoy all-expenses-paid trips to film festivals around the world where the studios treat them lavishly and accommodate their every desire," said the suit brought by Norwegian journalist Kjersti Flaas. "Qualified applicants for admission to the HFFPA are virtually always rejected because the majority of its 87 members are unwilling to share or dilute the enormous economic benefits they receive as members," it adds.

The HFFPA wields considerable power due to its annual Golden Globes—one of Tinseltown's biggest and glitziest award shows, which is seen as a key step to success at the all-important Oscars. Yet its membership—which exclusively decides who walks away with the coveted Globes each year—is shrouded in mystery. Though some members work for well-respected foreign media outlets, many are freelancers writing for obscure publications. The lawsuit details instances of members being wined and dined by Hollywood studios, including a Disney press trip to a Singapore five-star hotel last year.

"The studios, of course, resent having to lavish enormous sums of money on, and being required to cater to, the desires of a few dozen aging journalists who are regularly heard snoring through screenings, but given the importance of the Golden Globes, they see no way to end the farce," says the lawsuit. Flaas, the plaintiff, applied for membership in 2018 and last year, but was rejected both times.

In her lawsuit, she accuses rival Scandinavian journalists of blocking her entry even though she is qualified to join according to HFFPA criteria. Any foreign journalist seeking entry must be sponsored by two members, and a newcomer's application can be rejected if one member of the association vetoes it. The HFFPA, which has yet to be served with the complaint, denied the allegations and accused Flaas of "ongoing attempts to shake down the HFFPA." — AFP

CONGOLESE REFUGEE ARTIST SEEKS NICHE IN GREECE

Surrounded by cans of paint and canvas in his small studio in the Greek city of Thessaloniki, Richard Lusakumunu feels he has completed his "metamorphosis" from refugee to artist. "Art means integration, inclusion, breaking loneliness and living like everyone else," said Lusakumunu, who secured asylum in 2017 and is also active as a talent scout. Two years ago, the Congolesse man created "Mazi" (Greek for "together"), an art collective bringing together 11 refugee and Greek artists living in Greece's second city. The collective is supported by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, non-profit NAOMI and the French Institute in Thessaloniki.

It has already held two exhibitions at the institute and is planning a third on September 14, this time with around 30 artists. "The goal is to make them visible, to make ourselves visible, it is up to us to reach out to the world," said the 26-year-old, nicknamed "Admiral Lusaks" by members of the collective. "We do not speak the same language, it is painting that unites us," Lusakumunu, who signs his paintings as Lusaks, told AFP.

'We had to flee'

It was art that made it imperative for Lusakumunu to flee the Democratic Republic of Congo's capital, Kinshasa, in early 2017. The son of a graphics artist, Lusakumunu, a graduate of the Kinshasa

Academy of Fine Arts, held an exhibition on young people's lack of a future which was deemed critical of the regime of President Joseph Kabila. For this, and other reasons he prefers not to talk about, "we had to flee", he said. He reached the Greek island of Samos by inflatable boat after passing through Congo's Brazzaville and Turkey. Lusakumunu, who hopes to live in France someday, says there are "hidden talents" among thousands of fellow asylum seekers in Greece.

After receiving asylum and reaching Thessaloniki in 2018, he volunteered to give painting lessons in the nearest migrant camp, Diavata, to help discover other artists. One of the young men in the Mazi collective, Afghan Jaamel Khan, had never painted before, he said. "But faced with the loneliness of the camps, he began to doodle and he is a great artist," Lusakumunu explained.

Spotted by the Greek culture ministry, the Congolesse artist is "a driving force to help others integrate," France's consul-general Philippe Ray told AFP. At the Diavata camp, Lusakumunu patiently shows a group of girls and women-aged between 10 to 20 — where to put the next brush stroke on their designs.

'Art therapy'

"I try to bring out what is in them, put them at ease, and encourage them to release their problems in the painting," he said. Essentially, it is "art therapy", he added. "In the camps, you meet people



Congolesse artist and refugee Richard Lusakumunu poses for pictures in an atelier at the refugee camp of Diavata, near Thessaloniki. — AFP photos

who want a better life," he said. In January 2022, he hopes to organize an exhibition of artists from the Aegean islands. Lusakumunu is certain there is "plenty of talent" in the dimly overcrowded camps of Lesbos and Samos.

One of his paintings—which was sold—is entitled "Metamorphosis", a bright green and orange canvas of a caterpillar turning into a butterfly, which he drew shortly after arriving in Thessaloniki. Aside from painting, Lusakumunu works in hotels part-time to enable him to rent a small apartment. "In all our creations, there is one thing in common, it's a journey, we try to talk about our past," he said. — AFP



Congolesse artist and refugee Richard Lusakumunu, teaches paintings techniques to refugee students.

Sports

Photo of the day



DUBAI: Pavel Petkuns performing at Gravity Calasthenics Gym in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. —Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

W Indies T20 series in Australia called off

SYDNEY: Australia's October Twenty20 series against the West Indies was called off yesterday, as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect the international sporting calendar.

It follows the postponement of the T20 World Cup, scheduled for October-November in Australia, and this month's one-day international series against Zimbabwe. Cricket Australia said the three-match West Indies series had been intended as a warm-up to the T20 World Cup, but could no longer serve that purpose.

"In light of this development... it has been agreed to postpone the matches," CA said in a statement. The series will be take place ahead of the rescheduled T20 World Cup, on dates yet to be decided in either 2021 or 2022. Australia is currently struggling with a second wave of coronavirus infections and its international borders remain closed, with arrivals required to undergo 14-day quarantine.

Despite the logistical difficulties, Cricket Australia insists a money-spinning four-Test series against India in December-January will proceed. They have been less vocal about the fate of the first-ever Test match between Australia and Afghanistan, which is due to be held in Perth in late November. —AFP

Even the PM's a fast bowler: Pakistan cricket's need for speed

Blistering pace is essential for any team

KARACHI: To understand the culture of fast bowling in Pakistan, look no further than Imran Khan — once a feared quick, and now the country's prime minister. Not all of Pakistan's pacemen will fly so high, but Khan's rise underlines a tradition where speed is king, and blistering pace is essential for any team.

As if to reinforce the point, Pakistan have eight quicks in their 20-man squad for the three-Test series against England, starting today, ready to unleash their trademark pace and swing.

They carry the baton passed by predecessors such as Khan, left-arm great Wasim Akram and his destructive partner Waqar Younis, the unassuming Aaqib Javed, and Shoaib Akhtar, the feared "Rawalpindi Express" who is considered the fastest bowler in history.

The current generation includes the precocious Naseem Shah, still only 17, Shaheen Shah Afridi and Wahab Riaz, and the accurate Mohammad Abbas.

The production line is so consistent that when one player goes, another is ready to take over — as seen in 2010 when Mohammad Amir and Mohammad Asif, banned for spot-fixing, were replaced by Junaid Khan, Riaz, Mohammad Irfan, Ehsan Adil and Rahat Ali.

Even Amir's decision to retire from Tests at just 27 did not slow Pakistan, as Shaheen became the spearhead and Naseem announced himself with a stunning Test hat-trick.

But the steady emergence of quicks — left-armers, right-armers, even one who is ambidextrous — raises an obvious question: how does Pakistan keep doing it?

Former fast bowler Sarfaraz Nawaz, regarded as the pioneer of reverse swing in 1970s, said the factors

included Muslim Pakistan's meaty diet — unlike mainly vegetarian India, once known for its spinners.

"We are a nation obsessed with fast bowling," Nawaz told AFP. "We eat meat which strengthens the body, we love wickets clattering and the batsman shivering so it's natural that we produce fast bowlers."

'THE TWO WS'

Nawaz passed on his reverse-swing skills to Khan under whose tutelage Wasim and Waqar became "The Two Ws", a menacing partnership in the 1980s and 1990s.

Wasim said he followed Khan's legacy, and that pace bowling matches the Pakistani mentality.

"I think it's the culture (to become a fast bowler), especially this generation of Waqar and I and then Akhtar, we all had a role model in Khan," he said.

"Generally, when we talk about cricket it's mostly about the fast bowlers, they get batsmen caught napping. We are aggressive people in nature and that's what helps."

Wasim often holds camps to train emerging fast bowlers, swelling Pakistan's ranks.

"When I came I always wanted to be a fast bowler and then a crop of fast bowlers came, and now we have Naseem, Shaheen, Mohammad Hasnain and Musa Khan who bowl at 140-150 kph (87-93 mph)," he said.

However, perhaps the most decisive factor is Pakistan's legion of tape-ball players, who play in parking lots and disused patches of land using tennis balls wrapped in electrical tape to make them heavier, putting the onus on pace rather than spin.

Lahore Qalandars, a Pakistan Super League franchise which has been at the forefront of nurturing fast

bowlers in recent years, received more than 350,000 applicants for their talent-hunt programme — nearly half of them tape-ball players, including the ambidextrous pace marvel Yasir Jan.

"We give them platform in our development programme and send them to Australia to hone their talent,"



RAWALPINDI: File photo taken on February 7, 2020 shows Pakistan's Azhar Ali (2nd L) celebrating with teammates Naseem Shah (L) and Shaheen Shah Afridi (3rd L) after the dismissal of Bangladesh's Mohammad Mithun (unseen) during the first day of the first cricket Test match. —AFP

bowlers in recent years, received more than 350,000 applicants for their talent-hunt programme — nearly half of them tape-ball players, including the ambidextrous pace marvel Yasir Jan.

"We give them platform in our development programme and send them to Australia to hone their talent,"

said head coach Aaqib Javed.

According to Wasim, fast bowling is so deeply ingrained that Pakistan's stocks will never run out.

"Many natural resources will dry up, but not Pakistan bowling's reservoirs," he said. "Our fast bowling future is secure as they follow footsteps and run-ups." —AFP

England wary of slow start against Pakistan

MANCHESTER: England know another sluggish start to a Test campaign could prove costly as they go in search of a first series win over Pakistan in a decade. Today sees a three-match contest get underway with the first Test at Old Trafford.

And while England can point to recent series victories over most of their rivals, their last such success against Pakistan was back in 2010. That campaign, however, was overshadowed by a 'spot-fixing' scandal at Lord's which led to bans and jail terms for then Pakistan captain Salman Butt as well as pacemen Mohammad Asif and Mohammad Amir.

England have lost the first Test in eight of their last 10 series — including during last month's 2-1 win over the West Indies that marked international cricket's return from the coronavirus lockdown.

It is a statistic they are all well aware of, with in-form England pacemen Chris Woakes admitting: "I'd love to be able to put my finger on it and I'm sure the management and the team would as well. It's not coincidence but it's almost, it is just a coincidence that we can keep losing that first Test match."

"But we want to put that right," he added, with the eyes of the global cricket community set to turn to Manchester in the absence of any other major international fixtures outside of England amid the pandemic. Both of Pakistan's past two series in England — 2016 and 2018 — ended in draws, which should encourage the tourists this time even though they go into the first Test on the back of just a couple of intra-squad warm-up fix-

tures compared to their 'match-hardened' hosts.

'COMPLETE BOWLER'

"We've had good preparations and team bonding," said Pakistan coach Misbah-ul-Haq on Monday. "Still we feel there is always a slight nervousness when you just play Test cricket after a long, long time (away)," he added ahead of his side's first Test in six months.

Misbah accepted that how his batsmen coped with James Anderson and Stuart Broad — who now both have more than 500 Test wickets each after Broad reached the landmark against the West Indies — would go a long way to determining the outcome of the series.

But the former Pakistan captain was also excited by a pace attack that includes the youthful promise of teenage rising star Naseem Shah as well as the accurate Mohammad Abbas, and towering left-armer Shaheen Shah Afridi. Naseem has impressed Pakistan fast-bowling great turned bowling Waqar Younis and Misbah so much when they saw him in action in Lahore, the coach said they had no qualms about fast-tracking a "complete bowler" into Pakistan's side in Australia last year.

Naseem became the youngest bowler to take a Test hat-trick against Bangladesh in February and he showed a liking for English conditions with 10 wickets in the two practice matches at Derby. "He is one who could win a Test match on his own," said Misbah of Naseem.

Pakistan, however, could still deploy two spinners at Old Trafford in Yasir Shah and Shadab Khan. The West Indies failed to post a single individual century in their recent series. Pakistan will hope the likes of Abid Ali, the first man to score a hundred on both Test and one-day international debut, Shan Masood, Azhar Ali, Babar Asam and Asad Shafiq can provide the runs they need. —AFP

eSports starts wising up to health problems

SINGAPORE: Growing concern over health standards in eSports has prompted a new federation to pledge to address the problem, as players fall victim to conditions ranging from wrist injuries to obesity, stress and diabetes. The retirement of top Chinese player Jian Zihao, better known by his gaming handle "Uzi", sent tremors through the booming sport, whose revenues are predicted to reach \$1.1 billion this year, according to industry analyst firm Newzoo.

The 23-year-old, hailed as an "icon" of the League of Legends game, stepped away from eSports in June, saying "chronic stress, obesity, irregular diet, staying up late and other reasons" had given him Type 2 diabetes. He also had a hand injury. However, Uzi's case is far from isolated in a sport where professional players can perform up to 500 moves a minute, according to the American Osteopathic Association, and train for hours a day.

A report published by the association last year said eSports' "sedentary nature" meant "musculoskeletal injuries of the neck, back, and upper extremities" were likely for athletes, also flagging concerns over gaming addiction and social behaviour disorders. Alarming warnings are nothing new for eSports, which has met with a mixed welcome from the sporting establishment despite its wildfire popularity, as witnessed by the hundreds of millions who follow big tournaments online.

Attempts to join the Olympics have so far faltered, for reasons including a lack of cohesion between competing companies, the changing nature of games and basic questions over whether gaming can be considered a sport.

Chris Chan, president of the Global Esports

Federation, a new body backed by Chinese gaming giant Tencent, said credibility was a problem, with health and wellbeing one area that needs attention.

"It's about time that in eSports we looked into all this," he told AFP. Chan said the Singapore-headquartered federation, which launched in December and has a focus on "holistic health", has already set up an "education, culture and wellness" commission to guide its work. "We've got some very prominent doctors, who are sitting inside sharing with us," he said.

'PULLING IN DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS'

Coaches do sometimes think of health. Ahead of eSports' debut last year in the Southeast Asian Games, a regional multi-sport tournament, physical exercise was part of regular training for many teams. But Chan said competition between different industry bodies meant important issues, from player wellbeing to corruption, were not being fully addressed.

"We're all pulling in different directions now," he said. "Nobody's addressing the diversity... the fair play, the health." He said GEF was aiming "to be a platform for the ecosystem to bring some credibility to the sports". The body has been joined by dozens of national federations from around the world, and last month announced a collaboration with the Olympic Council of Asia to promote eSports in Asia. However, it remains unclear what impact it can have on health and other areas. eSports' governance remains a confusing patchwork and the new body has several rivals, including the South Korea-based International Esports Federation.

Remer Rietkerk, head of eSports at Newzoo, said GEF faces "significant" challenges to being regarded as the sport's main federation, not least as it only has the backing of one major game publisher, Tencent. Tencent owns Riot Games, the maker of League of Legends, backs large tournaments, and holds investments in many other game publishers, but GEF has not yet signed agreements with others. —AFP

Sports

Jacob deGrom strikes out 10 as Mets end skid with win over Braves

Cole keeps win streak alive as Yankees down Phillies

NEW YORK: New York ace Jacob deGrom picked up his first victory on Monday as the visiting Mets defeated the Atlanta Braves 7-2 to end their five-game losing streak.

DeGrom, the two-time defending Cy Young winner, worked six innings and allowed two runs on five hits and one walk. He struck out a season-high 10 batters, the 42nd time in his career he's had double-digit strikeouts. Only Nolan Ryan (46) had more through his first 173 career games than deGrom. The Braves had their five-game winning streak snapped, but lost their ace with a significant injury. Mike Soroka had to be helped off the field in the third inning with lower right leg injury that later was diagnosed as a season-ending torn Achilles tendon. Soroka was hurt while making a move to cover first base on a ground ball. He was unable to put any weight on his right leg and needed assistance to leave. Soroka (0-1) allowed four runs on three hits and four walks in 2 1/3 innings before his injury.

YANKEES 6, PHILLIES 3

DJ LeMahieu, Brett Gardner and Gio Urshela all homered and Gerrit Cole tossed six strong innings to extend his regular-season winning streak to 19 decisions as host New York beat Philadelphia. The Yankees have won seven straight and are 8-1 through nine games for only the third time in franchise history and the first time since 2003.

Cole (3-0) allowed one run — on Jay Bruce's homer leading off the third inning — on five hits and one walk while striking out four before the game was delayed for 67 minutes by rain following the sixth inning. His 19-game winning streak is the sixth longest in baseball history.

REDS 3, INDIANS 2

Joey Votto hit a go-ahead, two-run homer in the sixth inning, and Cincinnati beat visiting Cleveland for its third straight victory. Cincinnati's Nick Castellanos homered for the fifth time, and third time in two days, and Sonny Gray (3-0) allowed two runs, one earned, while striking out eight over six innings. Gray yielded four hits and two walks. The Indians looked to be in good shape behind starter

Zach Plesac (0-1), who was strong until the sixth. After Shogo Akiyama opened the frame with a single, Votto clubbed a 3-2 pitch into the right field seats to put the Reds on top.



Double-digit strikeouts

WHITE SOX 6, BREWERS 4

Jose Abreu had a two-run home run among his two hits and Yoan Moncada and Leury Garcia had three hits apiece as visiting Chicago defeated Milwaukee. Chicago extended its winning streak to a season-high five games behind 12 hits and a resilient bullpen. Six White Sox pitchers combined on seven innings of three-run relief after left-hander Carlos Rodon exited early with shoulder stiffness. Brewers center fielder Avisail Garcia had two hits and three RBIs against his former team while Christian Yelich and Ben Gamel added two hits each.

TWINS 5, PIRATES 4

Nelson Cruz delivered a game-winning double to deep center field with one out in the bottom of the ninth inning as Minnesota edged visiting Pittsburgh. Minnesota had runners on second and third when Cruz blasted a 1-1 pitch from Pirates right-hander Nick Burdi (0-1). The ball landed on the warning track and bounced against the wall as Jorge Polanco easily scored from third. Minnesota has won four straight games and seven of its past eight. Pittsburgh lost its fifth consecutive game.

CUBS 2, ROYALS 0

Alec Mills pitched a career-high seven innings as



MILWAUKEE: Nomar Mazara #30 of the Chicago White Sox files out in the sixth inning against the Milwaukee Brewers at Miller Park on August 03, 2020 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. — AFP

Chicago defeated Danny Duffy and Kansas City in an old-fashioned pitcher's duel at Wrigley Field. Mills picked up the win for the Cubs with seven scoreless innings. He allowed three hits, struck out four and walked three. He threw 63 of his 98 pitches for strikes. He retired 14 of the final 15 batters he faced. Duffy was the hard-luck loser for Kansas City. He gave up one run on three hits over six innings, with six strikeouts and four walks. He became the first Royals starter this season to complete six innings. The last team to start the season with 10 straight games without a starter going at least six innings was the 1995 Atlanta Braves, who won that year's World Series.

ROCKIES 7, GIANTS 6

Nolan Arenado and Chris Owings homered, and Colorado beat San Francisco in Denver. Jeff Hoffman (1-0) pitched 1 2/3 scoreless innings

in relief for the win, and Jairo Diaz survived a two-run ninth for his second save of the season. Alex Dickerson homered among his two hits. Mike Yastrzemski and Chadwick Tromp also went deep, and Wilmer Flores had two hits for the Giants.

Padres 5, Dodgers 4

Jake Cronenworth and Austin Hedges hit run-scoring singles against Los Angeles' bullpen in the bottom of the sixth inning to snap a 3-3 tie and lead San Diego to a win in the opener of a three-game series at Petco Park. The game was billed as a pitching duel between the Dodgers' Walker Buehler and the Padres' Chris Paddack. Buehler allowed three solo homers by Trent Grisham, Myers and Fernando Tatis Jr. — the only hits given up by the right-hander in five innings. Paddack (2-0) picked up the win, allowing three runs on five hits and no walks with five strikeouts in six innings. — Reuters

Espanyol want La Liga relegation cancelled

MADRID: Espanyol called on La Liga to cancel their relegation on Monday as the end to the season in Spain continues to prove problematic following a spike in cases of coronavirus. Despite finishing bottom of the table, Espanyol said in a statement the run-in had been "undoubtedly unfair in a sporting sense given the last stage of the league was not competed in the same, equal conditions as before the suspension".

Promotion and relegation between Spain's top

two divisions has become a thorny issue after the Segunda match between Fuenlabrada and Deportivo La Coruna on the final day could not go ahead due to several Fuenlabrada players testing positive for coronavirus.

Victory for Fuenlabrada would have earned them a place in the play-offs while Deportivo could have avoided relegation if they had won and other results gone their way. A three-person competition committee have decided the match should now be played on Wednesday but Depor's players failed to turn up for required tests early on Monday, with their place in the bottom four already now confirmed.

The delay to the play-offs has also irritated Real Zaragoza, who just missed out on the top two automatic promotion spots and will now be without their star player Luis Suarez, whose loan from Waford has ended. Referencing the problems in the second-tier, Espanyol have made a desperate plea for their

relegation to be scrapped, despite the top flight completing last month without mishap.

The Barcelona-based side claim they were unfairly disadvantaged both by empty stadiums, given their remaining fixtures against relegation rivals, and the high number of positive cases suffered by the club during the crisis. The club's statement read: "Taking into account all the conditions that have occurred since the return to competition and in light of the events that have occurred in recent days, in which various clubs have expressed their opposition to the injustice and lack of solutions, RCD Espanyol argues for the elimination of relegations this season in competitions supervised by La Liga, as has happened in all those organised by the Spanish football federation (RFEF)." The RFEF oversees Spain's third and fourth tiers and called off relegation in those divisions, with promotion decided in a compressed play-off format. — AFP

Svechnikov hat trick lifts Hurricanes

TORONTO: Andrei Svechnikov recorded the first postseason hat trick in franchise history to lead the Hurricanes to a 4-1 victory over the New York Rangers on Monday afternoon in Toronto, giving Carolina a 2-0 lead in a best-of-five Eastern Conference qualifying series. Svechnikov, a second-year left winger, scored a goal in each period. His last tally came with 5:58 remaining. Petr Mrazek made 23 saves for the Hurricanes, who will vie for a series sweep on Tuesday night. Jordan Martinook also scored, Sebastian Aho provided three assists, and Sami Vatanen set up two goals for Carolina. Hart Trophy finalist Artemi Panarin had a goal and Henrik Lundqvist made 30 saves for the Rangers.

OILERS 6, BLACKHAWKS 3

Connor McDavid's first career playoff hat trick led host Edmonton to a victory over Chicago in Game 2 of their Western Conference qualifying series. The best-of-five series is tied 1-1. After collecting a goal and two assists in Game 1, McDavid recorded another three-point performance with his first multi-goal game in the postseason. Ryan Nugent-Hopkins assisted on all three of McDavid's goals while Edmonton forward Alex Chiasson had a goal and an assist. James Neal and Tyler Ennis also scored for the Oilers. Patrick Kane and Slater Koekoek each had a goal and an assist for the Blackhawks.

PENGUINS 3, CANADIENS 1

Jason Zucker's third-period goal stood as the winner as Pittsburgh beat Montreal to even their qualifying-round series in Toronto. The teams have split the first two games of the best-of-five series. Sidney Crosby and Jake Guentzel also scored for Pittsburgh, which broke a string of seven straight postseason losses. Matt Murray made 27 saves for the Penguins after having lost for the ninth time in his past 10 postseason starts in Game 1. Jesper Koltanemi scored for Montreal, and Carey Price made 35 saves.

JETS 3, FLAMES 2

Nikolaj Ehlers scored the game-winning goal, and Adam Lowry netted one goal and an assist to



EDMONTON: James Neal #18 of the Edmonton Oilers scores a third period goal in Game Two of the Western Conference Qualification Round against the Chicago Blackhawks prior to the 2020 NHL Stanley Cup Playoffs at Rogers Place in Edmonton, Alberta. — AFP

lead injury-riddled Winnipeg to a win over Calgary Flames in Edmonton to even their Western Conference qualifying-round series at one win apiece. With the score even midway through the third period, Ehlers set up shop in the high slot and neatly deflected Neal Pionk's point shot at the 10:24 mark of the frame. His first career postseason goal came in his 23rd playoff game. It was a huge win for the Jets, who were without two of their top forwards in Mark Scheifele and Patrik Laine, as well as Mason Appleton. All were injured in the first game of the series. Goaltender Connor Hellebuyck made 28 saves in the victory.

LIGHTNING 3, CAPITALS 2 (SO)

Nikita Kucherov scored in regulation and added the winner in the shootout as Tampa Bay skated to a victory over Washington in the Eastern Conference round-robin tournament at Toronto. The reigning Hart Trophy recipient recorded the game-winning tally by sending the puck off the right post and into the net in the third round of the shootout. Brayden Point also scored in the shootout for Tampa Bay, while T.J. Oshie potted the lone

shootout goal for Washington. In regulation, Mitchell Stephens had his first career playoff goal for Washington, and teammate Andrei Vasilevskiy made 31 saves. Washington's Richard Panik and Evgeny Kuznetsov each scored late in the second period, and Braden Holtby stopped 26 shots.

GOLDEN KNIGHTS 5, STARS 3

William Carrier, Mark Stone and Nate Schmidt each scored goals over a five-minute span to highlight a four-goal third period as Vegas rallied for a victory over Dallas in a Western Conference round-robin opener in Edmonton. Carrier's first career playoff goal, with 5:03 remaining, was initially waived off for goalie interference but was overturned following a Vegas challenge. It proved to be the game-winner. William Karlsson, who along with Schmidt and Stone each added an assist, sealed the win on an empty-netter with 21 seconds to go. Joe Pavelski, Jamie Oleksiak and Corey Perry each scored goals and Miro Heiskanen had three assists to lead Dallas. Ben Bishop finished with 28 saves for the Stars. It was the first three-assist game of Heiskanen's career. — Reuters

BRIEFS

Murray to play US Open

NEW YORK: Three-time Grand Slam winner Andy Murray is among four players handed wild cards for this month's relocated Western & Southern Open, organisers said on Monday. Former Wimbledon and US Open champion Murray was given slot alongside Americans Tommy Paul, Tennyson Sandgren and Frances Tiafoe for the event, a warm-up for the Grand Slam in New York which begins on August 31. The Western & Southern Open is normally staged in Cincinnati but was moved to New York as a one-off in order to minimise COVID-19 risks for players travelling to compete at Flushing Meadows. Murray was a winner in Cincinnati in 2008 and 2011, making him one of six former winners entered in this year's tournament alongside Daniil Medvedev, Novak Djokovic, Grigor Dimitrov, Marin Cilic and Rafael Nadal.

Brentford promotion

LONDON: Brentford stand to earn some 160 million pounds (\$209.28 million) in additional revenue over three years if they defeat Fulham in Tuesday's Championship play-off final and secure a return to the Premier League, Deloitte have said. An estimated 85 million pounds of that sum would come from central broadcasting distributions and 75 million pounds from parachute payments over the 2021-22 and 2022-23 seasons if Brentford were relegated after a single campaign, it said. If they avoid immediate relegation, their additional revenue could rise to 265 million pounds over five years, Deloitte said. Fulham could earn 135 million pounds over three years if they are promoted, with the reduced amount due to the fact they are still receiving parachute payments following their relegation to the Championship in 2019. "Given the recent impact of COVID-19, it is likely that the financial impact of promotion will be better received than ever before," said Tim Bridge, director in Deloitte's Sports Business Group.

Liverpool's title win a gift

LONDON: Nearly 10 years after Fenway Sports Group took over Liverpool, owner John W. Henry said that he could not be prouder of the club after they won their first top flight league title for 30 years. Liverpool claimed the Premier League title in June with seven games to spare after the season resumed following a three-month suspension due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Under Jurgen Klopp, the Anfield club had won their sixth Champions League crown last season but Henry said getting their hands on the league title for a 19th time was the icing on the cake. "It was a long time coming," Henry told the club website <https://www.liverpoolfc.com/news/first-team/404366-john-henry-liverpool-fc-interview-premier-league-champions>. "I just want to say (to the supporters) that you've waited a long time for this ... this really feels sort of like the gift that keeps on giving." "Every day I get up, it's front and centre that we won (in) England finally.

14 Even the PM's a fast bowler:
Pakistan cricket's need for speed



15 Jacob deGrom strikes out 10 as
Mets end skid with win over Braves



15 Svechnikov hat trick
lifts Hurricanes



ORLANDO: Jordan Clarkson #00 of the Utah Jazz shoots the ball against the Los Angeles Lakers on Monday at The Arena at ESPN Wide World of Sports in Orlando, Florida. —AFP

Lakers clinch top seed with win over Jazz

ORLANDO: Anthony Davis scored 42 points and grabbed 12 rebounds Monday, and the Los Angeles Lakers clinched the No. 1 seed in the Western Conference playoffs with a 116-108 victory over the Utah Jazz at the ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex near Orlando. LeBron James contributed 22 points and nine assists, and Dwight Howard added 11 points as the Lakers improved to 2-1 in restart games, rebounding from a loss to the defending champion Toronto Raptors on Saturday. Donovan Mitchell scored 33 points, 21 of which came in the first half, and Mike Conley added 24 as the Jazz lost their second consecutive game after winning the opening game of the NBA's return in central Florida tomorrow.

PHILADELPHIA 76ERS 132 - SAN ANTONIO SPURS 130

Shake Milton hit a 3-pointer with 7.2 seconds remaining to lift Philadelphia past San Antonio. Joel

Embiid led the Sixers with 27 points and nine rebounds. Tobias Harris scored 25 points, and Josh Richardson added 19 as the 76ers improved to 40-27. Milton scored 16 points after going scoreless in a six-point loss to the Indiana Pacers on Saturday. DeMar DeRozan paced the Spurs with 30 points. Rudy Gay added 24 and Derrick White had 20. Keldon Johnson contributed a career-best 15.

DENVER NUGGETS 121 - OKLAHOMA CITY THUNDER 113 (OT)

Nikola Jokic scored eight of his 30 points in overtime to help Denver to a win over Oklahoma City. With the Nuggets down three starters due to injury — Will Barton (knee), Gary Harris (hip) and Jamal Murray (hamstring) — Michael Porter Jr. moved into the starting lineup and had a career game, leading Denver with 37 points. Shai Gilgeous-Alexander led the Thunder with 24 points, 14 in the fourth quarter.

TORONTO RAPTORS 107 - MIAMI HEAT 103

Fred VanVleet scored a career-high 36 points, leading Toronto to a win over Miami. Raptors forward Pascal Siakam had 22 points, although he was held to just seven in the second half. Toronto also got 15 points off the bench from Serge Ibaka, and Kyle Lowry finished with 14 points, eight rebounds and five assists. Miami was led by Goran Dragic's 25 points, five rebounds and five assists. The Heat also got 17 points from Kelly Olynyk and 16 points each from Jimmy Butler and Jae Crowder.

NEW ORLEANS PELICANS 109 - MEMPHIS GRIZZLIES 99

Rookie Zion Williamson scored six of his 23 points down the stretch as New Orleans held off Memphis. Brandon Ingram led the Pelicans with 24 points. JJ Redick had 16, and Josh Hart and Jrue Holiday scored 15 each. Jaren Jackson Jr. led

Memphis with 22 points, and Grayson Allen scored 17 (all in the first half). New Orleans won for the first time in the restart to tighten the battle for the final playoff spot in the Western Conference. The Grizzlies fell to 0-3 in the restart and saw their hold on eighth place continue to shrink.

INDIANA PACERS 111 - WASHINGTON WIZARDS 100

T.J. Warren recorded a game-high 34 points as Indiana scored 22 of the final 24 points in the third quarter to pull away from Washington. Malcolm Brogdon chipped in with 20 points, and a team-high six assists for the Pacers, who have won both their games since the restart of the NBA season. Thomas Bryant had 20 points to pace the Wizards, who fell to the brink of elimination from the Eastern Conference playoff chase with their third straight loss in central Florida. —Reuters

Tennis returns as service resumes at Palermo WTA

PALERMO: The stadium announcer at Palermo on Monday wished a warm and welcome return to tennis lovers as the WTA tournament in Italy started five months after the last one, with bottles of hand sanitiser attached to the nets.

The event comes just weeks before the US Open and Roland Garros double-header but lost original top seed Simona Halep to lingering

health concerns while an unnamed player withdrew from qualifying after testing positive for COVID-19. There were some 350 fans allowed into a venue that normally holds 1,500.

Sofia Kenin and Elina Svitolina captured titles on March 8, the last day of competitive matches before the circuit was put on hold as the tennis calendar was shaken upside down.

The prestigious Indian Wells event in the California desert became the first competition axed due to the pandemic. The French Open was then moved to late September with Wimbledon cancelled for the first time since World War II.

When Croatia's Donna Vekic and the Netherlands' Arantxa Rus took to the clay-court late on Monday some 150 days after the sport's

hiatus started they were not wearing face masks.

After Vekic won there was a video press-conference where she told media she was happy to have remembered how to play tennis.

"It's weird, sometimes funny with all the protocols, masks on your face, visors and screens in the transport," she said. "Of course it's necessary, but so different from before — it seems unreal," she said. The line judges and umpire were masked and the players had to stand behind a social distancing line to approach them. The stands in Sicily are cleared and disinfected after each match.

Players in the second meeting were told politely to wear their masks during the rest periods and to sanitise their hands from the dispensing bottles attached to the net poles.

There were hand gel bottles placed everywhere in the passages between the seats and in the entrances. Hand shaking or hugging after the matches is forbidden with players tapping rackets over the net from a safe distance.

Top seed Petra Martic, who faces Alison van Uytvanck on Tuesday, said it was an honour to be back. "It's been so long since I was at a tournament, so long since I played, so long since I got this adrenaline rush from playing. It's a privilege being back on court," she said.

The men must wait until the Western and Southern Open — moved from its traditional Cincinnati home to New York — begins on August 22, after the tournament in Washington DC was called off. —AFP