

3 Kuwaiti global oil sales score achievements despite virus



5 Pakistani PM Khan slams India on Kashmir 'versary



8 Not cashing in: Virus hits Iraq's Iran-US money trade



16 Spain and Real Madrid legend Casillas retires



Utter devastation as toll from Beirut monster blast tops 100

Deputy Amir sends medical supplies • Kuwait reaffirms solidarity with Lebanon



BEIRUT: A destroyed silo is seen yesterday amid the rubble and debris following Tuesday's blast at the port of Lebanon's capital. — AFP (See Page 6)

BEIRUT: Rescuers searched for survivors in Beirut yesterday after a cataclysmic explosion at the port sowed devastation across entire neighborhoods, killing more than 100 people, wounding thousands and plunging Lebanon deeper into crisis. The blast, which appeared to have been caused by a fire igniting 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate left unsecured in a warehouse, was felt as far away as Cyprus, some 240

km to the northwest. The scale of the destruction was such that the Lebanese capital resembled the scene of an earthquake, with thousands of people left homeless and thousands more cramming into overwhelmed hospitals for treatment. Officials did not say what caused the blaze that set off the blast. A security source and media said it was started by welding work being car-

ried out on a hole in the warehouse. The blast has left 300,000 people homeless and caused damage across half of the city estimated to cost more than \$3 billion, Beirut Governor Marwan Aboud told AFP yesterday. HH the Deputy Amir of Kuwait and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Tuesday sent a cable of condolences to Lebanese President Michel Aoun, in which he expressed condo-

lences over the victims of the blast, reiterating Kuwait's sympathies with Lebanon and praying to Almighty Allah that He bestows His mercy on the victims and for the speedy recovery of the injured. HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent a similar cable to Aoun. HH the Deputy Amir also instructed the dispatch of urgent

Continued on Page 2



KUWAIT: Finance Minister Barrak Al-Sheetan is seen during his grilling at the National Assembly on Tuesday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

No-confidence motion filed against Sheetan

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Ten lawmakers on Tuesday filed a no-confidence motion against Finance Minister Barrak Al-Sheetan for allegedly proposing to raise charges on public services as part of a government austerity program in the face of low oil prices. MP Riyadh Al-Adasani grilled the minister for the second time in a few weeks over almost the same issues, but this time accused the minister of attempting to overburden citizens with additional charges.

Continued on Page 2

Kuwait, India reach tentative deal on flights

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has reached a tentative service agreement for flights between Kuwait and India. Kuwait Times has viewed and verified a letter of acceptance for temporary service agreements

between the two countries that would allow flights to resume from August until October with a capacity of 500 seats per day for Kuwaiti airlines. The letter is dated July 30, 2020. Kuwait Times earlier reported that the two countries had agreed to the establishment of a 'transport bubble' that would allow the resumption of flights. However, a final agreement and implementation of the plan has not yet been reached. According to the proposal, the specific seat capacities per day for the national carriers of Kuwait starting from August 10, 2020 until October 24, 2020 will be 300 seats for Kuwait Airways Corporation (KAC) and 200 seats for Jazeera Airways. According to Yousef Al-Fouzan, Director General

of DGCA, Kuwait is still waiting to receive the approval from India for this plan. "We are also waiting for the Indian civil aviation to provide the seat capacities per day for the Indian carriers that will operate to/from Kuwait International Airport," he told Kuwait Times. Commercial flights resumed at Kuwait International Airport (departures and arrivals) on Aug 1, with a total operational capacity of 30 percent and a maximum number of passengers at 10,000 (both arrivals and departures). According to the government's reopening plan, this is phase 1 for commercial flights and should last until Jan 31, 2020, at which point the airport will enter phase 2 with a 50 percent capacity of operations.

Modi enjoys twin triumphs for nationalists

AYODHYA, India: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi took center stage yesterday at a ceremony laying the foundations for a temple at a flashpoint holy site exactly a year after imposing direct rule on Muslim-majority Kashmir - twin triumphs for his Hindu nationalist government. The site at Ayodhya, and divided Kashmir, have been two of the most divisive communal issues of the past 30 years in India, and Modi has attempted to

draw a line under both. For his fans, both steps confirm Modi - elected to a second-straight term in a landslide last year - as a decisive, visionary and heroic leader, and India's most important in decades. His critics see him as remodeling the officially secular country of 1.3 billion as a Hindu nation at the expense of India's 200 million Muslims, and taking it an authoritarian direction.

Continued on Page 2



NEW DELHI: People watch a live telecast on screen from Ayodhya of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi taking part in a Hindu religious ritual during a ground-breaking ceremony of the Ram Temple yesterday. — AFP

Local

Kuwait Deputy Amir receives call from Prince Turki on Amir’s health

Sheikh Nawaf receives cables from Cuba, Venezuela, Guinea Bissau presidents

KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Tuesday received a phone call from Prince Turki bin Mohammad bin Fahad Al-Saud, the Saudi Minister of State and Cabinet Member. Prince Turki inquired about the health of His Highness the

Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, wishing him everlasting health and wellbeing. In his reply, His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince expressed heartfelt gratitude to Prince Turki for the gracious sentiments, wishing him lifelong health and welfare.

Meanwhile, His Highness Sheikh Nawaf received a cable from President of Cuba Miguel Diaz-Canel, in which he inquired about the health of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, wishing him long-lasting health and well-being. In return, His Highness the Deputy Amir and

Crown Prince sent a cable to the Cuban President, expressing gratitude for the sincere gesture and wished him good health and welfare. His Highness Sheikh Nawaf exchanged similar cables with Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and Guinea Bissau President Umaro Sissoco Embaló. — KUNA

Coronavirus in Kuwait: What we know so far

KUWAIT: Kuwait has recorded 69,425 cases infected with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) as of yesterday, in addition to 468 deaths. With the exception of 128 cases in intensive care, all infected cases are in stable condition and are recovering in quarantined locations designated by the government for this purpose, while tens of thousands have been discharged from quarantine after exhibiting no symptoms during their 14-day quarantine period, the Ministry of Health confirmed. Meanwhile, 60,906 people have recovered completely after previously being infected with the virus, while there are 8,051 people receiving treatment.

Curfew

Kuwait moved to the third phase of a five-phase plan for a gradual return to normal life on June 28, 2020. The curfew is set from 9:00 pm to 3:00 am, government and private offices are able to operate with up to 50 percent capacity, mosques are allowed to host Friday prayers with strict social distancing and health precautions observed, malls can operate from 10:00 am to 8:00 pm, taxis are allowed to resume operations but they are allowed to carry only one passenger, while resorts, hotels and furnished apartment businesses are allowed to reopen. The first phase included a total lockdown on Farwaniya, Khaitan, and Hawally, joining Mahboula and Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh which were put under lockdown earlier. The lockdown ended in Hawally and Khaitan on June 21, 2020, in Mahboula and Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh on July 9, 2020, and in Farwaniya on July 26, 2020.

Commercial flights

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

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

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

Meanwhile, arriving passengers must register to the ‘Shlonik’ app before boarding, and obtain an accredited PCR certificate showing negative COVID-19 test results valid for 96 hours from the test’s date. Passengers will have their temperatures checked before boarding the plane and upon arrival, while a random PCR test will be conducted for 10 percent of passengers on each flight. All arriving passengers must home quarantine for 14 days upon arrival. Kuwait had earlier sent special flights to repatriate Kuwaitis back home from countries affected with the virus’ spread. Meanwhile, the Cabinet announced on April 9 the operation of all airline flights for expats who are wishing to return back to their countries. Kuwait suspended issuing entry permits and visas unless those issued through diplomatic missions.

School year ended

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

schools. Earlier, the Ministry of Education had suspended classes at all public and private schools (for both students and teaching staffs); first from March 1 to March 12, and later extended it until March 29, before eventually suspending schools until August for grade 12 and October for other stages.

Hotlines

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

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

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

Medicine delivery

Kuwait’s Ministry of Health (MOH) launched a new medicine delivery service for people in Kuwait, which they can use to order medications to be delivered during curfew hours. The medications will be delivered within 72 hours after the order is submitted. To place an order, patients should send a WhatsApp to the numbers for the hospitals and medical centers as listed below. The patient should include their name, Civil ID number, hospital or clinic file number, mobile phone number and the medicine needed to the following numbers:

- Amiri Hospital: 50880699
- Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital: 50880755
- Farwaniya Hospital: 50880852
- Adan Hospital: 50880908
- Jahra Hospital: 50881066
- Sabah Hospital: 97632660
- Jaber Hospital: 96992079
- Ibn Sina Hospital: 99613948
- Chest Hospital: 99258749
- Razi Hospital: 97633487
- Kuwait Cancer Control Center: 96735242

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

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

Mental health assistance

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

- Dr Rashed Al-Sahh: on Monday and Wednesday 10:00 am - 1:00 pm. Call 9797-6168.
 - Dr Fahad Al-Tasha: daily from 8:00 pm - 12:00 am. Call 9904-8258.
 - Dr Othman Al-Asfour: daily 5:00 pm - 8:00 pm. Call 9938-5350.
 - Dr Mohammed Al-Khalidi (head of this team): daily 9:00 am - 12:00 pm. Call 9903-6470.
 - Dr Ahmad Al-Khalidi: daily 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm. Call 9910-7965.
 - Dr Muneera Al-Qattan: Monday and Wednesday 9:00 am - 1:00 pm. Call 9953-3108.
 - Dr Zainab Al-Saffar: Sunday and Thursday 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm. Call 9954-9908.
 - Dr Sameera Al-Kandari: Tuesday 9:00 pm - 12:00 am. Call 6770-9434.
 - Dr Kawthar Al-Yaqout: Monday and Wednesday 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm. Call 5521-0088.
- For information and other concerns, call 9401-4283.

No-confidence...

Continued from Page 1

The minister denied the charges and insisted these were merely draft proposals initiated by the entire government that would not be implemented in full or part without the prior approval of the National Assembly. But MPs Rakan Al-Nasef, Omar Al-Tabtabaei, Mubarak Al-Hajraf, Ahmad Al-Fadhl, Safa Al-Hashem and Khalil Al-Saleh, in addition to Khaled Al-Shatti, Salah Khorshed, Saleh Ashour and Adasani himself filed the no-confidence motion against the minister.

Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said voting on the motion will take place on Aug 12. Those vying to oust the minister need at least 25 MPs to vote the minister out of office. A second grilling against Interior Minister Anas Al-Saleh by MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri was postponed for two weeks at the request of the minister, who insisted it will be held in public.

Utter devastation as toll from...

Continued from Page 1

medical supplies to Lebanon, Amiri Diwan Minister Sheikh Ali Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah said.

Kuwait’s foreign ministry said in a statement that Kuwait reaffirms complete solidarity with Lebanon. “The State of Kuwait is following with great sorrow and pain the huge explosion that took place today afternoon in the Lebanese capital, Beirut, killing and injuring tens of people and causing severe material damage,” the ministry statement said on Tuesday. Kuwait, it affirmed, fully supports Lebanon in the face of this “painful incident” in order to “overcome its ramifications”. Kuwait, it added, stands by the “Lebanese brothers to preserve their security and stability”.

Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah expressed condolences to his Lebanese counterpart Hamad Hassan on the deadly Beirut port blast in a phone call Tuesday. During the call, Sheikh Basel stated that based on the directives of HHI the Deputy

Modi enjoys twin triumphs for...

Continued from Page 1

“Modi has certainly been India’s most transformative leader in recent memory,” Mlicheal Kugelman, from the Wilson Center, told AFP, making him “wildly popular, but also highly controversial and quite divisive”.

The holy city of Ayodhya in northern India has long been a religious tinderbox, providing the spark for some of its worst sectarian violence. In 1992, a Hindu mob destroyed a centuries-old mosque there that they believed had been built on the birthplace of Ram, an important deity. This triggered religious riots that killed 2,000 people, most of them Muslims.

A lengthy legal battle ensued, but in November -

Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf, and based on Kuwait’ solidarity with the brothers in Lebanon, Kuwait would provide urgent medical assistance to confront the effects of the huge explosion and overcome its repercussions.

The minister called on his counterpart in Lebanon to provide Kuwait with a list of medicines and urgent medical needs. The Lebanese minister thanked brothers in Kuwait for this generous initiative, wishing a speedy recovery for HHI the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem also expressed condolences to his Lebanese counterpart Nabih Berri on Tuesday. Ghanem, in a cable to Berri, reaffirmed solidarity of the Kuwaiti people with the Lebanese people in these “difficult” circumstances. He prayed for Allah to have mercy on the dead and wished speedy recovery of the injured.

“We’ve had some dark days in Lebanon over the years but this is something else,” said Rami Rifai, a 38-year-old engineer, speaking to AFP from a hospital where his two daughters were receiving treatment after sustaining cuts despite being half a kilometer from the site of the blast. “We already had the economic crisis, a government of thieves and coronavirus. I didn’t think it could get worse but now I don’t know if this country can get up again. Everyone

in a major victory for Modi’s BJP party - India’s top court awarded the site to Hindus, allowing a temple “touching the sky” to be built. Yesterday’s elaborate religious ceremony was shown live on television and was reportedly set to be beamed in Times Square in New York. Small celebrations also took place across India.

A masked Modi, 69, shared the stage with the head of the RSS, the militaristic hardline Hindu group that is parent to the BJP and which Modi joined as a young man. “Not only mankind, but the entire universe, all the birds and animals, are enthralled by this golden moment,” chanted the main priest. “(Modi) is going to make his position permanently in history purely on the strength of this temple,” his biographer Nilanjan Mukhopadhyay told AFP.

Further cementing Modi’s place in his country’s annals is Kashmir, divided between India and Pakistan since 1947 and the spark for two wars and the source of much bloodshed. The BJP had long seen the special status enjoyed by the part of Kashmir controlled by India as a historical wrong, and on August 5 last year,

is going to try to leave. I will try to leave,” he said, his voice choked by tears.

In the areas closest to the port, the amount of destruction caused by the long years of civil war between 1975 and 1990 was achieved in a second by a blast that leveled buildings within a radius of several hundred meters. One resident of Mar Mikhael, one of the most affected neighborhoods, said she saw bodies strewn in the middle of the street, apparently thrown off balconies and rooftops by the blast. Many people were watching and filming with their phones after an earlier and smaller explosion was heard in the port and ignited a fire.

‘The Apocalypse’

The resulting footage, which was widely shared on social media, shows a wall of fire and smoke rising above Beirut and a white shockwave engulfing everything around it. The mushroom-shaped explosion - which seismologists said was logged as the equivalent of a 3.3 magnitude quake - and the scope of the damage drew nuclear analogies in many people’s accounts of the tragedy. “The Apocalypse” read the headline of L’Orient-Le Jour, the main French-language daily in Lebanon, a country that has seen its share of explosions in its recent past, but none quite this big.

Modi abolished it. An accompanying security operation turned the region into a fortress for weeks, with all telecommunications cut and thousands taken into custody.

Even now, India has “maintained stifling restraints on Kashmiris in violation of their basic rights”, according to Human Rights Watch. People from outside Kashmir are now being granted the right to buy land for the first time. This has ignited fears that Modi wants to change Kashmir’s demographic makeup with an Israel-style “settler” project.

Fearing protests ahead of the anniversary, on Tuesday thousands of Indian troops imposed a tight curfew in Kashmir. The streets were all but deserted the following morning. In Pakistan-administered Kashmir, Prime Minister Imran Khan - who on Tuesday released a new map showing all of Kashmir as part of Pakistan - was due to lead a protest march. “We will never accept, and neither will the Kashmiris, the illegal Indian actions and oppression of the Kashmiri people,” said Khan in a statement released yesterday. — AFP

The embattled government of Prime Minister Hassan Diab described the circumstances at the port that led to the explosion as “unacceptable” and vowed to investigate. “Those responsible for this catastrophe will pay the price,” he said. Messages of support poured in from around the world for Lebanon, whose economy was already on its knees after defaulting on sovereign debt earlier this year.

A crippling devaluation has sent poverty levels soaring to an estimated 50 percent of the population and for a country so heavily reliant on imports, the obliteration of the main port signaled more hardship ahead. Criticism of the government was already rife on social media, where Lebanese users argued that a disaster of such magnitude could only strike in a state whose institutions are crippled by incompetence and corruption.

Late Tuesday, thousands of families drove out of Beirut to take their families to safety, but many others were left stranded without a roof, unable to go anywhere or unwilling to leave their gutted homes open to looters. The rescue effort was slowed at night by the lack of electricity, which was already intermittent at best in much of the city before the explosion. The security forces sealed off a huge area around the blast site, turning away residents trying to reach their homes to assess the damage. — Agencies

Local

KPC official: Kuwaiti global oil sales score achievements despite pandemic

Fifteen sales contracts renewed through virtual meetings

KUWAIT: Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) has been able to overcome a number of challenges posed by the coronavirus pandemic in order to ensure the uninterrupted continuity of its business thanks to digital platforms, Deputy Managing Director for International Marketing Jamal Al-Loughani said. All of the state oil firms' departments have been operating remotely, including marketing and sales, finances and human resources, while ensuring the quality of services and technical support provided to customers. Adjustments required by employees to adapt to the newly-introduced work system have also been completed, the company's senior employee said in an exclusive interview.

Internal communication has been facilitated by VPN and virtual programs, such as Citrix XenApp and XenDesktop, for their ease of use and compatibility with most modern devices and their importance in fortifying networks and employee information from eavesdropping and hacking attempts. Meanwhile, oil sector officials and employees have resorted to audiovisual meetings for their daily communication to follow up on work progress. This has helped in strengthening the spirit of cooperation between employees and enabling them to adapt to the new nature of their work surroundings until the time they return to their offices, he explained.

Int'l meetings

Communication between the global marketing and finance departments for export shipment information and purchase orders and the issuing of

invoices to customers have also been conducted online, immediately and without delay. Company representatives have been able to actively participate with the Kuwaiti oil minister and the OPEC governor at more than 10 OPEC remotely-held meetings. One of the most important meetings of



Oil pricing reviewed with mega companies

the global oil-producing cartel, on April 10, led to the historic agreement to reduce global oil production. Contractual meetings held remotely have culminated in the renewal of approximately 15 sales contracts for crude, derivatives, fuel, naphtha, liquefied gas, petrol and other products and the preparation of around 30 procurement contracts, including the discussion of terms and conditions. The international marketing sector managed to determine the pricing of Kuwaiti crude and various petroleum products, such as naphtha, sulfur, petroleum coke, diesel and jet fuel, and is set to initiate contracts with some 12 companies for the trade and



Jamal Al-Loughani

products, 21 pricing orders for shipments of fuel oil, sulfur and petroleum coal. Elaborating, he said that 23 addresses had been issued for collecting the corporation revenues - without any delay. Loughani also noted continuing cooperation with the customs authority to facilitate exports and imports of the oil and derivatives. Various other issues during the ongoing coronavirus crisis had been addressed namely closing the financial year 2019-2020 regarding global marketing and drafting the projected budget for the financial year 2021-2022 for global markets. These tasks would not have been accomplished without efforts of the enthusiastic young Kuwait personnel who worked round the clock for securing sales, exports of the Kuwaiti crude, petroleum products for sake of boosting the KPC role and ensuring financial inflows for the

purchase of products with the renewal of contracts for others.

By-products

With respect of pricing orders for petroleum by-products, Loughani said there had been 282 of such orders for naphtha, fuel, liquefied gas, 208 pricing orders for shipments of the crude oil and 138 others for shipments of medium by-products, 21 pricing orders for shipments of fuel oil, sulfur and petroleum coal. Elaborating, he said that 23 addresses had been issued for collecting the corporation revenues - without any delay. Loughani also noted continuing cooperation with the customs authority to facilitate exports and imports of the oil and derivatives. Various other issues during the ongoing coronavirus crisis had been addressed namely closing the financial year 2019-2020 regarding global marketing and drafting the projected budget for the financial year 2021-2022 for global markets. These tasks would not have been accomplished without efforts of the enthusiastic young Kuwait personnel who worked round the clock for securing sales, exports of the Kuwaiti crude, petroleum products for sake of boosting the KPC role and ensuring financial inflows for the

state. He lauded unlimited support from the corporation higher management that tackled all hurdles and enabled the staff work from long distance.

Adapting to change

The KPC had grappled to adapt itself to the changing work methods in the shadow of the coronavirus, Loughani said, noting that the management had immediately instructed the personnel to evacuate offices and pursue work via the internet from their houses. The personnel have pursued the tasks using state-of-the-art digital technology; provided by the KPC IT department. The KPC marketing sector "faced no challenges" while shifting to online work, he said, affirming that it keenly secured communications with clients as well as with the KPC offices abroad without interruption.

In the shadow of the falling oil prices and changes in supply and demand in the international markets, staff of the international market sector had continued performing their tasks in full, while doubling their efforts to meet needs of the clients in the shadow of the drastic fluctuations that happened in the oil and gas markets, Loughani continued. The sector's department of marketing research had engaged in dialogue with mega companies for oil pricing seeking to review the prices when the barrel of oil dropped to 37 dollars in April. Such efforts by the KPC ended with success and prompted these companies to examine recommendations for amending the oil pricing mechanism in the future. — KUNA

Kuwait E-Sports Club meets, appoints new board members

KUWAIT: The Board of Directors of the Kuwait E-Sports Club appointed key leadership positions in its first meeting held recently. Abdullah Al-Ali was selected as Chairman, Khalid Al-Hathran as Vice-Chairman, Faisal Abul as Board Secretary, Nada Al-Gharabally as Treasurer, Abdullah Al-Manie as Assistant Board Secretary, Nasser Al-Hassawi as Assistant Treasurer and Abdullah Mandani as a Board member.

During its meeting, the Board approved its official logo and assigned the Chairman to become the official spokesperson of the club. After the meeting, Ali wished for the speedy recovery of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, praying to Allah Almighty to return him to Kuwait in good health and wellness.

Ali expressed his pride in being the first chairman and spokesperson of the Kuwait E-Sports Club, which is the first of its kind in Kuwait. It was established as a specialized club for electronic sports by decision number 12 for 2020 by the Board of Directors of the Public Authority for Sport.

Ali stated that the growing importance of elec-

tronic media, internet applications and social media has impacted the daily lifestyle of various members of society. "As electronic games become a common pastime for many youngsters and kids, many international corporations started exploiting the elements of adventure, challenge, enthusiasm and curiosity in these games to promote values and ideas that are foreign to and contradict with the culture, customs and traditions of the Kuwaiti society. This was done either for financial gains or to impose alien values on our society," he said.

The club will focus on creating the right environment to allow its members to utilize their spare time in practicing e-sports as well as social, cultural and recreational activities. This is obviously one of its main objectives and a driver for its establishment. Besides that, another fundamental principle for establishing the club is community service. The Kuwait E-Sports Club aims to become a safe and effective gateway for protecting society against the hazards of online gaming. This should give more confidence and comfort to parents when their kids and family members use online gaming applications through the club.

The Kuwait E-Sports Club aims to become a platform for others to benchmark against in terms of organizing and coordinating various e-sports activities such as tournaments, competitions, training programs, and camps both in Kuwait and beyond.

The club's spokesperson emphasized that all of this is in line with the general policy of the state and its plan to focus on youth and sports. This is also in accordance with the club's articles of association and the rules and regulations that govern its activi-



KUWAIT: Members of the Board of Directors of the Kuwait E-Sports Club.

ties as it is considered a sports association for electronic sports. Ali further noted that many neighboring Arab and regional countries have already established specialized entities for electronic sports. This might be due to the false belief that electronic games are for entertainment purposes only.

E-sports are now considered physical, mental and psychological activities and there is a growing global trend to formally recognize them as a form of sports. Thus, the Public Authority for Sport has taken a timely step to establish, for the first time ever, the Kuwait E-Sports Club as a specializing sports club that is considered a national sports association.

The Chairman thanked and acknowledged the honorable work of the Public Authority for Sport and namely its Director General and his deputy

for their knowledge and understanding of the importance of establishing a specialized club for electronic sports. They were both instrumental in securing a decision by the Board of Directors of the Public Authority for Sport, headed by Minister for Youth Affairs Mohammad Al-Jabri to authorize the establishment of the Kuwait E-Sports Club and publishing its articles of association in the official gazette.

He also stated that the honor of representing Kuwait in the various fields and activities of electronic sports locally and internationally is a heavy responsibility that propels the club to seek achievements that are deserved by the State of Kuwait and its citizens. The club announced that it receives inquiries on info@kuwait-esports.com.

News in brief

COVID-19 cases up in July

KUWAIT: COVID-19 infections increased among Kuwaitis by 39 percent in July compared to June, while it dropped by 23 percent among expatriates within the same period, Al-Qabas reported yesterday quoting a research prepared by Kuwaiti researcher Mohammad Al-Awadhi. Total infections have increased by eight percent in July, the study says. Meanwhile, the study points out some positive indications recorded last month, including the drop in mortalities and cases under treatment, combined with an increase in swab tests.

Money laundering probe

KUWAIT: Well-informed sources told Al-Rai that the list of new reports submitted to the public prosecution by the financial investigations unit last week concerning suspicions of the involvement of 10 account holders in money laundering which include a female social media celebrity and a female artist. The sources added that the list also includes popular personalities of various nationalities including Canadians, Egyptians and others, as well as companies, including some involved in human trafficking. "These files need to be scrutinized to complete investigations that are likely to commence by the end of this week or the beginning of the next," the sources added, justifying the delay to the time needed to provide the data the public prosecution requests from relevant bodies. "Once all data is provided, suspects will be summoned for interrogation," the sources stressed.

Oil price up

KUWAIT: The price of Kuwaiti oil went up by 36 cents to \$44.10 per barrel Tuesday after it was at \$43.74 pb Monday, said the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) yesterday. Globally, the price of the Brent crude went up by 28 cents to \$44.43 per barrel, the same case with the West Texas Intermediate, which rose by 69 cents to \$41.70 pb.

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Cairo professor convicted
for forging Kuwaiti
student's certificate

KUWAIT: Cairo's supreme court ordered the dismissal of an assistant professor at the law college of University of Alexandria for manipulating the grades of a Kuwaiti student and changing his results from 'failed' to 'passed', Al-Rai daily reported yesterday. The professor confessed that he managed to revise the answers the third-year Kuwaiti student wrote in five subjects, including one in which he got zero out of 20. He changed some answers, the grading and the total marks of each test paper to help him succeed.

In other crime-related news, an Arab man was arrested in Jabriya for driving under the effect of drugs, losing control and damaging three parked vehicles, said security sources. Case papers indicate that responding to a report about a collision involving four vehicles, a police patrol rushed to the scene to find the suspect was under the influence and possessed drugs he claimed were for his personal use. A case was filed and the suspect was referred to relevant authorities. Meanwhile, Ahmadi detectives arrested an expat in violation of partial curfew hours, said security sources, noting that the suspect was under the effect of drugs and had drugs with him. Case papers indicate that a police patrol stopped the suspect's car during partial curfew hours and found he was acting strangely. On searching him, detectives found the drugs. A case was filed and the suspect was referred to relevant authorities.

Separately, a Kuwaiti was arrested for assaulting a compatriot while under the effect of drugs, said security sources, noting that the suspect said the assault was over personal disagreements. The suspect also had drugs and a knife he confessed he was planning to use to assault his rival. A case was filed and the suspect was detained pending taking legal actions against him. In another case, Capital detectives arrested two Asian women for trading in unlicensed sexual stimulants, medical pills and creams, said security sources. Case papers indicate that a patrol spotted the two vendors at a shopping mall, and on searching them, found the illegal merchandise. A case was filed and the suspects were detained pending further legal action.

—Translated by Kuwait Times from Al-Rai

Zain reopens all-new branches
at Airport and Al-Hamra

Company implements strict measures to protect customers and staff

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced the all-new reopening of its main branches at Kuwait International Airport and Al-Hamra Shopping Center. The reopened branches leap beyond the traditional branch concept by offering a large collection of the latest electronics and smart devices from the world's biggest brands, while implementing strict health precautionary measures to protect the safety of both customers and staff.

The reopening of Zain's latest two branches came after the great success witnessed by the Mishref Cooperative Society branch, which was reopened in a similar fashion last year, and was considered the first of its kind by a telecom operator in Kuwait. Zain was keen on implementing the same direction within its main branch at Kuwait International Airport as it is the first and last destination for travelers, in addition to coinciding with the upcoming return of commercial flights in August. The same changes were also implemented within Zain's branch at Al-Hamra Shopping Center as it is one of the country's biggest and most luxurious commercial destinations.

Zain's reopened branches feature the latest special and exclusive offers for prepaid and postpaid customers, while also offering the best customer care services. The branches also offer tech enthusiasts with a wide range of the latest electronics and original accessories from the world's biggest tech brands, including laptops, video game consoles, drones, headphones and speakers, cases and covers, and much more.

The new branches also offers customers a chance to try Zain's superfast 5G network and learn about the huge capabilities behind this revolutionary new technology. Additionally, the branches feature a dedicated section for Zain LIFE's innovative home security solutions, including smart cameras, motion sensors, smart smoke detectors, and more.

A number of Zain's newly reopened branches feature the Zain Smart Branch, which is considered the first digital self-service touchscreen of its kind launched by a telecom company in Kuwait. The Smart Branch offers Zain's customers with new service options and a wide range of self-service transactions, and

works automatically via advanced technology without the need to communicate with branch staff.

Zain affirmed its utmost adherence in implementing strict health precautionary measures within all reopened branches to protect the health and safety of both customers and staff. This includes health measures such as sanitization and body temperature check-ups, as well as social distancing protocols and others.

Zain's plan for reopening its branches included many strict precautionary measures that started with full sanitization of all branches, furniture, and devices/equipment before opening them. Thermal cameras were installed to detect body temperatures from a safe distance of one meter without the need for physical contact, which achieves social distancing goals and commitment in official instructions. See-through dividers were also installed to separate customers and staff in a safe manner during transactions, while enabling sound to pass efficiently in order to achieve the best customer experience possible.

Zain has also supplied all branches and self-service machines with awareness stickers and banners to remind customers of health guidelines and social distancing goals while waiting. Some seats were marked unavailable inside the branch to guarantee a safe space between customers while seated.

Zain has trained branch staff on all new health guidelines and precautions, including wearing face masks at all times, not allowing anyone to enter the branch in case they do not follow the needed precautionary measures or show an unaverage body temperature reading. Branches are also periodically sanitized as per the highest health standards before opening, and K-NET pay machines, pens used for signatures, and other equipment will be sanitized after each transaction. Any important/official papers will be stored in a safe place and not kept exposed.

Zain has also reopened a number of additional branches with the same above concept to ensure offering the best customer experience in a bigger number of locations. Reopened branches include Mishref Cooperative Society, Saad Al-Abdullah Cooperative Society,



Pictures showing Zain's reopened branches.

Al Salam Cooperative Society, Mubarak Al Abdullah Cooperative Society, Al-Jabriya branch, and Aswaq Al-Qurain branch.

Zain always aspires to new levels of excellence in all services it offers to its customers. Through the reopening of these new branches, Zain affirms its continuous efforts in meeting its cus-

tomers' needs and aspirations, and delivers its promise to offering the best services and latest technologies. The company constantly looks at ways to improve the retail experience for its customers, including providing them with the latest solutions to better serve their needs through the biggest network of branches in Kuwait.

AUB continues
partnership with
charity society

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank (AUB) announced its continued partnership with Al-Manabr Al-Quraniya Society through launching the second step of the bank's sponsorship of 'Kairokoum' the simplified interpretation application for the hearing-impaired by developing 'Juz Al-Ahqaf' of the Holy Quran.

This step comes after the remarkable success achieved by 'Juz Amma' application sponsored by AUB as a first step of 'Kairokoum' application, being the first of its kind application that includes the Holy Quran with interpretation of its verses in emoji sign language.

On this occasion, Sahar Dashti, General Manager Customer Protection and the Head of AUB Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Team said: "Our sponsorship of 'Kairokoum' simplified interpretation application for the hearing-impaired in 'Juz Al-Ahqaf' comes to compliment the community partnership between Al-Manabr Al-Quraniya Society and AUB, which is based on our belief in the importance of caring for the people with hearing challenges and integrating them with the community. Previously, AUB launched the sponsorship of the comprehensive Holy Quran application for the deaf 'Juz Amma' in its first stage, to be the first application of its kind to serve this special segment at local and global levels. This all due to AUB recognizing the importance of empowering and supporting this special segment, and helping them overcome challenges and learn the Holy Quran."

Dashti added: "Our CSR program is aligned with

the New Kuwait 2035 Vision of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the bank's vision to utilize modern technology and digital transformation aimed at achieving a wider spread and provide better services."

Dashti noted that AUB has taken upon itself to provide all means of support to the people with hearing challenges as there are more 5,000 in Kuwait only, as well as sponsor various activities and events that integrate them within the society, adding that this sponsorship will be followed by similar steps in the future.

Meanwhile, Dr Ahmad Al-Batini, Chairman of Al-Manabr Al-Quraniya Society, expressed gratitude to AUB for sponsoring 'Kairokoum' application 'Juz 26, Al-Ahqaf,' adding that supporting 'Kairokoum' application simplified interpretation for the hearing-challenged, 'Juz Al-Ahqaf' is a new fruit of the community partnership between Al-Manabr Al-Quraniya Society and AUB. He explained that the application is an important contribution as part of CSR while being a free application for spreading the Holy Quran to the world, while providing a brief simplified interpretation of the verses of the Holy Quran.

In addition, it includes simplified scientific material that illustrates fundamentals of Islamic, such as faith, religious duties ... etc. Such things serve all Muslims and non-Muslims in general and the deaf in specific due to being quite simplified in terms of presenting the content and using the sign language in explaining the meaning of verses, which help learn and reflect on the Holy Quran, recalling its guidance and make it a lifestyle. Batini extended his sincere gratitude to AUB and other supporters for their sponsorship of this blessed application, noting that so far the Society managed to interpret Surah Al-Fatihah, Juz Amma, Juz Tabarak, Juz Al-Dhariyat and Juz Al-Ahqaf.



KUWAIT: Sahar Dashti (left) and Dr Ahmad Al-Batini.

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Apocalyptic scenes as blasts ravage Beirut



This combination of pictures shows a fireball exploding while smoke is billowing at the port of the Lebanese capital Beirut. Two huge explosions rocked the Lebanese capital Beirut, killing over 100 and wounding dozens of people. —AFP

BEIRUT: An entire port engulfed in fire, ships ablaze at sea and crumbling buildings; the site of the massive blast in Beirut's harbor area resembled a post-nuclear landscape. Soldiers cordoned off the area, littered with glass and debris from the explosion which officials said was the result of fire catching in a warehouse where hundreds of tons of ammonium nitrate were stored.

A woman in her twenties stood screaming at security forces, asking about the fate of her brother, a port employee. "His name is Jad, his eyes are green," she pleaded, to no avail as security forces would not let her enter. Nearby another woman almost fainted while also asking about her brother who worked at the port.

Ambulance sirens rang throughout the area as vehicles ferried the dead out for at least three hours and fire trucks rushed in and out of the blast zone. Inside the port itself, the hangars looked like charred

cans, everything destroyed beyond recognition as fire-fighting helicopters flow overhead, dumping water. Abandoned luggage was strewn across the area. Next to one untouched bag lay an unattended corpse. Every parked vehicle within a radius of several hundred meters sustained damage from blast, so big that it was felt in Cyprus, 240 kilometers away.

'Corpses everywhere'

The cars closest to the site of the explosion were reduced to scrapyard metal, their wailing alarms and flashing lights adding to the chaos. Exhausted firemen were rushing to the scene, some searching for colleagues sent in earlier to put out the initial fire that was raging before the bigger explosion shook the city. With the help of the security forces, civil defense teams scoured the area for corpses, as officers

screamed at reporters who were trying to document the disaster. "What are you taking pictures of? There are corpses everywhere," said one of them. The confirmed death toll stood at 73 at 2:00 am but with more than 3,000 wounded and hospitals struggling to cope, a much higher final count seemed inevitable. Members of the security forces broke down in tears when one of their colleagues was brought to them dead on a stretcher. A fellow police officer pulled out a picture of the deceased with his fiancée, as his comrades wept.

'Don't know what to do'

A ship anchored off the port was ablaze from the mushroom of fire, causing panic among the authorities fearing the fuel onboard would trigger another tragedy. Sitting on a sidewalk near the site of the blast, at least 10 crew members of two cargo ships damaged

in the explosion were waiting to be treated by medics. "The ship is sinking in the water, the explosion caused an opening in it, and there are serious injuries on board," said an Egyptian member of the crew of one of the ships, Mero Star. "We heard firecrackers and we saw smoke coming out of a warehouse ... and after a few minutes the explosion happened," said another crew member, who asked not be named.

Syrian and Egyptian crew had arrived at the port on Tuesday on board a ship carrying cargo from Ukraine, and many were planning to head back home on Tuesday. "From the day we set sail six months ago, we had been looking forward to this day of homecoming," said one Syrian seafarer. Another Egyptian crew member said he was planning to go back home on Wednesday after months at sea. "But I will not be able to," he told AFP. "I don't know what to do." —AFP



BEIRUT: An aerial view shows the massive damage done to Beirut port's grain silos (center) and the area around it a day after a mega-blast tore through the harbor in the heart of the Lebanese capital with the force of an earthquake, killing more than 100 people and injuring over 4,000. —AFP photos



BEIRUT: A wounded boy lies on the ground amid debris as smoke billows in the background at the scene of a massive explosion that hit the port of Beirut in the heart of the Lebanese capital on August 4, 2020.

World offers support and condolences to Lebanon after devastating blasts

BEIRUT: Close allies and traditional adversaries of Lebanon paid tribute on Tuesday to the victims of massive, deadly twin blasts in Beirut, as condolences and offers of help poured in. Lebanon's Prime Minister Hassan Diab called on "friendly countries" to support a country already reeling from its worst economic crisis in decades and the coronavirus pandemic.

UN chief Antonio Guterres expressed his "deepest condolences ... following the horrific explosions in Beirut" which he said had also injured some United Nations personnel. US President Donald Trump said "it looks like a terrible attack" and that US generals had told him that the powerful explosions appeared to have been caused by a "bomb of some kind", without offering evidence. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo tweeted that "we are monitoring and stand ready to assist the people of Lebanon as they recover from this horrible tragedy".

In the region, Gulf nations were among the first to react, with Qatar promising to send field hospitals to

support the medical response. Qatar's ruler Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani wished "a speedy recovery for the injured," while the United Arab Emirates' Vice President and ruler of Dubai, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, tweeted "our condolences to our beloved people in Lebanon." Kuwait said it would also send emergency medical aid.

Egypt expressed "deep concern" at the destruction, and Arab League chief Ahmed Aboulgheit offered condolences, stressing "the importance of finding the truth about the explosions". And unusually, neighboring Israel offered humanitarian aid to a country with which it is still technically at war. "Defense Minister Benny Gantz and Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi, on behalf of the State of Israel, have offered the Lebanese government via international intermediaries-medical and humanitarian aid, as well as immediate emergency assistance," a statement read.

'Stay strong, Lebanon'

Jordan's Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi said Amman was ready to provide any help Lebanon needed, while Iran said it was "fully prepared to render assistance in any way necessary".

"Our thoughts and prayers are with the great and resilient people of Lebanon," Iranian Foreign

Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif tweeted. Stay strong, Lebanon."

Syria's President Bashar Al-Assad wrote to Lebanese President Michel Aoun that "on behalf of the Syrian Arab people, we extend our sincere condolences to you and the Lebanese people". Outside the region, President Vladimir Putin said that "Russia shares the grief of the Lebanese people," according to a Kremlin statement. "I ask you to convey words of sympathy and support to the families and friends of the victims, as well as wishes for a speedy recovery to all affected." French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said the country was "ready to provide assistance according to the needs expressed by the Lebanese authorities".

Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson called the pictures and videos from Beirut "shocking". "All of my thoughts and prayers are with those caught up in this terrible incident," he wrote on Twitter. "The UK is ready to provide support in any way we can, including to those British nationals affected." Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau wrote on social media to say "we think of all those who were injured in this tragic explosion, as well as those who are trying to find a friend or family member or who have lost a loved one. We're ready to help you." —AFP

Lebanon, small country mired in tragedies

BEIRUT: Lebanon, a small multi-confessional country which endured a devastating 15-year civil war, has often been caught in the crossfire of regional conflicts. The tragic explosions at Beirut port on Tuesday struck with the country mired in its worst economic crisis for decades, marked by the collapse of its currency and angry popular protests. Lebanon has had more than 5,000 cases of coronavirus, with 65 dead.

Between Israel and Syria

The civil war raged between 1975 and 1990, with Lebanon under Syrian domination for two decades until its troops withdrew in 2005. Lebanese political institutions have long been paralysed by discord between pro- and anti-Syrian camps. In 2013, the powerful Shiite movement Hezbollah announced it was fighting alongside the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, further dividing the Lebanese political scene.

Iran-backed Hezbollah is the sworn enemy of Israel, against which it fought a month-long war in 2006. The Syria conflict has sporadically spilled over into Lebanon, with several attacks rocking the capital Beirut and other regions. The most visible impact of the Syrian war in Lebanon, a country of around 4.5 million people, has been the influx of an estimated 1.5 million refugees. Lebanon and international organizations have on several occasions sounded the alarm over the economic and social burden posed by the massive influx.

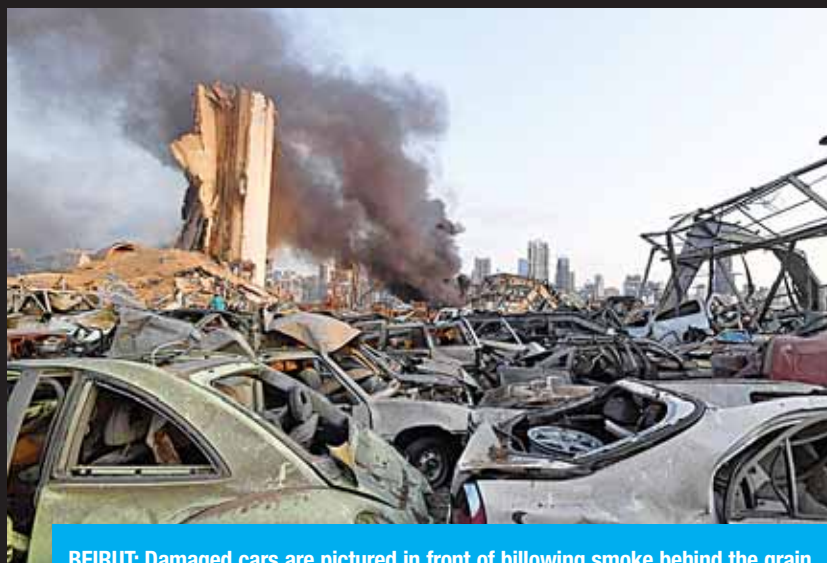
Multi-confessional

The country with the cedar tree stamped on its flag is one of the Middle East's smallest, covering an area of about 10,000 square kilometers. Flanked to the west by the Mediterranean, it shares borders with Syria and Israel. Lebanon is considered relatively liberal in a generally conservative region, but religion remains all-important. A crucible for 18 religious communities, its governance has been dictated by a power-sharing deal between the main sects. Lebanon is a parliamentary republic, with a 128-member house evenly split between Muslims and Christians. In line with the "national pact" dating from independence from France in 1943, the president must be a Maronite Christian, the prime minister a Sunni Muslim and the parliament speaker a Shiite Muslim.

Colossal debt

For the first time in its history, Lebanon announced in March it was defaulting on its debts. According to ratings agency Standard and Poor's (S&P), it is sagging under a debt of \$92 billion, equal to nearly 170 percent of its gross domestic product, one of the highest debt ratios in the world. In May, Lebanon launched negotiations with the International Monetary Fund aimed at securing crucial aid, under a plan to rescue the economy adopted by the government. Talks have since stalled. Since October 2019, Lebanon has been rocked by mass protests against what is seen as a corrupt and incompetent political system.

The country lags in development in areas such as water supply, electricity production and waste treatment. A welcome lifeline for Lebanon came in 2018, when aid pledges worth more than \$11 billion were made at a Paris conference. But the pledged money has been blocked due to a lack of promised reforms. Nearly half of Lebanon's population now lives below the poverty line and 35 percent are out of work, according to official statistics. —AFP



BEIRUT: Damaged cars are pictured in front of billowing smoke behind the grain silos at the port of Beirut following a massive explosion that hit the heart of the Lebanese capital.



BEIRUT: Wounded men are evacuated following an explosion at the port of the Lebanese capital Beirut, on August 4, 2020.

International

Are they any use? With Europe's black-box apps - it's hard to tell

Smartphone apps seek to break chain of COVID-19 infection

DUBLIN: Europe's experiment in using technology to fight coronavirus has achieved some early successes: millions of people have downloaded smartphone tracker apps and hundreds have uploaded the results of positive COVID-19 tests. Yet most European countries so far lack solid evidence that their apps - which identify close contacts via Bluetooth connections with nearby users - are actually alerting people who may have caught the disease before they can infect others.

The reason? Design choices made by governments and their app developers to protect people's privacy. In many of the 11 European territories using architecture designed by Alphabet's Google and Apple, apps have been made to be 'blind' to warnings of potential exposure to COVID-19 flowing through the system.

In Switzerland, for example, the Federal Office of Public Health acknowledged that "the effectiveness of the SwissCovid App is difficult to measure because of the 'privacy by design'". The weakness puzzles some who have championed the apps. They point out that the Apple-Google framework does allow for some data collection while at the same time making it impossible for governments to stalk their own citizens.

"I find it quite strange that many of the systems are designed not to be able to monitor and evaluate," said Michael Veale, a lecturer at University College

London. Ireland, which uses the same standard, is showing the benefits of being a bit less privacy-obsessed. Its Covid Tracker app, which has been downloaded by 30% of the population, tallies how many people upload a positive test result and how many get notifications.

"We're seeing the whole end-to-end flow and success from that perspective," said Colme Harte, technical director at NearForm, the software development firm that created the Irish app. A total of 58 users registered positive tests in the app's first three weeks of operation through to July 28, generating 137 close contact alerts. Of these, 129 opted to get a follow-up call from Ireland's contact tracing team.

Building trust

While the numbers are small, partly reflecting Ireland's low levels of infection with the flu-like illness, publishing them helps to show that people can make a contribution to fighting the pandemic by downloading the app. "It helps build trust that it is worth actually installing the app," Harte told Reuters. The Irish app has inspired spinoffs in Northern Ireland and Gibraltar, while Scotland has picked NearForm to develop its own app.

Elsewhere in Europe the data is much sketchier. "It is impossible to say how many people have received risk notifications," the Robert Koch Institute, Germany's federal agency for disease control, said in an-

outer. But in 1949, idols of Lord Ram appeared inside the mosque, allegedly placed by Hindus.

Who was behind its destruction?

In 1984, a group of Hindus formed a committee to "liberate" the birthplace of Ram and build a temple at the disputed site. The movement was headed by L. K. Advani, a senior figure in the ruling BJP, now headed by Modi. Its supporters began travelling to the site to demand a temple be built.

When did tensions escalate?

On December 6, 1992 a huge Hindu crowd converged on the mosque site to symbolically and provocatively lay the first stone of the new temple. The 200,000-strong mob broke through police cordons, first smashing three domes to rubble before reducing the rest of the historic mosque to ruins. The destruction triggered some of the worst religious riots since India's bloody partition in 1947. Ten years later a trainload of Hindu activists were burned alive as they returned from Ayodhya, sparking retaliatory riots in Gujarat state that left upwards of 1,000 people dead, again most of them Muslims.

Where does it stand legally?

In November India's highest court finally settled a decades-long, arcane legal fight that even saw the infant Ram represented by a lawyer. The ruling awarded the site to Hindus, in a major victory for Modi and the BJP. The Muslim side were given a nearby location to construct a "prominent" new mosque.

Indian police shamed by rare murder probe into custodial deaths

CHENNAI: It took a while for Indians to learn how a father and son died in hospital with blood pouring from their rectum, days after police in small southern town locked them up for violating a nationwide coronavirus lockdown. Fanned by media reports, outrage spread throughout India over what happened between June 19 and June 23 in Sathankulam, a town on the sub-continent's southern tip, 2,785 km from the capital New Delhi.

A month earlier, many Indians noted how commonplace police brutality was in their own country when they saw the furious global reaction to images of George Floyd, a Black American man, dying as a Milwaukee policeman knelt on his neck. Yet, despite nearly 800 custodial deaths in India in the latest eight years covered by official data, no police officers were convicted in any of the cases.

Charges have yet to be laid in Sathankulam, and it is uncertain whether investigations into the deaths of J. Jayaraj, 59, and his son, 31-year-old Bennicks Immanuel will lead to prosecutions, but five officers have been named as murder suspects. Jayaraj, the owner of a mobile phone shop, was detained on June 19 after exchanging words with officers who accused him of breaking lockdown rules. That night, accompanied by friends, including two lawyers, Immanuel went to the police station looking for his father.

When he remonstrated with officers over why his father had been beaten, he was locked up too, his friends told Reuters. Both men, allegedly, were brutally beaten while in custody, taken to hospital, and then transferred to jail. "When they sat on a chair in the hospital and in a car when they were taken to the magistrate, they left blood trails. That's how much they were bleeding," said S. Rajaram, one of lawyers. Other witnesses asked for their names to be withheld, fearing police retribution.

Immanuel, described as fit and healthy by his family, died on June 22. His father died on June 23. They were buried together a day later. Jayaraj's eldest daughter recounted what male relatives and friends had told her and photographs had shown. "You should see the bedsheet they were sitting on while being transported to the jail. It was full of blood. And this was hours after they were brought



VANTAA, Finland: Medical personnel wait for passengers at the corona virus testing point of the Helsinki-Vantaa airport in Vantaa, Finland. Finland has now 7,466 confirmed cases with the COVID-19, with 329 fatalities. — AFP

to a Reuters inquiry. This is because checking for alerts is handled on individual devices, an approach called decentralisation. Germany's Corona Warn App has been downloaded more than 16 million times, though uptake has slowed since it emerged that some smartphones were sending the app to sleep to save battery. The problem was soon fixed but prompted critical media coverage.

So far 1,052 people who have tested positive have been issued with one-time codes to upload into the system, according to weekly figures from the Robert Koch Institute. But there is no way of knowing if they actually did so. Switzerland is publishing daily updates on downloads, active users and uploads of positive test results - now running at a rate of just over 10 a day. —Reuters

Ayodhya - India's flashpoint holy site

AYODHYA: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi will help lay the foundations yesterday for a "grand" new Hindu temple at a flashpoint holy site that has been the spark for some of India's worst sectarian violence. AFP looks at the history of the three-acre patch of land in the holy northern town of Ayodhya and why it has long been an explosive source of contention between India's majority Hindus and minority Muslims.

Why is it disputed?

Hindus and Muslims have for decades been bitterly divided over the 16th-century Babri mosque in Ayodhya. Hindus believe the mosque was built on the ruins of an ancient temple dedicated to their god Ram, who is also believed to have been born on or near the site. Tensions boiled over in 1992 when a Hindu mob tore the mosque to the ground, sparking religious violence that left about 2,000 dead across India.

How long has it been a flashpoint?

Hindus believe a Muslim conqueror razed the Ram temple in the 1500s to make way for the mosque. The British erected a fence in the 19th century to separate places of worship so that Muslims could worship in the inner court and Hindus the

COVID-19 and Beyond: UN Secretary-General's education policy brief

KUWAIT: The COVID-19 pandemic has created the largest disruption of education systems in history, affecting nearly 1.6 billion learners in all countries and all continents. (1) The pandemic has exacerbated education disparities. Learning losses due to prolonged school closures threaten to erase progress made in recent decades, not least for girls and young women. (2) Some 23.8 million additional children and youth (from pre-primary to tertiary) could drop out or not have access to school next year due to the pandemic's economic impact alone. (3) Education is a fundamental human right. It is the bedrock of just, equal and inclusive societies and a main driver of sustainable development. To prevent a pre-existing learning crisis from turning into a learning catastrophe, governments and the international community must step up. (4) Once national or local outbreaks of the virus are under control, governments must look to reopen schools safely, listening to the voices of key stakeholders and coordinating with relevant actors, including the health community. (5) The gap in education financing globally could increase by 30% because of the crisis. Governments need to protect education financing in national budgets, in international development assistance and through greater cooperation on debt. (6) To cope better with future crises, governments should strengthen the resilience of education systems by placing a strong focus on equity and inclusion; and on reinforce capacities for risk management. Failure to do so poses major risks to international peace and stability. (7) The transformation of education systems has been stimulated and reinforced in many countries during the pandemic: innovative solutions for learning and teaching continuity have flourished. (8) Responses have also highlighted major divides, beginning with the digital one. It is time to reimagine education and accelerate positive change, and ensure that education systems are more flexible, equitable, and inclusive. (9) To spur global momentum around the education emergency and the need to protect and re-imagine education in a post-COVID-19 world, a coalition of global organizations is also joining forces to launch the 'SaveOurFuture' campaign. This campaign will amplify the voices of children and young people and urge governments worldwide to recognize investment in education as critical to COVID-19 recovery.

UNICEF, UNESCO, WFP, World Bank, Save the Children, Education Cannot Wait, Global Partnership for Education, Education Outcomes Fund, Education Commission, Asian Development Bank, African Development Bank.



AMRITSAR: Workers of Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha, the youth wing of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), burn crackers as they celebrate the groundbreaking ceremony of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, at the Ram Tirath Temple in Amritsar yesterday. —AFP

What will the temple look like?

To shouts of "Hail Lord Ram", Modi said in parliament in February that the new temple would be "grand". His right-hand man, Home Minister Amit Shah, said it would "touch the sky". Yesterday's ceremony, held at a time recommended by astrologers and involving 135 "revered saints", will use soil from almost 2,000 holy sites around India and water of about 100 holy rivers. Silver bricks will be used in the foundations. — AFP

News in brief

US tests ballistic missile

WASHINGTON: The United States on Tuesday successfully tested an unarmed Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) in a launch directed from an airborne command center, the Air Force said. The missile was launched at 12:21 am from Vandenberg Air Force Base in California, travelling 6,700 kilometers over the Pacific Ocean before landing in the sea near the Marshall Islands. "The test demonstrates that the United States' nuclear deterrent is safe, secure, reliable and effective," the Air Force said in a statement. "Airmen... were aboard the US Navy E-6 aircraft to demonstrate the reliability and effectiveness" of the airborne launch control system, it said. — AFP

Iran executes convicted man

TEHRAN: Iran yesterday executed a man convicted of killing a member of the Revolutionary Guards during deadly protests in 2017-18, the judiciary's news website reported. "Mostafa Salehi, who had murdered martyr Guard Sajad Shahsanayi with a bullet during the riots of (December 2017-January 2018), was executed this morning upon the request of the victim's family," Mizan Online said. The report said Salehi had shot at security forces using a "hunting rifle", killing Shahsanayi and wounding six others. — AFP

Australia records deadliest day

MELBOURNE: Australia's worst-hit state of Victoria reported 15 coronavirus deaths yesterday, including a man in his 30s, making it the country's deadliest day of the pandemic to date. An outbreak in Melbourne, Australia's second-biggest city and the capital of Victoria, has seen hundreds of new cases recorded daily in recent weeks, including 725 yesterday. The epidemic surge continued even though Melbourne has been under a stay-at-home lockdown for nearly a month. Victoria Premier Daniel Andrews told a press conference that the latest fatalities included one man in his 30s and 12 other deaths linked to care homes for the elderly. — AFP

Cancer diagnoses rates fell

WASHINGTON: The number of cancers diagnosed weekly in the United States fell by almost fifty percent during March and April compared to the recent average, a study said Tuesday, the latest to examine the impacts of COVID-19 lockdowns. Emergency room visits additionally appear to have dropped for heart attacks, strokes and even appendicitis-trends that are being confirmed through ongoing studies. Child vaccinations have also stalled globally, according to the UN, and world health bodies are alarmed by the impact on the fight against HIV, malaria and tuberculosis as screening campaigns, logistics and access to health care have been disrupted. — AFP

Suspension of Nile dam talks

CAIRO: Egypt on Tuesday called for a suspension of meetings with Ethiopia on Addis Ababa's massive dam construction project on the Nile. Sudan threatened to withdraw from the talks saying Ethiopia insisted on linking them to renegotiating a deal on sharing the waters of the Blue Nile. Sudan's water and irrigation minister, Yasser Abbas, said he received a letter from his Ethiopian counterpart who proposed "the deal under discussion be limited to filling up the dam and any deal concerning its management be linked to the question of sharing Blue Nile waters". —AFP

Business

THURSDAY, AUGUST 6, 2020

Iraq's Iran-US money trade in tatters

Not cashing in: Lockdown curbs inflict economic woes in both countries

SULAMANIYAH, Iraq: In Iraq's Kurdistan region and at the country's Muslim Shiite holy sites, trading US dollars for rials from Iran was once big business. But the money exchange trade has been hard hit by lockdown restrictions to stop the spread of COVID-19, and by deep economic woes in both countries.

Traders in Sulaimaniyah, the second city of Iraqi Kurdistan and close to the border with Iran, have seen dramatic changes. In March, before restrictions to stem the pandemic which has killed more than 5,000 Iraqis and infected more than 130,000 others, one dollar traded for 150,000 Iranian rials.



Traders see fortunes tumble

Today, one dollar fetches 250,000 rials, money changer Amanaj Saleh told AFP.

Tehran and Washington may be at loggerheads—close to open war in Iraq at the beginning of the year—but Iraqis have no problem keeping a mix of the rival banknotes in their wallets.

Betting on a rebound in the Iranian currency—and hoping the coronavirus crisis would pass quickly—many Iraqis rushed to snap up rials on the cheap. The dollar-rial trade seemed like a welcome alternative income during the financial turmoil, which has destroyed countless livelihoods. A survey by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) aid organization has found 87 percent of people questioned said they could no longer work because of the disease.

Big losses

Iraq is going through its worst economic crisis in its recent history, hit by a slump in oil prices that account for almost all public revenues. Government austerity cuts are expected to be severe.

“Since the appearance of coronavirus and the economic crisis it has caused, people who can no longer work are investing in Iranian currency to make their capital work,” said Saleh. But the trader, a man with a small grey moustache sitting under a huge framed reproduction \$100 bill, warned that not all had found profit in the gamble.

“Those who had bought Iranian rials at the exchange rate of 200,000 rials for one dollar, now resell them at the lower rate: 250,000 rials for a dollar,” he said. Many Iraqis use American dollars and their own dinars interchangeably, with the rates stable between the two currencies.

It is the big swings between dollars and Iran's rial that attract those hopeful of winning on the difference. American sanctions have long stifled the Iranian economy, and the closure of official border crossings between Iran and Iraq has added to the woes.

Hazar Rahim, a laborer in Sulaimaniyah, found this out the hard way. “A few days ago, I bought five billion Iranian rials,” he told AFP. “I was betting on the market but I was taken by surprise. In a few hours, the rial dropped, and I'd lost 13,000 dollars.”

Religious tourism frozen

Two of the most holy sites for Shiites, Karbala and Najaf, are both in southern Iraq. Millions of Shiite pilgrims, the majority from Iran, visit every year. They bring Iranian rials to spend and trade. In past years, the visitors brought in up to five billion dollars—crucial in a country where almost all tourism is to religious sites. It also provided hundreds of thousands of jobs and accounted for around 2.5 percent of GDP,



SULAMANIYAH: An Iraqi man walks past a money exchange office in Sulaimaniyah city in the Kurdish autonomous region of northern Iraq, on Tuesday. — AFP

according to official figures. But with travel restrictions in place because of the virus, the shops and restaurants once busy with visitors are closed. Iranian arrivals had already slowed amid deep economic woes at home since the United States in 2018 withdrew from the Iranian nuclear agreement and reinstated punishing sanctions. Coronavirus in Iran—the worst in the region with more than 17,000 deaths and 310,000 infections—has only worsened the situation of the country.

The crisis has reduced Iran's exports, causing devaluation and inflation.

According to the International Monetary Fund, Iran's GDP is expected to shrink six percent in 2020, after contracting 7.6 percent last year. In Iraq, meanwhile, tougher times loom as well. The economy is expected to contract almost 10 percent this year. But with few apparent alternatives, dozens of Iraqis keep coming to the money traders in the hope that times will change, the rial will rise, and they can cash in. — AFP



SHENZHEN: This file photo taken on March 10, 1999 shows Microsoft then-chief executive Bill Gates (center) walking among heavy security inside a hotel lobby during a visit to Shenzhen. — AFP

Microsoft could be ‘white knight’ for TikTok or fall flat

WASHINGTON: A deal allowing Microsoft to buy social media phenomenon TikTok could be transformative for the US tech giant's efforts to become more consumer-focused — if it can overcome the business and political risks. Microsoft appeared to be in position to acquire the Chinese-owned app which is under national security review, after President Donald Trump said he would approve such a tie-up if completed by mid-September.

Buying TikTok could make Microsoft a hipper, more youth-focused company after years of shifting to enterprise services and cloud computing, say analysts.

Microsoft has had limited success in social media, although it did acquire the business-focused network LinkedIn. Debra Aho Williamson, an eMarketer analyst, said Microsoft has long had ambitions for consumer networks and even sought to acquire Facebook at an early stage.

“Getting TikTok would give it another chance to get in on a fast-growing, youth-oriented social media property and be a way to try to get back at Facebook for spurning its advances,” she said in a research note. Williamson said TikTok could help Microsoft boost its position in digital advertising while noting that “it's just potential at this point. TikTok is very early in the development of its ad business, and there's no guarantee that it will attract a large share of ad dollars.”

‘Aggressive bet’

Daniel Ives at Wedbush Securities said TikTok could be a golden opportunity for Microsoft, with the current value appearing to be around \$40 billion but which “could reach a valuation in the \$200 billion area code given the steep user and engagement trajectory of TikTok.” Ives said in a research note that Microsoft “would be making an aggressive bet to transform its consumer strategy with a major social media bet.”

Analyst Jack Gold of J. Gold Associates said he was skeptical of a Microsoft-TikTok marriage that would put the US firm in unfamiliar territory. “Microsoft frankly has never been all that good at running a consumer-focused social network, they've tried it before,” Gold said.

Gold said the monetization outlook for TikTok is still murky and that Microsoft has had difficulties in the digital ad sector. “Most of the (TikTok) users are kids—what does Microsoft want with that group?” Gold said. “I don't understand the synergies.”

It is possible that “Microsoft is doing the government a favor by pickup up TikTok,” according to Gold, who added that “it's also a defense move against Google or Facebook acquiring TikTok.” The talks on splitting TikTok from its Chinese parent ByteDance come amid rising US-China tensions and increasing fears voiced by US officials and lawmakers that the social platform could be used for espionage, despite repeated denials by the company of any links to the Beijing government.

The moves also come with Washington stepping up scrutiny of Big Tech firms for dominating key sectors of the economy, raising the prospect of potential breakups or spinoffs of some of the major companies.—AFP

Virgin Australia closes budget offshoot, fires 3,000 staff

SYDNEY: Pandemic-struck airline Virgin Australia announced yesterday it would close budget subsidiary Tigerair Australia and lay off 3,000 staff as it prepares to relaunch under new owners.

The carrier is attempting to revive its fortunes following its decision to go into voluntary administration in April shortly after Australia closed its international borders and domestic travel plunged.

Virgin Australia said in an announcement to the Australian Securities Exchange yesterday that it would axe its budget Tigerair Australia brand and 3,000 jobs while retaining 6,000 staff. It would also continue the suspension of long-haul international

flights and retire part of its fleet, with the country's borders likely to remain restricted into 2021. “Demand for domestic and short-haul international travel is likely to take at least three years to return to pre-COVID-10 levels, with the real chance it could be longer,” Virgin Australia CEO Paul Scurrah said in the statement.

“As a business we must make changes to ensure the Virgin Australia Group is successful in this new world,” he added. US private equity giant Bain Capital was successful in its takeover bid for Virgin Australia in late June. The deal is subject to regulatory approval and is due to be completed

Virus may shrink global imbalances further in 2020

WASHINGTON: The International Monetary Fund said on Tuesday that global current account imbalances narrowed in 2019 as trade slowed, and the coronavirus could narrow them further in 2020, but some commodity exporters and tourism-dependent countries will swing to current account deficits. The IMF's External Sector Report on currencies and imbalances for the world's 30 largest economies showed that net current account balances fell by 0.2 percentage point to 2.9 percent of global GDP. The Fund projected a further narrowing by 0.3 percent of global GDP in 2020, partly due to massive fiscal and monetary stimulus by many countries and continued pressure on trade.

“Major commodity exporters should see their current accounts going from significant surpluses to significant deficits,” IMF chief economist Gita Gopinath said in a webcast presentation of the report. The IMF projected that Saudi Arabia, which had a 5.9 percent current account surplus in 2019, will see a deficit of 4.9 percent in 2018 due to the collapse of oil prices and demand.

Tourism-dependent Thailand and Malaysia will see their surpluses shrink dramatically in 2020, the report showed. The fund said the US dollar's current account position in 2019, a deficit of 2.3 percent of GDP, was moderately weaker than warranted by economic fundamentals and would likely narrow to 2.0 percent in 2020. But it estimated that the dollar's real effective exchange rate was overvalued by around 11 percent in 2019.

China's current account surplus of 1.0 percent in 2019, projected to grow to 1.3 percent in 2020, was broadly in line with economic fundamentals, the IMF said in the report. It estimated that China's yuan was undervalued by around 2 percent in 2019, largely due to trade tensions with the United States, but said the assessment was “subject to especially high uncertainty.”

China's real effective exchange rate had appreciated by 1.8 percent from the 2019 average through May 2020, the report showed. — Reuters

Banks snared by HK sanctions laws as US-China spat spirals

HONG KONG: International banks in Hong Kong are caught in the crossfire of competing laws enacted by the United States and China as the superpowers clash over the city's future, with analysts warning businesses are being forced to pick a side. Lawyers working for the lenders have been busy. Their clients have grown increasingly alarmed by two pieces of legislation that came into effect last month that could radically alter how they do business in the semi-autonomous city.

The first is a bipartisan US bill sanctioning Chinese and Hong Kong officials responsible for the current crackdown on political freedoms in the city. The second is a sweeping security law Beijing imposed on the finance hub that includes a ban on businesses complying with foreign sanctions.

That has left banks scratching their heads—how can they follow one law without breaching the other?

“We are very worried,” one banker with a major organization told AFP, asking to remain anonymous to speak freely. The biggest concern was Beijing's track record of punishing businesses deemed to step out of line, with the security law giving it powerful new ammunition.

“Most people in Hong Kong, especially in the banking industry, do worry that the... national security law is very vague and it can easily be interpreted to whatever agenda the government has,” he added.

Steve Tsang, director of the China Institute at London's SOAS university, said businesses were only beginning to digest the predicament they face. “It is a real issue and it applies not only to foreign banks but to all banks, companies, and international NGOs in Hong Kong,” he said.

“If they are deemed to have violated the national security law they are vulnerable to prosecution by the Chinese authorities.”

Beijing's security law targets secession, subversion, terrorism and colluding with foreign forces. The law has chilled political freedoms in Hong Kong, which was promised certain liberties and autonomy until 2047 under Britain's handover deal with China. The legislation bypassed Hong Kong's legislature, its wording kept secret until the moment it became law. —AFP



HONG KONG: A man walks past an HSBC advert outside a branch of the bank in Hong Kong. International banks in Hong Kong are caught in the crossfire of competing laws enacted by the United States and China. — AFP

Business

China pursues self-reliance as external economic risks grow

Leaders propose a dual 'circulation model' of growth

BEIJING: China is looking to reduce its reliance on overseas markets and technology for its economic development, government advisers say, as US hostility and a global pandemic increase external risks that could hamper longer-term progress.

The country's leaders have proposed a so-called "dual circulation" model of growth to steer the economy, the sources said, which would prioritize "internal circulation" to boost domestic demand and be supplemented by "external circulation". No details have been given on the strategy.

Policy insiders and government advisers said the emphasis signals a strategic shift to local demand and technological development although domestic supply chains would be built partly with the help of foreign investment. "The Chinese leadership raised the 'internal circulation' concept as the situation has become grim, although complete (reliance on) 'internal circulation' is unlikely," said a policy insider, declining to be named due to the sensitivity of the matter. China had already been trying to rebalance its economy towards consumption-led growth from exports and investment. Last year, total exports and imports accounted for 32 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), down from a peak of 64 percent in 2006, according to government data.

"We will rely more on domestic demand as foreign trade will decline, and the United States is imposing a tech blockade," said a second policy insider. The "dual circulation" strategy could become a key priority in the government's 14th five-year plan (2021-2025), which is expected to be dis-

cussed and endorsed by top leaders at a key Communist Party conclave in October, policy sources said. The plan is likely to be unveiled during the annual parliament session in early 2021, they said. The current five-year-plan, which ends this year, focuses on moving away from traditional and polluting industries, boosting technological innovation, and building a moderately prosperous society.

Decoupling risks

While a complete decoupling between the world's two largest economies is unlikely, the recalibration would deepen an inward-focused shift that followed the 2008-09 global financial crisis, which exposed the vulnerability of its export-led model. Chinese firms have started to feel the pinch from US curbs on trade and technology as the Trump administration confronts Beijing over a range of issues from its handling of the new coronavirus pandemic to the new security law in Hong Kong.

Higher US tariffs have hurt Chinese exports, with shipments to the United States falling 11.1 percent in the first half of 2020 from a year earlier, while Washington has targeted Chinese tech giants such as Huawei and now the popular video app TikTok owned by ByteDance.

"It's impossible to completely decouple, but the near-term impact from a partial decoupling is unavoidable," said Xu Hongcai, deputy director of economic policy commission at China Association of Policy Science. Chinese leaders have pledged to open the economy wider to foreign investors, especially in high-end manufacturing, to expand its

francs pegged at 1,600 francs to the dollar. "A five-kilo (11-pound) bag of sugar that used to cost 7,000 francs sells today for 10,000 francs. A sack of rice has gone up from 28,000 to 38,000 francs. Life has become intolerable," said Richard Balimwacha, a student out shopping.

Angry oil companies

And it's not just the public who are worried. Among those affected by the slump are energy companies which have to pay for oil in dollars but whose income is in local currency and whose prices are pegged. Oil companies operating in Katanga, south-eastern DRC, and in the central region of Kasai, say they will go on strike from Thursday because of local pricing clamps. Petrol in Katanga's Lubumbashi was set in May at 1,390 francs per liter, compared with 1,995 francs per liter in the capital. "Distribution and storage of oil products will cease (there)... until the publication of new price structures... which take current trends into account," the local section of the Congo Business Federation said. On March 24, President Felix Tshisekedi decreed a raft of emergency restrictions to help protect people from the coronavirus pandemic. The measures were eased on July 22, mainly to help poor people whose livelihoods were devastated by the measures.

As public anxiety about the declining franc has mounted, the government has been trying to ease the load-but with little success. At a cabinet meeting on Friday, the president urged ministers to be "bold... to stabilize the exchange rate in the first place, then to make it favourable to our economy and the well-

yen, forcing the automaker to record operating losses of 113.69 billion yen. Like other car firms, Honda "was forced to suspend production and sales activities in many countries throughout the first quarter", vice president Seiji Kuraishi said in an online news conference.

"In the four-wheel business, we suspended production in 12 out of 17 countries as of the end of April, but now we've resumed operation in all production bases," he said. "We will swiftly move towards getting our products into the market from the second quarter," he said. For the full-year to March 2021, Honda said it would record a net profit of 165 billion yen, down 63.8 percent from the previous year, on sales of 12.8 trillion yen, which would be down 14.3 percent.

disease, which forced the shutdown of vast parts of the global economy in the second quarter.

Last month, Indonesia's central bank cut interest rates for the fourth time this year in a bid to boost the struggling economy. Indonesia has announced a stimulus package worth more than \$48 billion to help offset the impact of the virus, which forced a large-scale shutdown that hammered growth, including in the key tourism sector. Several million Indonesians have been laid off or furloughed, and the government has projected that the economy could contract by 0.4 percent for the full year.

The archipelago, home to nearly 270 million people, eased movement restrictions in a bid to prevent economic collapse but coronavirus infections are mounting, with cases topping 115,000 and more than 5,300 deaths. The true scale of the public health crisis is widely believed to be much bigger in Indonesia, which has one of the world's lowest testing rates. Boosting annual growth above five percent had been a key priority for President Joko Widodo in his second term, which kicked off late last year. But his government's handling of the health crisis has been widely criticized. —AFP



BEIJING: People wearing face masks walk in a subway station in Beijing. China is looking to reduce its reliance on overseas markets and technology for its economic development, government advisers said yesterday. —AFP

global footprint in advanced industries.

"We should fully tap the potential of internal circulation, but this does not mean a return to seclusion," said Jia Kang, head of China Academy of New Supply-side Economics, a think tank.

In 1978, then Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping initiated historic reforms and opening-up policies, paving the way for the country's transformation from a diplomatically isolated backwater to the world's second-largest economy today. Some fear

China, with per capita GDP of just over \$10,000, could struggle to drive its income levels to those enjoyed by advanced economies.

Economists warn China's economy may stagnate if it fails to rise up the value chain, as it faces increasing competition from countries with advanced technologies and lower labor costs. "If we are always sandwiched in the middle and get squeezed harder and harder, we could slip into the middle-income trap," Jia said. —Reuters

Slumping currency fuels inflation fears in DR Congo

KINSHASA, DR Congo: Emilie Kapinga, a 60-year-old fishmonger in a Kinshasa market, now works all day for a pittance. At her wholesaler, "10 kilograms (22 pounds) of fish have gone up from 30,000 to 45,000, even 50,000 Congolese francs," she said. "A fish that I used to sell for 1,000 francs costs 3,000 today," she said. "Profit margins are being eaten away by the dollar rate."

Since mid-July, the Congolese franc has slumped against the US dollar, stoking fear and uncertainty in everyday transactions. The franc, which for months was a stable 1,600-1,620 per dollar, is now changing hands at around 2,000, with much day-to-day volatility.

"It's rare to get dollars on the marketplace and everybody wants some," money changer Nickel Kwavita, 41, told AFP. "People accept any old exchange rate as long as they can offload Congolese francs." While vastly rich in mineral wealth, DR Congo imports almost all the essential products needed by its population-and when the currency slumps it badly affects consumers, most of whom live on less than \$2 per day.

The economy is more than 85 percent dollarized, but most salaries are paid in Congolese



KINSHASA: In this file photo, batches of Congolese francs are seen at a market in the commune of Gombe, in the Lukunga district of Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo. After a few months of stability around 1,600 to 1,620 Congolese francs to the dollar, the Congolese franc has resumed its plunge against the US dollar since mid-July, causing the foreign exchange market to overheat. —AFP

being of the population." Tshisekedi won 2018's presidential election but leads in a coalition with members of the Common Front for the Congo, who support his predecessor Joseph Kabila and enjoy a substantial majority in the country's institutions.

Congolese financial expert Noel Tshiani told AFP that a widening trade deficit was to blame for the accelerating decline of the currency. Imports from major countries have fallen by 30 percent, while exports have crashed 40 percent, he said. —AFP

In the United States, even though it suffered declining sales in the first quarter, it is recovering "at a pace faster than" the US automobile market as a whole, Kuraishi said. Looking ahead, however, Honda said it anticipates slower sales in the US and Japan, he said. In China, where the auto market as a whole is rebounding thanks to government stimulus measures, the automaker aims to sell more vehicles than last year, he said.

The announcement comes a week after rival Nissan warned of a massive \$6.4 billion net loss for the current fiscal year as it reels from the pandemic. Last week, US auto giant General Motors also reported a loss hit by the pandemic but at a smaller-than-expected scale thanks to strong pricing for some newer auto models. —AFP



JAKARTA: Motorcycle taxi drivers take a rest during a lunch break in Jakarta yesterday. Indonesia's economy contracted in the second quarter for the first time in more than two decades as it was slammed by coronavirus restrictions, with warnings that the recovery could be among the weakest in Southeast Asia. —AFP

Honda posts Q1 net loss but forecasts full-year profit

TOKYO: Japanese carmaker Honda yesterday reported a net loss for the first-quarter and forecast a much-reduced full-year profit as the coronavirus pandemic hits sales and production.

For the April-June quarter, the firm posted an 80.87 billion yen (\$770 million) net loss, against a 172.30 billion yen profit in the same period last year. Sales plunged 46.9 percent on-year to 2.12 trillion

Virus-hit Indonesian economy shrinks for first time in 2 decades

JAKARTA: Indonesia's coronavirus-hit economy contracted in the second quarter for the first time in more than two decades, with warnings that its recovery could be among the weakest in Southeast Asia. Output in the region's biggest economy slumped 5.3 percent on-year in April-June, the statistics agency said yesterday, as retail sales and manufacturing took a hit.

That marked Indonesia's first contraction since the first quarter of 1999 during the Asian financial crisis, putting it on course for its first recession since then. "Economic activity in Indonesia collapsed in the second quarter," research house Capital Economics said in a note after the figures were published.

"A failure to contain the virus effectively and inadequate policy support means the recovery is likely to be one of the slowest in the region." Governments around the world have been struggling to contain the deadly

Argentina must fix economy after debt deal

Buenos Aires: It took months of tough talks for Argentina to reach agreement on restructuring \$65 billion in debt. Now, economists and policymakers say, the real work begins: reviving Latin America's No 3 economy from its currency and fiscal crises.

Though both government and creditors celebrated Tuesday's deal that should help Argentina avert a messy default, it still faces a 10 percent-plus contraction this year, an over-valued peso, spiking poverty and a deep fiscal hole.

"This was the easy step," Stephen Liston, senior director at the Council of the Americas, said of the debt deal. How the once-wealthy grains producer does from now is the acid test for Peronist President Alberto Fernandez and his star Economy Minister Martin Guzman, fresh from taming Wall Street.

"This is an important step," Guzman said of the agreement. "But this does not solve all the problems of the Argentine economy."

Argentina's peso has been propped up by tight capital controls, which has seen the value of the currency in black market trades veer dangerously away from the official rate, with the gap currently around 76 percent.

The government says it plans to ease controls, but only when the economy has been righted, leaving an artificially strong peso that businesses say hinders trade.

Precarious situation

"It's a very precarious situation there where you've got an over-valued currency, but weakening it will only worsen the debt situation," said Nikhil Sanghani of Capital Economics in London. Inflation, the thorn in the side of Argentine policymakers for years, shows little sign of abating. Consumer prices have slowed during the pandemic, but remain at an annualized level above 40 percent and will likely revive as the economy recovers.

The central bank, looking to mop up liquidity, is facing a "snowball" of short-term debt, temporarily reining in prices but increasingly straining the institution, said economist Eduardo Levy Yeyati of Buenos Aires' Universidad Torcuato Di Tella. Getting out from under this would likely mean the bank has to raise interest rates to encourage savings in pesos, he added, otherwise it would risk unleashing a new wave of inflation.

Under the weight of public spending to combat the impact of the pandemic, the primary fiscal deficit soared to \$3.53 billion in June and the government is expected to end the year with a large fiscal hole.

Guzman has pledged to return to fiscal balance and keep the deficit under control, but faces a politically tricky balancing act between that and growth-boosting policies.

"The fiscal deficit has blown out again and we think that the primary deficit will be something like 8 percent of GDP this year," said Sanghani, adding it could force the government to adopt politically unpalatable measures even as millions face increased poverty. "If they have to impose some sort of austerity going forward, it will only keep the economy quite weak and that will hinder its ability to pay off even these restructured debts." —Reuters

Business

NBK warns customers against the spread of coronavirus related fraud

Warning aims to protect customers and raise awareness

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) is always committed to educate its customers about the latest types of fraud and ways to prevent them, in light of the recent increased fraudulent activities due to the coronavirus outbreak. In this context, the bank continues to run its awareness campaigns and provide customers with advice and guidance on bank account fraud and ways to protect themselves.

The bank advises its customers to be aware of the most recent types of fraud that include:

Selling medical products

Fraudsters claim to sell medical products and personal protective equipment using fake websites, e-mail addresses, e-commerce platforms and social media accounts created to facilitate fraud. Some of them even use the names of renowned companies in the area of production and distribution of medical products, and request to complete the payment process by transferring funds to obtain customers' banking details.

Winning a prize

Fraudsters may contact customers through phone calls, claiming to be an NBK representative and informing them that they have won a prize. They will ask customers to disclose their account or card details to receive the prize.

Requesting data update

Fraudsters ask customers to update their information through SMS or social media applications like WhatsApp, claiming that their debit card has been blocked because they had not updated their personal information.

health authorities through e-mails. They ask customers to visit a dedicated webpage and log in using their e-mail and password; they will therefore use this data to obtain personal information.

Business Email Compromise (BEC)

Business email compromise is a type of fraud in which businesses receive emails from fraudsters pretending to be their suppliers or vendors. Through these emails, scammers usually inform a business that the bank account details of the vendor or supplier have been changed.

NBK urges its customers to confirm requests for funds transfer and changes in vendor payment accounts through alternate channels such as a previously used phone number. Should a customer become a victim of a business email scam, they need to immediately notify the bank. A repayment claim can then be sent to the beneficiary bank by the remitting bank and if funds are available in the beneficiary account, they may be returned.

Commenting on the NBK's efforts to educate its customers on recent fraud methods, Ali Al-Mulla, Head of Domestic Branches, National Bank of Kuwait said: "We always strive to keep our customers aware on the latest methods employed for fraud by constantly communicating with them through our different channels. We always aim to give our customers tips on how to protect their per-

sonal and banking information."

"We have monitored a significant change in the fraud schemes since the outbreak of coronavirus. Scammers are constantly trying to steal personal information and obtaining private data. This is why at NBK, we ensure that we are always close to our customers and provide them with the best ways to protect their accounts from increasing suspicious activities." He added.

Al-Mulla stressed that NBK Employees will never ask customers to disclose their personal bank details like account, card details or OTP, therefore customers shouldn't share their confidential banking information with anyone. Al-Mulla affirmed that customers should immediately report any suspicion of fraud attempts by calling 1801801.

NBK also advises customers to follow the bank's social media channels, where they can find information and instructions to guide them. They can also visit nbk.com to learn more about fraud types and ways to prevent them.



Ali Al-Mulla



NBK continues its awareness campaign

Loan postponement

Fraudsters send messages to customers via SMS or social media applications like WhatsApp asking them to call a dedicated number in order to postpone their loan installment, which allows fraudsters to obtain their bank details.

Impersonating health authorities

Fraudsters claim to be a representative from the

Gulf Bank congratulates Al-Awadh, winner of KD 250,000 cash prize

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank welcomed Hamad Abdullah Al-Awadh, the winner of the second Al-Danah quarterly draw of the year, at the Bank's head office. During the course of the visit, Mohammad Al-Qattan, Deputy General Manager Consumer Banking at Gulf Bank, and other senior management representatives awarded the lucky winner with the KD 250,000 cash prize.

The draw took place on Thursday, July 16, 2020 after initially being postponed in April 2020 due to restrictions imposed by the coronavirus pandemic. Commenting on the second quarterly Al-Danah draw of the year, Mohammad Al-Qattan, Deputy General Manager of Consumer Banking at Gulf Bank said: "We are very excited to congratulate Hamad Abdullah Al-Awadh for winning Gulf Bank's second Al-Danah quarterly draw of the year, especially following the brief hiatus in draw announcements. We would like to remind all our customers that they can still enter for a chance to win the

annual Al-Danah draw, which will be held in January 2021, for the grand prize of KD 1.5 million!"

Gulf Bank's Al-Danah draws are bigger than ever, with an annual draw prize of KD 1.5 million. This year's annual draw is scheduled to take place on January 14, 2021 with the last chance for customers to be able to deposit into their accounts, and therefore be eligible for the draw, on September 30, 2020.

Gulf Bank encourages customers to increase their chances of winning with Al-Danah by depositing more into their Gulf Bank accounts using the new ePay (Self-Pay) service, which is available on Gulf Bank's online and mobile banking services. Gulf Bank's Al-Danah account is open to both Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti residents of Kuwait. A minimum of KD 200 is required to open an account and the same amount must be maintained for customers to be eligible for the upcoming Al-Danah draws. If the customer's account balance falls below KD 200



Mohammad Al-Qattan with the winner

at any given time, a KD 2 fee will be charged to the account monthly until the minimum balance is met. Customers who open an account and/or deposit more will enter the daily draw within two days. Gulf Bank's Al-Danah draws take place throughout the year, with cash prizes totaling more than KD 2 million. Al-Danah offers several unique services

to customers, including the Al-Danah Deposit Only ATM card, which allows account holders to deposit money into their accounts at their convenience. Account holders can also calculate their weekly, quarterly, and yearly chances of winning the draws through the 'Al-Danah Chances' calculator available on the Gulf Bank website and app.

Al-Tijari announces winners of Al-Najma account draws

KUWAIT: Commercial Bank conducted the weekly and monthly draws on Al-Najma Account and Salary Transfer Campaign on Tuesday. The draws were conducted in the presence of Ministry of Commerce and Industry representatives Ahmad Al-Basman and Jassim Al-Hubeida.

The results of the draws were as follows:

1- Al-Najma monthly account- the prize of KD 20,000 was for the share of Yousef Dughaim Al-Rasheedi

2- Al-Najma weekly account - the prize of KD

5,000 was for the share of Hasan Mohammad Mousa Abdullah

3- Salary account campaign - the prize of up to KD 1,000 was for the share of Wadheha Saied Al-Marri

The bank stated that the salary campaign is aimed at customers who transfer their salaries of KD 500 or more to the bank, especially Kuwaiti employees and residents working in the government, oil sectors and companies listed with the Bank as well as retirees, and take advantage of the benefits of this campaign and get an instant cash gift from KD 250 to KD 500 or an interest-free loan of 5 times the salary and a maximum of KD 10,000, in addition to the cash gifts, there will be a weekly draw for new and local Kuwaiti customers who transfer their salaries to the Bank to earn an amount equal to one salary of the salaries they receive monthly.

The bank stated that Al-Najma Account prizes

are distinguished by the highest cash prize and diversity of prizes throughout the year clarifying that the account offers weekly prize of KD 5,000, monthly prize of KD 20,000 and a semi-annual prize of KD 500,000 in addition to the largest prize - linked bank account payout of KD 1,500,000.

Al-Najma Account can be opened by depositing KD 100, and customer should maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 to be eligible to enter all draws on Al-Najma Account prizes. As for the chances of winning, the more balance a customer maintains in Al-Najma Account, the more chances the account holder will get to win, the account also offers additional benefits like the ATM card, a credit card against customer's account and all CBK banking services that customer can enjoy.

The Bank revealed that Al-Najma account is available to everyone, and anyone can open Al-Najma account through CBK mobile application in simple steps from anywhere and at any time.

Burgan Bank announces winners of Yawmi account draw

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced yesterday the names of the daily draw winners of its Yawmi account draw, each taking home a cash-prize of KD 5,000.

The lucky winners are:

1. Nasima Ali Bhair Anwar
2. Arwa Abdulaziz Abdullah AlRobie
3. Mannaa Farhan Mannaa AlEnezi
4. Khaireyah Mohammad Hassan Gholom

In addition to the daily draw, Burgan Bank also offers a Quarterly Draw with more chances to win higher rewards, offering the chance to one lucky customer to win KD 125,000 every three months. The Yawmi Account offers Daily and Quarterly Draws, wherein the Quarterly Draw requires customers to maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 in their account for two months prior to the draw date. Additionally, every KD 10 in the account will entitle customers to one chance of winning. If the account balance is KD 500 and above, the account holder will be qualified for both the quarterly and daily draws.

Burgan Bank encourages everyone to open a Yawmi account and/or increase their deposit to maximize their chances of becoming a winner. The higher the level of the deposit, the higher the likelihood to win.

For more information on opening a Yawmi account, the new quarterly draw or on any of the bank's products and services, customers are urged to visit their nearest Burgan Bank branch, or simply call the bank's Call Center at 1804080. Customers can also log on to Burgan Bank's www.burgan.com for further information.

Burgan Bank announces winner of Al-Thuraya draw

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank, announced yesterday Jayan Mathen as the lucky winner of the draw prize of Al-Thuraya Salary Accounts monthly draw. The draw rewards new and existing customers who transfer their salary to Burgan Bank by offering them a chance to win KD 10,000 every month. Each account holder has one chance to enter the draw.

The Al-Thuraya account holders have the option to hold money in Kuwaiti Dinar and other major currencies and can access account-related services such as standing orders, loans and credit cards, and benefit from the discounts and offers throughout the year.

Eurozone business activity resumes growth in July

LONDON: Eurozone business activity returned to modest growth in July as some curbs imposed to stop the spread of the coronavirus were lifted, but the recovery in the dominant service industry was not as sharp as expected, a survey showed. More than 18.5 million people have been diagnosed with the coronavirus globally but, amid signs the pandemic was being contained in much of Europe, governments have allowed more businesses to reopen.

The bloc's economy contracted a record 12.1 percent last quarter, data showed on Friday. A Reuters poll in July predicted 8.1 percent growth this quarter as businesses begin to return to some sort of normal.

Wednesday's final Composite Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) from IHS Markit, seen as a good indicator of economic health, climbed to 54.9 in July from June's 48.5, better than a 54.8 flash estimate. It had been below the 50 level separating growth from contraction for four months. "The PMIs should be in the high sixties, just because what they should be telling us is the monthly change in economic output,

but they have been very subdued," said Kallum Pickering at Berenberg.

"That said, the July data for services showed significant improvement. It is consistent with the continued easing of the lockdown across Europe." Earlier surveys showed activity in Germany, Europe's largest economy, reached expansionary territory. In France it grew as one of Europe's strictest COVID-19 lockdowns has gradually been eased. In Spain, where infection rates have been rising again, services improved for the second month in a row. But with some countries changing their advice on travel to the holiday hotspot, uncertainty over the recovery from the pandemic has increased.

Italy's services returned to, but the recovery remained muted. Meanwhile, the volume of retail sales in the euro zone rebounded in June to levels recorded in February before lockdowns, official estimates showed yesterday, completing a recovery that began in May after record declines in March and April. Separately, businesses in Britain expanded at the fastest rate in more than five years after restaurants, cafes and pubs reopened to diners and drinkers on July 4.

"The pick-up in the PMI in July supports other indicators suggesting that the recovery has gathered some momentum recently, though a V-shaped rebound remains highly unlikely," said Samuel Tombs at Pantheon Macroeconomics. —Reuters

BMW swings to first loss in a decade as virus hits sales

BERLIN: German luxury carmaker BMW said yesterday that it swung into its first loss since 2009 as the coronavirus pandemic ravaged car sales but said it still hopes turn an operating profit for the year. The Munich-based company reported an operating loss (EBIT) of 666 million euros (\$787.6 million), compared with an operating profit of 2.1 billion euros in the same period of 2019, after selling around 25 percent fewer cars year-on-year in the three months to the end of June.

The group kept net loss to just 212 million euros, as the damage was mitigated by an accounting boost over its car leasing business. The company kept its 2020 guidance unchanged, with several key caveats including the potential impact of a second wave of infection and possible new lockdowns or deeper recessions in its key markets.

BMW added that the guidance is based on the assumption that demand in all key markets will be significantly reduced in light of the coronavirus pandemic and containment measures.

"As a consequence, worldwide deliveries for the automotive segment in 2020 are likely to be significantly lower than one year earlier," the carmaker said. Operating loss in its automobile division, which also includes the Mini and Rolls-Royce marques, was 1.55 billion euros, compared with a EBIT profit of 1.47 billion euros in the same period of the previous year. However, BMW chief executive Oliver Zipse said: "We are now looking ahead to the second six-month period with cautious optimism and continue to target an EBIT margin between 0 and 3 percent for the automotive segment in 2020." The company said "a more positive" trend was emerging from China as it exited coronavirus containment measures. —AFP

Classifieds

Thursday, August 6, 2020

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Fax: (+965) 24348714

www.met.gov.kw

Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Very hot with light to moderate north westerly wind to light variable wind with speed of 08 - 32 km/h .

BY NIGHT: Hot to rather hot with light variable wind to light to moderate northerly wind with speed of 08 - 30 km/h

WEATHER WARNING

No Current Warnings

STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	46 °C	34 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	47 °C	32 °C
ABDALY	47 °C	30 °C
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C
JAHRA	47 °C	33 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	47 °C	33 °C
SALMIYAH	44 °C	35 °C
AHMADI	- °C	- °C
NUWAISIB	47 °C	31 °C
WAFRA	46 °C	33 °C
SALMY	46 °C	30 °C

SFC. CHART

05/08/2020 0000 UTC

MSL Analysis (hPa)
Valid 0000 UTC 05 AUG 2020

4 DAYS FORECAST

DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Thursday	08/06	Very hot	47 °C	33 °C	NW-VRB	08 - 30 km/h
Friday	08/07	Very hot	48 °C	33 °C	NW	10 - 40 km/h
Saturday	08/08	Very hot with a chance for rising dust and some high clouds will appear	50 °C	34 °C	NW	15 - 45 km/h
Sunday	08/09	Very hot with a chance for rising dust over open areas and some scattered clouds will appear	49 °C	34 °C	NW	15 - 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.	48 °C
MIN. Temp.	33 °C
MAX. RH	26 %
MIN. RH	07 %
MAX. Wind	N 50 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

CHANGE OF NAME

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

Hospitals

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

Clinics

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

we required manpower for the following position:

1. HVAC Technicians

2. Chiller Operator

3. BMS Operator

4. Electrician

operation.admin@urrc.cc

Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is

1889988

EMERGENCY ☎ 112

Airlines

Kuwait Airways	171
Jazeera Airways	177
Turkish Airlines	1884918
FlyDubai	22414400
Qatar Airways	22423888
KLM	22425747
Royal Jordanian	22418064/5/6
British Airways	22425635
Air France	22430224
Emirates	22921555
Air India	22456700
Air India EXPRESS	22438185/4
Sri Lanka Airlines	22424444
Egypt Air	22421578
Swiss Air	22421516

Word Search

Crime Fiction

DIRECTIONS:
Find and circle the vocabulary words in the grid. Look for them in all directions including backwards and diagonally.

ACCOMPLICE

ALIBI

BREAKTHROUGH

CAPER

CLUE

CRIMINAL

DEDUCTION

DETECTIVE

EVIDENCE

FEMME FATALE

FLATFOOT

FORENSICS

GUMSHOE

HUNCH

INVESTIGATOR

METHOD

MODUS OPERANDI

MOTIVE

MYSTERY

OBSERVATION

PRIVATE EYE

RED HERRING

SLEUTH

SUSPENSE

VILLAIN

WHODUNIT

WITNESS

Join the Dot

STAR TRACK

Aries (March 21-April 19)

Your mind is buzzing like a bee, Aries. You're apt to find that there's very little you can do to slow it down. Make sure you add compassion to the chain that's holding everything together. Also make sure that you don't become a victim of your thoughts by losing control over how you act simply because the voice in your head has completely taken over.

Cancer (June 21-July 22)

This is one of those days in which you're better able to stand back and look at your emotions intellectually, Cancer. Your freedom-loving nature isn't built to deal with heavy emotional baggage and turmoil, so don't bother trying. Be especially wary of those who seem to plop a problem in front of you and expect you to deal with it.

Libra (September 23-October 22)

Your engine may sputter this morning as your gears begin to turn, Libra. It could be that you're working out something important in your mind that's helping clarify your emotions. The answer you seek is probably nothing like the one you'll find. By the time night comes, you'll have everything figured out. All the answers you need will be right there in front of you.

Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Don't be surprised if you leap out of bed with a spark of inspiration that wasn't there last night, Capricorn. Let your dreams linger a bit before you face the world. This flash of genius is likely to strike quickly and unexpectedly, so keep an eye out for it, but don't consider it something that you can plan on or force into happening.

Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Mornings aren't usually your best time, Taurus. You aren't fully awake until afternoon. Try not to discount the events of this particular morning, however. More than likely, you'll enjoy your best mental clarity sometime before noon. Surprise people with an upbeat attitude and a solution for every problem that comes your way.

Leo (July 23-August 22)

Prepare for a surprise today, Leo. Perhaps it will come from someone else or perhaps it will come from you. Either way, by evening you're apt to be feeling quite lovey-dovey and rather spaced out. Give in to the lethargic attitude that might sweep over you. This is your time to play, so put work aside and have a good time while letting your emotions dictate your actions.

Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Be careful not to overdo things today, Scorpio. You may so zealously want to meet your goals that you overshoot the mark by quite a bit. Feel free to express your exuberance and let your enthusiasm shine in whatever you do. At the same time, be careful about getting so carried away that you don't notice that you've already reached the finish line.

Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Sometimes your emotions overtake your rational thoughts, Aquarius, and you end up acting on impulse. Today you'll find that your head and heart are aligned on significant issues, and that they're working well together. Try not to swing the other way by becoming too rational. Your goal is to find the best working balance.

Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Your world may seem rather tight and rigid this morning, Gemini, but the good news is that difficulties are apt to melt away as the day progresses. Don't assume that opinions are fixed in stone. Things can change in an instant. Even if they seem one way at one point, more than likely they're going to manifest themselves completely differently later.

Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Things seem to be going quite well for you in many respects, Virgo. Your thinking is clear, your emotions are under control, and the puzzle pieces are fitting into place. This is your time to take advantage of these pockets of good fortune and turn them into something huge. You have the power to make anything happen - especially now.

Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Tempers may get hot today when someone says something that pierces you to your core. Address this problem right away, Sagittarius, instead of letting it fester through the rest of the day. The solution requires sensitivity and caring. Let the offender know that he or she has hurt you significantly, if that is indeed the case. There's no need for you to try to hide your feelings.

Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Review your day as you watch the sunset and observe the clouds turning from white to purple, Pisces. Make sure that your head is in tune with your heart. Think about the day's emotions and thought patterns and how they affected your actions. Determine if your actions were a result of either your rational mind or fluctuating moods.

Lifestyle | Features

Disney's 'Mulan' to skip big screen with September streaming launch



In this file photo US-Chinese actress Yifei Liu attends the world premiere of Disney's "Mulan" at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood. — AFP

Disney's much-delayed blockbuster "Mulan" will skip the big screen and premiere on streaming platform Disney+ next month, it was announced Tuesday, as coronavirus keeps theaters shut across much of the United States. The unprecedented decision-described by CEO Bob Chapek as a "one-off" for a Disney blockbuster-is the latest major blow for movie theater chains already reeling from the pandemic. "Mulan," a mega-budget live action remake of the tale of a legendary Chinese warrior, will be available from September 4 in homes to Disney+ subscribers for an additional \$29.99. "We see this as an opportunity to bring this incredible film to a broad audience currently unable to go to movie theaters, while also further enhancing the value and attractiveness of a Disney+ subscription," Chapek told an earnings call.

The film will launch simultaneously in theaters in territories such as China which do not have currently announced Disney+ launch plans. The move comes as a second wave of US coronavirus cases stalls reopening plans for theaters in key markets such as New York and Los Angeles. Before the pandemic, studios typically waited 90 days to release major films digitally after their theatrical openings.

But several major studio movies including "Trolls World Tour" have grossed tens of millions during the pandemic by abandoning theatrical releases and going directly to streaming-often at premium rental rates. "We are looking at 'Mulan' as a one-off, as opposed to trying to say that there is some new business window model we are looking at" regarding movie launches, Chapek said. But he added that the experiment

would provide "very interesting" information on consumers' willingness to shell out \$30 for a new streaming title. If successful, the price would help to "recapture some of that investment" in a "fairly expensive" movie, said Chapek. "Mulan" cost an estimated \$200 million to produce. It was originally due for release in March-Disney even held its red-carpet world premiere in Hollywood-before being delayed multiple times.

It was one of a handful of major "tentpole" Hollywood releases expected to help drive wary consumers back to movie theaters. "Tenet," Christopher Nolan's hotly awaited sci-fi epic, will release internationally on August 26 before hitting a limited number of US screens in September, Warner Bros said last week. — AFP

Neil Young to sue Trump over campaign songs

Neil Young is suing Donald Trump's re-election campaign to try to stop the US president playing his songs at campaign rallies, according to a lawsuit posted on the rocker's website. The 74-year-old claims a breach of copyright for the use of "Rockin' In The Free World" and "Devil's Sidewalk," at several Trump events including a recent rally in Tulsa, Oklahoma. "(The) plaintiff in good conscience cannot allow his music to be used as a 'theme song' for a divisive, un-American campaign of ignorance and hate," reads the draft filing.



In this file photo Neil Young performs on stage for his first time in Quebec City during 2018 Festival d'Ete. — AFP

The suit, which seeks damages of up to \$150,000 for each infringement, is undated but the text indicates Young's attorneys planning to file it with a federal court in New York. Young has repeatedly voiced disdain for Trump's use of his classic hits at rallies, asking him to stop. The Canadian-born musician, now a US citizen, called Trump "a disgrace to my country" earlier this year while coming out in support of Bernie Sanders in the Democratic race. Several top artists, including Pharrell Williams, Rihanna, Aerosmith, Adele, and the estate of singer Prince have complained about Trump using their songs.

In June, British rock legends the Rolling Stones threatened legal action against Trump for his use of their classic "You Can't Always Get What You Want" at campaign rallies. The same month, the family of rock musician Tom Petty issued a cease and desist letter over Trump's use of "I Won't Back Down" at the Tulsa rally on June 20. Last month, Mick Jagger, Michael Stipe and Sheryl Crow were among high-profile musicians to sign a letter demanding that politicians get their consent before playing their songs at rallies. — AFP

New York's Rockettes' Christmas show canceled

It's synonymous with Christmas in New York, like the Rockefeller tree all lit up and "Home Alone 2." But for the first time since 1932 there will be no Rockettes show this holiday season. Madison Square Garden Entertainment said in a statement Tuesday that the 2020 "Christmas Spectacular" at Radio City Hall has been canceled "due to continued uncertainty associated with the COVID-19 pandemic." The dancers have wowed more than 75 million people since the show began in 1933, according to the touring company's website. This year is the first time the extravaganza has been canceled in its 87-year-history. "We are disappointed

for everyone involved with the show, as well as for the many fans who make the Christmas Spectacular a cherished part of their holiday tradition," said MSG.

More than 3,000 women have performed as Rockettes since the group was founded in 1925. During the "Christmas Spectacular" the cast of 80 can perform four 90-minute shows in one day, kicking up to 650 times. The dancers are proficient in jazz, tap and ballet and their height must be between five feet six inches and five feet ten and a half. The COVID-19 crisis has wiped out New York's cultural calendar, with Broadway closed until at least January. — AFP



Swedish singer Zara Larsson ends collaboration with Huawei

Swedish singer Zara Larsson said Tuesday that she had ended her collaboration with China's Huawei to promote its smartphones, saying China "is not a nice state," but the firm responded that the deal had always been limited in time and had ended "as agreed". Speaking with broadcaster TV4, Larsson, whose greatest hits have been streamed over five billion times according to the broadcaster, said the collaboration with Huawei had ended a few months ago. "If I now look back it wasn't, from a professional but also a personal perspective, the smartest deal I've done," the 22-year-old singer said. "It's not something I stand behind," she added.

Larsson, who is one of Sweden's best known international singers, first reached international fame with her 2013 hit "Uncover," then through her collaboration with French DJ David Guetta. In the spring of 2019, Zara Larsson signed a promotional deal with Huawei to market the launch of a new smartphone. Olympic swimmer Sarah Sjostrom was also hired to promote the Chinese telecoms giant's phones. Interviewed last year by the magazine Resumé about the accusations of spying and Huawei's ties to the Chinese state, Larsson said she wasn't

"particularly informed". "Huawei is a privately owned company in China that is now launching a good mobile phone, more than that I'm not thinking about or commenting," she told the magazine.



Swedish singer Zara Larsson

Her statements provoked criticism that Larsson was promoting the interests of the Chinese communist regime. In an op-ed published on Tuesday in newspaper Expressen, Matilda Ekeblad, a local politician representing the conservative Moderate Party, accused the singer of "running China's errands", pointing to accusations Huawei conducts espionage for Beijing and Chinese repression of the Uighur community and Hong Kong. Interviewed by TV4 the same day, Larsson said she did not want to support what China "was doing". —AFP



In this file photo a make shift Mickey Mouse on top of a car circles around Disneyland Resort calling for higher safety standards before its reopening, amid the coronavirus pandemic in Anaheim, California. — AFP

Disney sees big loss as pandemic hits parks, studios; subscriptions rise

The Walt Disney Company on Tuesday reported its quarterly earnings were hit hard as the pandemic emptied theme parks and cruise ships, while it hit a new milestone for streaming subscriptions. The entertainment colossus said it lost \$4.7 billion on revenue of \$11.8 billion — about half of the amount of money it took in during the same period last year. "Despite the ongoing challenges of the pandemic, we've continued to build on the incredible success of Disney+ as we grow our global direct-to-consumer businesses," Disney chief executive Bob Chapek said in an earnings release for the quarter ending June 27.

The company has more than 100 million paid subscribers in what Chapek touted as a "significant milestone" affirming the company's move to streaming its coveted content direct to homes. That includes some 60.5 million for Netflix rival Disney+ along with some 35 million for Hulu and 8.5 million for its ESPN+ sports service. Earnings in the fiscal third quarter were hurt by the pandemic, with Disney's theme parks, resorts and cruise ships closed or operations suspended, according to the California-based company. "The most significant impact in the current quarter from COVID-19 was an approximately \$3.5 billion adverse impact on operating income at our Parks, Experiences and Products segment due to revenue lost as a result of the closures," the company said in a statement.

Disney also reported higher costs to launch its online services. Disney shares were up 4.5 percent in after-market trades that followed release of the earnings. "Despite the harsh realities we are facing today, we have made some encouraging progress," Chapek said on an earnings call. "We've begun a responsible phased reopening of our Parks in Shanghai, Paris, Tokyo, and Orlando, as well as our shopping and dining area, Downtown Disney, in Anaheim." Theme park reopenings have involved new health and safety measures including a mandatory mask policy, temperature screenings, and

capacity restrictions to promote social distancing, Chapek noted. Disney executives said some television and film production has restarted, and that the return of professional sports matches promised to return ad revenue to its ESPN arm.

'Mulan' heads to homes

Chapek announced that Disney's much-delayed blockbuster "Mulan" will skip the big screen and premiere on the streaming platform Disney+ next month, as coronavirus keeps theaters shut across much of the United States. The unprecedented decision-described by Chapek as a "one-off" for a Disney blockbuster-is the latest major blow for movie theater chains already reeling from the pandemic. "Mulan," a mega-budget live action remake of the tale of a legendary Chinese warrior, will be available from September 4 in homes to Disney+ subscribers for an additional \$29.99.

"We see this as an opportunity to bring this incredible film to a broad audience currently unable to go to movie theaters, while also further enhancing the value and attractiveness of a Disney+ subscription," Chapek told an earnings call. The film will launch simultaneously in theaters in territories such as China which do not have currently announced Disney+ launch plans. The move comes as coronavirus cases stall reopening plans for theaters in key markets such as New York and Los Angeles. "We are looking at 'Mulan' as a one-off, as opposed to trying to say that there is some new business window model we are looking at" regarding movie launches, Chapek said. But he added that the experiment would provide "very interesting" information on consumers' willingness to shell out \$29.99 for a new streaming title. If successful, the price would help to "recapture some of that investment" in a "fairly expensive" movie, said Chapek. "Mulan" cost an estimated \$200 million to produce. — AFP

PARIS BALLET'S 'LITTLE RATS' STAY FOCUSED AS WORLD SPINS

The world might feel like it is falling apart but that is no excuse for slacking at the Paris Opera Ballet School. Teacher Wilfried Romoli barks out orders to his final year boys at what is arguably the world's best ballet school, and certainly its oldest having been founded by the "Sun King" Louis XIV-no mean dancer himself. They are about to face fantastically tough tests that might determine the rest of their careers. The stakes could not be higher. The annual competitive examination is the holy grail for final-year boarders at the school in Nanterre, just west of the French capital. For the very best, there is the possibility of a place in the Paris Opera's corps de ballet.

But even for the creme de la creme, there can be disappointment. Some years none are taken on, depending on the ballet's needs. With the coronavirus pandemic following a marathon strike at the Paris Opera, it has been a tough year for the "little rats", as the students are affectionately known. Exams were postponed and pupils forced to train and rehearse at home, which

can be potentially disastrous for such elite athletes and performers.

'Little rats' to big stars

"I quickly realized that we were at risk of sacrificing a generation," said the school's director Elisabeth Platel, guardian of the French style of classical dance. "So I decided to give all the students who were not taken on by the company an extra year" to prove themselves, the former legendary prima ballerina told AFP. Even the lucky few selected for the ballet will not be able to take their traditional first bow at the iconic Opera Garnier until December. For a whole year, "the entire school has not had to face the public, nor stage fright," Platel noted.

The "little rats" were able to restart classes in June after France's two-month lockdown, but 20 of the multinational group were unable to return-blocked in homes from Canada to Australia by travel bans or quarantines. The school's dormitories have also reopened, with just one student per room rather than the usual three. Dance studios are regularly aired out, barres are



In this file photos dancers rehearse at the Opera Ballet School in Nanterre, a Paris suburb. — AFP photos

disinfected and everyone must wear a mask as they move between classes. Folk dance, mime and pas de deux courses have been suspended to minimize physical contact.

Leaping gazelles

Final year student Rubens, 18, did a series of grand jetes, leaping like a gazelle



across the room. He injured his ankle before the lockdown and had to start practicing again practically "from zero" at home, he said. "It was a little bit like being in prison but it allowed me to be really concentrated so that I could improve the quality of my work," Rubens added. Another dancer, Margaux, had fears of "falling behind" during the lockdown. Ballet

dancers grow up with warnings to stay in peak condition drilled into them. One maxim goes: "When you miss a class for a day, you notice it. The second day the teacher notices it. And the third, the public sees it." "It was hard," Margaux said, "but we have learned to work on our own." —AFP



File photo shows the abandoned Costa Del Croco complex, by the coast in the Black Sea town of Tsarevo, southeastern Bulgaria.

“We need at least 100 charter flights a day,” says Plamen Kopchev, head of the hotel owners’ association in Bulgaria’s mammoth Black Sea resort of Sunny Beach, laid waste by the coronavirus pandemic. But the trouble is, only a fraction of those flights have been arriving, a disaster for a resort Kopchev explains “is made for mass tourism”—a model that some Bulgarians have long been questioning and which now lies in tatters. Bulgaria is the poorest country in the European Union and will be dealt a body blow by the virtual collapse of its tourism sector, which accounts for 12 percent of annual economic output.



File photo shows tourists walking near empty sunbeds and umbrella in front of an hotel at the beach in Sunny Beach, Bulgaria’s biggest Black Sea resort.

Initially, Bulgaria managed to control its infection numbers but after easing its lockdown comparatively early, it has found itself in the midst of a fresh spike. With more than 12,000 infected and a peak of 330 new cases a day in late July, the country has been hit with travel restrictions from several western European countries. The British tourists who would normally be thronging the fine golden sands are nowhere to be seen, while the occasional Czech, Polish or Romanian family scurries to the beach through the deserted alleys or enjoy having a hotel pool to themselves.

Rows and rows of sunbeds and umbrellas lie

empty while hawkers selling inflatable flamingos and other beach must-haves wait idly by. “Our turnover is down 90 percent from last year, there are simply no foreigners and Bulgarian visitors are few,” beach bar manager Nedelin Yankov, 37, told AFP. “Our bar is open and that’s fine with us even if the hotel is only 15 percent full,” said Czech teacher Lenka Svobodova, 35, who ventured on holiday with three friends.

‘Years of turbulence’

The government has tried to tackle the crisis by launching a campaign to encourage Bulgarians to holiday at home. In addition, the tourism ministry decided to subsidize charter flights and allow in tourists with a negative virus PCR test from several neighboring non-EU countries, as well as from Israel and Kuwait. But those efforts seem to have largely been in vain. Figures from Burgas airport, which services Sunny Beach, show a 98 percent drop in charter flights in June, followed by 87 percent in July when fewer than 400 out of an expected 2,800 planes arrived. There is little hope the numbers will pick up for the rest of the season.

The collapse is unprecedented and “tragic” says Kopchev, adding: “None of us ever imagined anything like this could befall us.” He says that of Sunny Beach’s more than 150 hotels, more than half have not opened and many of those that have may well have to close early. “Mass tourism as we knew it probably won’t end but will go through years of turbulence,” Kopchev said, citing an estimate from a German tour operator that visitor numbers at Sunny Beach will likely only return to pre-virus 2019 levels in 2022. Last year, 9.3 million foreign tourists visited Bulgaria and the government had hoped for an increase this year.

Where are the Bulgarians?

The crisis may be hitting the economy but some say there may be some positives to take from it, especially those who have long been advocating a rethink of Bulgaria’s tourism model and the construction boom it has helped fuel. Rampant construction all along the coast—even in protected nature reserves—has put off many Bulgarians from holiday-

ing at home, despite the government’s efforts. They have instead largely been heading to neighboring Turkey and Greece.

Even the long queues at the Kulata border crossing and the Greek requirement for a recent negative coronavirus test have not deterred Bulgarians from heading south. “It’s a pity but our whole Black Sea coast is dotted with bigger or smaller villas, hotels and all kinds of buildings, many still under construction, others abandoned,” environmental activist Kremena Vateva, 38, told AFP. In theory, construction is banned within 100 meters (110 yards) of the seashore outside urban areas but Vateva points to various loopholes that need closing in the legislation.



File photo shows an empty street with closed stores in Sunny Beach, Bulgaria’s biggest Black Sea resort.

New construction work on a small beach bordering Alepu marsh, a protected area south of Burgas, prompted Vateva to organize a series of protests this summer under the motto “Sea without concrete”. She is an optimist when it comes to the prospects for improving the country’s treasured coast. “It’s not too late yet,” Vateva says. “The important thing is to... repair the damage that’s already been done and make so that no new outrageous things happen,” she adds. Whether that can be made to fit with Bulgaria’s ambition to revive its tourism sector remains to be seen. — AFP



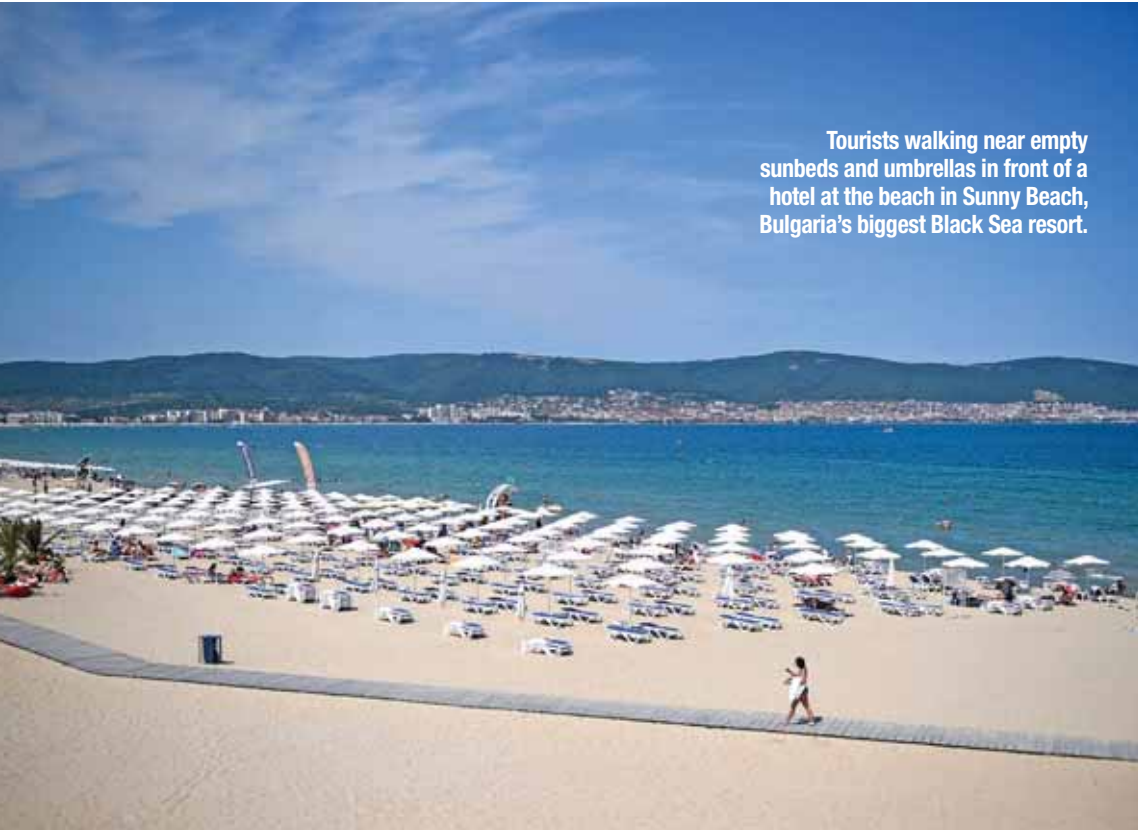
The abandoned Costa Del Croco complex, by the coast in the Black Sea town of Tsarevo, southeastern Bulgaria.



File photo shows a girl riding a bike in an empty street in Sunny Beach, Bulgaria’s biggest Black Sea resort.



Tourists walking near empty sunbeds and umbrellas at the beach, in Sunny Beach, Bulgaria’s biggest Black Sea resort. — AFP photos



Tourists walking near empty sunbeds and umbrellas in front of a hotel at the beach in Sunny Beach, Bulgaria’s biggest Black Sea resort.



Tourists staying next to an empty pool in Sunny Beach, Bulgaria’s biggest Black Sea resort.

Sliding walls, hideable offices: How pandemic could change home design

When Spain’s coronavirus lockdown ended in late June, one thing was at the top of Teresa Silvi’s priority list - to sell her apartment and find somewhere more suitable for her family to live now they were spending far more time at home. Three months of remote working with a toddler and a husband was a challenge, especially given the lack of dedicated workspace, the university researcher told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. “I can’t concentrate if I see toys or dirty dishes lying around. It is really important to be able to carve out a working space so you can have your own separate identities,” said Silvi, who lives in Barcelona’s upscale Sant Antoni neighborhood. “When my baby was crying, I just had to sit there with these noise-cancelling headphones on trying to work.”

As city dwellers around the globe rethink how they want to live following months of lockdown, architects are reflecting on how flats can be redesigned to suit remote working, for instance, with sliding walls and hideable office space. “If people now are going to be able to work from home on a far more regular basis they need to have the ability to have a real work-life space and structure at home,” said Greg Verabian, design director at architecture firm HKS in Los Angeles. “I don’t think you feel comfortable sitting in your kitchen all day long taking conference calls,” he said in a phone interview.

Silvi said her family wants an open-plan home with flexible areas that can be closed off or opened up, to serve as office space or playrooms, depending on their needs that day. It is important to make apartments more adaptable, especially for families and people living in medium or high-density blocks, said Andre Brumfield, a Chicago-based director at global design firm Gensler. “Flexibility is key, especially for multi-family units. The question is how can you allow a family to be together but also have their moments of refuge on their own within that unit,” he said.

‘Every inch is utilized’

HKS is trying to blend the technology and structure of the office environment into apartments without increasing square footage, to keep the price down, Verabian explained. The firm’s new designs include a height-adjustable workspace that can be used variously by an adult working, a child playing or a teenager doing homework. It has a storage area beneath and the option to conceal the desk behind moveable panels at the end of the day. The prototypes were in part inspired by Japanese apartments where “every inch of space is utilised”, he said.

French-Moroccan architectural design practice Studio Belem has taken the concept of flexible spaces further, with sliding panels instead of walls and integrated furniture systems to make living as fluid as possible. Their “aula modula” apartment block concept is aimed at young families and flatshares, where the number of inhabitants may vary, said Edouard Bettencourt, one of the firm’s co-founders. “There are no corridors, as this is wasted space,” he said. “The bedrooms are all set next to each other. You use slidable panels, which can completely open or close rooms as you like.”

A room could be used as a yoga space or a children’s playroom in the morning, then turned into a bedroom at night, or a living room could be enlarged by sliding back the doors of a bedroom, if guests are coming for dinner, he said. Although initially designed for Paris, the concept would work in any city and the firm is currently adapting it for Morocco, said Bettencourt. “We would need to analyze the context of the place and the way that people live there, but this model can be modified and that’s actually part of the concept,” he said.

While wealthier city dwellers rethink home living, cities in both the developed and developing world are grappling with a dire shortage of affordable housing. For example, a surge of coronavirus cases in foreign-worker dormitories across Singapore and in the slums of India has drawn attention to the squalid housing conditions of migrant laborers. “The pandemic has exposed the growing gap in wealth inequality globally, but it has always been difficult balancing design, policy and market forces in building affordable housing,” said Brumfield.

Bringing outside in

Spanish architecture firm Estudio Lamela unveiled a post-pandemic apartment prototype in June based around six concepts: air, light, greenery, safety, connectivity and flexibility. The design removes all unnecessary doors and walls, and the rooms are placed in a line, to cut down on unused space, improve ventilation and let in as much light as possible. These light and plant-filled apartments aim to bridge the gap between interior and exterior for city dwellers deprived of outdoor space, the firm said on its website. “The concept is fairly experimental... and all about well-being. I think these elements will be incorporated into apartments little by little,” said Carlos Lamela, a leading Spanish architect and owner of the firm.

The pandemic will have a lasting impact on residential building design, he added, with flats evolving to feel closer to nature - but not immediately. “There will be a very gradual revolution,” he said. “The pandemic has given us time to reflect and mature, and accelerate these changes, like more outdoor space, fresh air and natural elements.” For example, balconies have become more important than ever, said Verabian at HKS. —AFP

Sports

Photo of the Day



CAUCASUS: Egor Posokhin, professional aerobatic paragliding athlete, performs at Chegem Valley in Caucasus, Russia. — Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

Kearns wants 2027 WCup to revive Aussie rugby

SYDNEY: Australian rugby risks becoming a “third tier” sport if it fails to win hosting rights for the 2027 World Cup, two-time tournament winner Phil Kearns said yesterday after being appointed to lead the bid campaign.

Kearns, who won the showcase tournament in 1991 and 1999 during a 67-Test career, said he was “enormously excited” to be named executive director of the bid by Rugby Australia. “There’s a couple of really big roles in Australian rugby at the moment and this is certainly one of them,” the former Wallabies skipper told reporters in a video conference.

Kearns said hosting the 2027 tournament could be “transformational” for rugby in Australia, which is currently struggling with financial difficulties, the Wallabies’ slide to seventh in the world rankings, and bitter infighting.

He offered an unflinching assessment of rugby’s standing in Australia, where it faces fierce competition from rival codes such as rugby league and Aussie rules. “There was some talk that we’re a second-tier sport heading towards (becoming) a third-tier sport,” he said. “By winning this, it gives us the opportunity that we won’t go to third-tier... if you go back to the late 1990s and early 2000s, we were a tier-one sport in this country. “We can’t escape the fact that we’ve gone backwards. This gives us an opportunity to turn that around for the long term.”

Kearns has been an outspoken critic of the game’s administrators in recent years and had considered applying for the position of Rugby Australia chief executive after New Zealander Raelene Castle quit the role in April.

But he said hosting the 2027 tournament was so important for the code’s future in Australia that he shelved his leadership ambitions to promote the bid. “The financial windfall it would bring would spark the Australian economy as we rebuild from the impact of COVID-19 and then gives us the opportunity to invest back into the grassroots,” he said.—AFP

Hurricanes cap three-game sweep of Rangers, Flames rout Jets

Islanders set sights on finishing off Panthers

TORONTO: Warren Foegele scored the go-ahead goal in the third period, and goalie James Reimer made 38 saves in his series debut as the Carolina Hurricanes swept their best-of-five qualifying set against the New York Rangers by winning 4-1 in Game 3 on Tuesday night in Toronto. The Hurricanes advance to the Eastern Conference’s first round against an undetermined opponent, beginning that best-of-seven series next week. The Rangers had won at least one game in their past 21 playoff series. New York managed a total of four goals in the just-concluded series. Teuvo Teravainen provided Carolina’s first goal, and Sebastian Aho’s two goals — the latter into an empty net — padded the lead across the final 10 minutes. Chris Kreider scored for the Rangers, who swept four regular-season games from the Hurricanes.



Best-of-five qualifying set

MAPLE LEAFS 3, BLUE JACKETS 0

Auston Matthews scored the go-ahead goal late in the second period, and host Toronto went on to defeat Columbus and tie the best-of-five Eastern Conference playoff qualifying series at one game each. Frederik Andersen stopped 21 shots to earn his third career playoff shutout. John Tavares added a third-period goal for the Maple Leafs, who dominated play for much of the game. Morgan Rielly scored into an empty net at 19:17 of the third with an assist from Matthews. Toronto defenseman Jake Muzzin was taken off the ice on a stretcher with 1:52 to play in the game after taking an awkward fall in the Maple Leafs’ zone. His head appeared to hit the knee of Columbus’s Oliver Bjorkstrand as he fell. Columbus goaltender Joonas Korpiälä made 36 saves.

FLAMES 6, JETS 2

Sean Monahan collected one goal and two assists, and Calgary used a dominating second period to claim a convincing win over Winnipeg and move to the verge of advancing in the Stanley Cup playoffs. Mikael Backlund, Johnny Gaudreau and Elias Lindholm each netted one goal and one assist for the Flames, who lead the best-of-five Western Conference qualifying round series 2-1. Calgary goalie Cam Talbot stopped 34 shots. The Flames, who also got goals from Matthew Tkachuk and Milan Lucic plus two assists from Andrew Mangiapane, will look to eliminate the Jets on Thursday. Andrew Copp and Nikolaj Ehlers scored for Winnipeg.



TORONTO: Sebastian Aho #20 of the Carolina Hurricanes scores a goal on Igor Shesterkin #31 of the New York Rangers during the third period in Game Three of the Eastern Conference Qualification Round prior to the 2020 NHL Stanley Cup Playoffs at Scotiabank Arena in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. — AFP

Connor Hellebuyck made 26 saves.

CANUCKS 4, WILD 3

Vancouver spread goals among four scorers and held on in the final seconds to defeat Minnesota in Edmonton, tying their best-of-five Western Conference qualifying series at 1-1. Jacob Markstrom made 32 saves

for the Canucks, who got goals from Tanner Pearson, J.T. Miller, Brock Boeser and Bo Horvat. Miller and Horvat each had an assist, and Alexander Edler chipped in two helpers. Kevin Fiala scored twice in the last 2 1/2 minutes to bring the Wild close. Luke Kunin added a single goal for the Wild, and Alex Stalock turned aside 24 shots. — AFP

Koepka aims for rare 3-peat on PGA’s big stage

SAN FRANCISCO: Brooks Koepka will be chasing history at the PGA Championship today as the two-time defending champion attempts a rare major championship three-peat in San Francisco. The 30-year-old American is seeking to join Walter Hagen as just the second player to win the major for a third consecutive year.

After winning the 2018 PGA Championship, Koepka successfully defended his title last year at Bethpage Black and is now aiming to become the first to win three straight since Hagen captured four in a row, beginning in 1924. “My game feels like it’s in really, really good shape right now,” said Koepka. “I like the way I’m hitting it, and it feels like I am putting it really well. “Every day is a lot more comfortable. I’m excited.”

“This is a big-boy golf course. I think it kind of plays into my hands.” Golf’s first major championship of 2020 will be contested without spectators after the season was placed on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Prior to its postponement on March 17, the PGA Championship was originally scheduled for play May 14-17. This week was also the time set aside for the men’s

Summer Olympic golf tournament in Japan.

The US PGA Tour has been back, minus spectators, since early June but will really kick into high gear over the next couple of weeks. More than a half dozen players and several caddies have tested positive in the eight weeks since the PGA Tour resumed.

Players, caddies and officials are tested for the coronavirus before entering the grounds. Players also undergo daily temperature screenings and their clubhouse has been redesigned to allow for three metres (10 feet) of space between lockers.

“Some sports are struggling to get their seasons going and things going and figure it out. Luckily the PGA Tour and the entities have been able to provide a safe environment with testing,” said Spanish golfer Jon Rahm.

The PGA Championship launches the busiest phase of the disrupted season. Following the PGA Championship are three weeks of FedEx Cup playoff events with the US Open on September 17-20 at Winged Foot near New York. Lately when it comes to majors, the smart money has been on Koepka. But there is plenty of star power in San Francisco this week, including last week’s Memphis tournament winner and new world number one Justin Thomas.

“Last week is over with. This is a new week,” Thomas said. “We have a new field, new guys that are out here, all trying to win a major. “I’m trying to get rested more than anything. Get my energy back so we’re ready to go come today.” Thomas will tee off in a group with Tiger Woods and Rory McIlroy. Woods and McIlroy have already hoisted trophies at Harding Park. —AFP

Woods ready for leap into unknown at fan-free major

SAN FRANCISCO: Tiger Woods is preparing for a journey into the unknown as he heads into this week’s PGA Championship hunting for a 16th major championship against the surreal backdrop of a deserted course at TPC Harding Park.

Throughout his career, the 44-year-old former world number one has become accustomed to roaring galleries following his every shot, providing a jolt of energy that Woods has fed off time and again.

Yet this week’s PGA Championship in San Francisco will be different. Restrictions imposed due to COVID-19 mean that the first major of 2020 will be a fan-free, muted affair. Woods got an early taste of his changed environment on Tuesday during a media briefing. Where in the past a scrum of reporters would have attended, on Tuesday only a handful of journalists were present.

“Well, that’s an unknown,” Woods said when asked about how the absence of fans might affect his chances. “I don’t know if anyone in our generation has ever played without fans in a major championship. It’s going to be very different. “But it’s still a major championship. It’s still the best players in the world. We all understand that

going into it, so there’s going to be plenty of energy from the competitive side. “But as far as the energy outside the ropes, that is an unknown. And hopefully I can put myself in a position where I can be in that position where I can feel what it feels like to have no fans and also coming down the stretch with a chance to win.”

Woods’ former caddie, New Zealander Steve Williams, is among those who believe that the lack of fans might prove to be a hindrance. “With that element missing, for someone who hasn’t played a lot of tournament golf this year, it’ll be challenging for Tiger to find that spark he needs,” Williams said this week.

Woods experienced new fan-less reality at the Memorial Tournament last month, at Muirfield Village, in Dublin, Ohio. He finished tied for 40th. “Those four days at Muirfield were a bit different,” Woods said.

“It reminded me of sometimes on the weekend, you’d tee off Saturday morning and you’d just barely make the cut and you’re first off and there’s no one out there. “But generally by the time you make the back nine, there’s thousands of people out there on the golf course waiting for the leaders to tee off.

“But that never happened. So that’s the new world we live in. We just have to get used to it.” Woods meanwhile has one eye on this week’s weather forecast in San Francisco, with the former world number one’s lower back notoriously vulnerable to the cooler temperatures expected. “When it’s cooler like this, it’s just making sure that my core stays warm, layering up properly,” said Woods. “I know I won’t have the same range of motion as I would back home in Florida where it’s 95 every day. That’s just the way it is.” —AFP

Sports

Lopez toss five scoreless innings as Marlins end hiatus with shutout win

Pirates turn to Williams hoping to cool scorching Twins

BALTIMORE: Starter Pablo Lopez tossed five scoreless innings, Francisco Cervelli and Jesus Aguilar homered, and the Miami Marlins returned from an eight-day hiatus with a 4-0 shutout of the host Baltimore Orioles on Tuesday night. The game was Miami's first since July 26 after 18 players tested positive for COVID-19 following a three-game series in Philadelphia to open the season. Lopez (1-0) allowed just two hits, didn't issue a walk and matched his career high with seven strikeouts in his season debut. Relievers James Hoyt, Richard Bleier, Brad Boxberger and Brandon Kintzler tossed an inning each for the Marlins, who fanned a season-high 11. Baltimore's John Means (0-1) pitched 4 2/3 innings and allowed one run on two hits. He struck out four without a walk.

INDIANS 4, REDS 2

Franmil Reyes hit a tiebreaking, two-run homer in the eighth inning, and Shane Bieber pitched into the eighth inning as visiting Cleveland beat Cincinnati. Reyes' first home run of the season went deep into center field and helped the Indians snap a four-game losing streak. The Reds' three-game winning streak ended. Bieber (3-0) yielded solo homers to Nick Castellanos and Eugenio Suarez among five hits while striking out eight and 7 2/3 innings. Bieber, who pitched 14 scoreless innings and struck out 27 while winning his first two starts of the year, walked two on Tuesday.

ROCKIES 5, GIANTS 2

German Marquez pitched into the eighth inning, Nolan Arenado homered for the second straight game, and Colorado won in Denver. Charlie Blackmon had two hits, drove in two and scored a run, and Yency Almonte got the last five outs for his first major league save. The Rockies have won eight of their past nine after dropping the opening game of the season. Marquez (2-1) allowed two runs on six hits and struck out nine in 7 1/3 innings against the Giants, who have dropped three in a row. Colorado native Kevin Gausman (0-1) gave up four runs on five hits and struck out seven in 5 1/3 innings. He walked one.

TWINS 7, PIRATES 3

Nelson Cruz went 3-for-4 with a run and an RBI, and Jose Berrios picked up his first victory of the season as Minnesota topped Pittsburgh in Minneapolis for its fifth straight win. Eddie Rosario



He struck out four without a walk

had two hits and two RBIs, and Max Kepler walked a career-high four times and scored twice for the Twins, who finished their eight-game homestand with a 7-1 mark. Berrios (1-1) allowed one run on four hits and three walks over six innings while striking out six. Trevor May got the final two outs for his first save. Joe Musgrove (0-3) allowed five runs on six hits and five walks in 3 1/3 innings. Erik Gonzalez went 3-for-4 with a double and a run, and Phillip Evans had three hits and an RBI for the Pirates, who lost their sixth consecutive game.

RAYS 5, RED SOX 1

Hunter Renfroe hit a go-ahead two-run double in the fourth inning, Joey Wendle added three hits and Tampa Bay ended a five-game losing streak with a win over Boston in St. Petersburg, Fla. Austin Meadows went 2-for-4 with an RBI in his season debut as the Rays won the opener of a two-game set. Charlie Morton (1-1) gave up a run on five hits and striking out five over 5 2/3 innings. Mitch Moreland homered for the Red Sox, who lost their fourth straight. J.D. Martinez had two hits. Nathan Eovaldi (1-1) allowed four runs on six hits and a walk in five innings, striking out six.

BRAVES 10, BLUE JAYS 1

Atlanta belted three home runs, and Max Fried



BALTIMORE: Jon Berti #5 of the Miami Marlins steals second base as shortstop Andrew Velazquez #13 of the Baltimore Orioles applies the late tag in the first inning at Oriole Park at Camden Yards in Baltimore, Maryland. — AFP

was locked in on the mound in a win over visiting Toronto. Matt Adams, Tyler Flowers and Austin Riley each went deep as the Braves won for the sixth time in the past seven games. Fried (2-0) worked six innings and allowed one run on four hits and two walks while striking out three. The Blue Jays played for the first time since Thursday. The club was stranded in Washington after the league postponed its series in Philadelphia because of COVID-19 concerns. Matt Shoemaker (0-1) took the loss after giving up six runs, six hits, three walks with two strikeouts over 4 2/3 innings. He allowed all three home runs.

DODGERS 5, PADRES 2

AJ Pollock broke a tie with a two-out double in the seventh inning as a pinch hitter and added a solo homer in the ninth to lead Los Angeles to a win

at San Diego. The Dodgers, who rallied from a 2-0 deficit, were no-hit into the sixth inning by Dinelson Lamet. The right-hander wound up charged with two runs (one earned) on two hits in 5 2/3 innings. Timely two-out hitting by Corey Seager and Pollock, combined with a pair of costly errors by the Padres, gave Dodgers starter Dustin May the victory. May (1-0) struck out eight while throwing six innings of two-run ball. Kenley Jansen picked up his third save by throwing a scoreless ninth.

Howie Kendrick homered and collected four hits as Washington built an early lead and held to beat visiting New York. Kendrick finished 4-for-4 — his 24th career four-hit game — and hit his homer in the first inning as the Nationals raced out to a 5-0 lead against Mets starter Steven Matz (0-2). Washington lefty Patrick Corbin (1-0) allowed three runs and eight hits in 5 2/3 innings. — Reuters

Fulham return to Premier League promised land

LONDON: Fulham made an instant return to the Premier League on Tuesday, beating Brentford 2-1 at Wembley in what is regarded as the most lucrative game in world football. Defender Joe Bryan was the unlikely hero for Scott Parker's side in the Championship play-off final, scoring two goals in extra time after the London clubs were locked at 0-0 at the end of a cagey 90 minutes.

Henrik Dalsgaard scored a late consolation for Brentford but it was too little too late for Thomas Frank's team, who have not played in the English top-flight for 73 years. The Craven Cottage club will earn around £135 million (\$176 million) for bouncing back from relegation last season and this result also gives rookie boss Parker a first success of his fledgling managerial career.

"We've done what we've done tonight, but there's still improvement, and that's what makes me so proud and happy," Parker told Sky Sports. "For all of the good players and everything you see, what makes me so happy I see a group of players who only a year ago were struggling psychologically, didn't have a mindset or mentality."

"I've driven this team every single day and what makes me proud is I stood on the touchline tonight and have seen a team that represents what I've been saying over the last 12 months."

Champions League last-16 ties: How they stand

PARIS: The UEFA Champions League returns on Friday with the remaining places at the final tournament in Lisbon up for grabs as Europe's top clubs look to go all the way and lift the trophy on August 23 after a suspension of five months because of the coronavirus. AFP Sport looks at the four outstanding last 16, second legs — all being played behind closed doors — for a reminder of where they stand:

JUVENTUS V LYON

(Friday 1900GMT: Lyon won first leg 1-0)

It is nearly six months since officials in Lyon questioned the decision to allow the first leg to go ahead as coronavirus cases took off in northern Italy. Yet the game was played in front of almost 60,000 spectators, including nearly three thousand Juventus supporters. Lucas Tousart's goal gave Lyon a surprise 1-0 win on the night, but much has changed since then — for a start Tousart is no longer at Lyon having signed for Hertha Berlin. Lyon were a lowly seventh when the French season was brought to an early end. Their defeat on penalties to Paris Saint-Germain in last Friday's League Cup final — their first competitive game since March — means they must win the Champions League to qualify for Europe next season.

That seems unlikely, but putting out Juventus might not be. The Old Lady have just won their



LONDON: Fulham supporters gather outside their team's Craven Cottage football stadium to celebrate the club's promotion to the English Premier League, in west London, following their Championship play-off victory over Brentford. — AFP

BRYAN DOUBLE

Left-back Bryan broke the deadlock for Fulham in the 105th minute when he made the most of a costly misjudgement by Brentford goalkeeper David Raya. While Raya and everyone else expected a cross from a free-kick 35 yards out, Bryan beat the goalkeeper at his near post to break the deadlock.

The goal sparked wild celebrations, which only

ninth successive Serie A title, yet there are doubts about Maurizio Sarri's side. Juve won just twice and lost four of their final eight league games, and in Europe they may be reliant on Cristiano Ronaldo's appetite for more Champions League success.

MANCHESTER CITY V REAL MADRID

(Friday 1900GMT: City won first leg 2-1)

Pep Guardiola's City have already claimed one major European victory this summer after the club's successful appeal to the Court of Arbitration for Sport which saw their two-year Champions League ban overturned.

That may mean they are extra motivated to go on and win the trophy for the first time, even if Guardiola insists "this issue is over". They are in prime position to reach the quarter-finals after a 2-1 victory in Spain in the first leg, when Kevin De Bruyne's penalty won the game.

Nevertheless they are without the injured Sergio Aguero, and there is pressure on them. Their campaign was underwhelming domestically and the high point of City's experience in the Champions League so far remains a defeat to Real in the semi-finals in 2016. Madrid, in contrast, have been there and done it so many times before, winning the competition four times in the last six years alone. Zinedine Zidane's team are fresh from claiming the Spanish title after an exceptional run of post-shutdown form. However, they must do without Sergio Ramos, who is suspended after being sent off in the first leg.

BAYERN MUNICH V CHELSEA

(Saturday 1900GMT: Bayern won first leg 3-0)

This is surely a formality, with Bayern producing a stunning display to beat Chelsea 3-0 away in

grew in the 117th minute when Bryan got forward again and exchanged passes with substitute Aleksandar Mitrovic before finding the net again. Promotion was confirmed for Fulham but only after Henrik Dalsgaard had pulled one back for Brentford with seconds to go, heading home after Christian Norgaard had knocked a free-kick across the face of goal. — AFP

February thanks to Serge Gnabry's brace and a Robert Lewandowski goal. The Bavarians picked up where they left off in style when the Bundesliga resumed in mid-May, romping to a league and cup double by winning 11 games in a row post-lockdown. Overall Hansi Flick's side have won 17 on the bounce and are unbeaten in 26 matches since early December. Lewandowski has 51 goals this season.

Their focus should therefore be on a quarter-final against Barcelona or Napoli, while the pressure is off Chelsea after they achieved their aim of finishing in the top four in the Premier League.

Frank Lampard's team lost to Arsenal in the FA Cup final last weekend and lost Cesar Azpilicueta and Christian Pulisic to injury in the same game. It looks an impossible task for them.

BARCELONA V NAPOLI

(Saturday 1900GMT: First leg 1-1)

After missing out to Real Madrid in La Liga, Barcelona cannot contemplate being knocked out of the Champions League already, but they are far from safe against Napoli. They drew 1-1 in the first leg in Italy with Antoine Griezmann cancelling out Dries Mertens' opener, so Barca have the upper hand. However, all is not well at the Camp Nou, with coach Quique Setien under intense scrutiny.

Barca are looking for a sixth European Cup, five years on from their last success. Lionel Messi has turned 33 since the first leg and time is running out for the Argentine to lift the trophy again. Napoli are a club on the up under Gennaro Gattuso, witness their triumph on penalties over Juventus in the Italian Cup final in June and their recent statement signing of Lille's Nigerian striker Victor Osimhen for a fee that could reach 80 million euros (\$94.2m). — AFP

German clubs agree plans to allow fans to return next month

BERLIN: Football clubs in Germany's top two divisions on Tuesday agreed to plans drawn up by the league which could allow the partial return of fans to stadiums from mid-September, despite the coronavirus pandemic.

Under the plans proposed by the German Football League (DFL) for the new season, which starts on September 18, the clubs agreed on four key points. Fans would only be allowed to sit, tickets would be personalised so spectators could be traced, alcohol at matches would be banned until October and there will be no away fans until the end of the year.

The plan is however subject to approval by German authorities, with health ministers of the country's 16 states to meet on Monday over the issue. Germany has recorded 211,281 cases and 9,156 deaths due to the coronavirus, and in April began easing curbs imposed to halt transmission.

But fears are growing over a second wave as daily number of new infections was steadily climbing again, in recent weeks hitting levels not seen since May. "The priority in Germany at the moment is not full stadiums, but people's health," said Christian Seifert, chief executive of the Bundesliga after a virtual meeting of the clubs.

"When and how many spectators are allowed to return to the stadiums is not a decision for the DFL to make." The league's plans for fans to return has been the subject of debate among politicians and virologists in Germany. Several fan groups have also criticised the plans, fearing long-term restrictions of their rights. However, the league insists any changes would only be temporary while the pandemic continues to be a factor.

Seifert says the rate of infection must be taken into account and "should by no means be underestimated". "Professional football can only return to normality in stages," he added. "We will have to regain normality in small steps. We cannot go from zero to 100."

After a two-month hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the final nine rounds of last season's Bundesliga matches were completed behind closed doors in late June. Amid tight hygiene measures, Germany was the first country to restart its league season which paved the way for other top European leagues to follow suit.

However, Bundesliga clubs lose millions of euros in match day revenue for each game played in front of empty stands and are eager to welcome fans back. For example, Borussia Dortmund, who finished second to champions Bayern Munich last season, are planning to have up to 15,000 fans for home games next season.

On a typical match day in Dortmund, over 81,000 spectators would fill Signal Iduna Park. However, Seifert said even a figure of 10,000 at matches would be hard to justify with large events banned in Germany until October 31. "Nobody at the DFL will require a specific number of fans," he said. — AFP

Sport Times

THURSDAY, AUGUST 6, 2020

14 Hurricanes cap three-game sweep of Rangers, Flames rout Jets



15 Lopez toss five scoreless innings as Marlins end hiatus with shutout win



15 Fulham return to Premier League promised land



LAKE BUENA VISTA: Luka Doncic #77 of the Dallas Mavericks shoots against the Sacramento Kings in the second half of a NBA basketball game at HP Field House at ESPN Wide World Of Sports Complex in Lake Buena Vista, Florida. — AFP

Doncic, Mavs nip Kings in OT

Blazers turn back Rockets, tighten postseason race

ORLANDO: Luka Doncic capped a 34-point, 20-rebound, 12-assist triple-double with an inside basket to break a tie with 1:57 remaining in overtime Tuesday afternoon as the Dallas Mavericks outlasted the Sacramento Kings for a 114-110 victory at HP Field House inside the NBA bubble near Orlando. Tim Hardaway Jr. had six of his 22 points in the extra session, helping the Mavericks win for the first time in three tries since the NBA restart. De'Aaron Fox went for a team-high 28 points for the Kings, who fell to the brink of elimination in the Western Conference playoff race with a third straight defeat since the restart.

Doncic's triple-double was his league-leading 16th of the season, while his 20 rebounds were a career high, eclipsing his previous best of 18 set against New Orleans in December. Kristaps Porzingis matched Hardaway with 22 points, while Dorian Finney-Smith collected a career-high 16 rebounds to complement 16 points.

A Buddy Hield 3-pointer gave Sacramento a 102-99 lead with 3:30 left in overtime before Hardaway was fouled on a 3-point attempt and converted three straight free throws for the game's final tie at 102-all. Doncic then connected on his go-ahead hoop, and Maxi Kleber then hit a 3-pointer with 1:22 to go, propelling the Mavericks to the win.

BROOKLYN NETS 119 - MILWAUKEE BUCKS 116

Timothe Luwawu-Cabarrot scored a career-high

26 points and hit two clutch 3-pointers down the stretch to help Brooklyn pull out the win over Milwaukee. Luwawu-Cabarrot hit 8 of 12 from the field and made five 3-pointers. Garrett Temple added 19 for the Nets, who played without Jarrett Allen (rest), Joe Harris (lower back/right hamstring) and Caris LeVert (left thigh contusion). Brooklyn also lost Jamal Crawford early in the second due to a left hamstring injury after he played six minutes.

Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 16 points and rested for the second half in a predetermined move by Milwaukee coach Mike Budenholzer, who also rested Khris Middleton in the second half. Kyle Korver added 13 as Milwaukee lost for the sixth time in eight games dating to March 1.

PHOENIX SUNS 117 - LOS ANGELES CLIPPERS 115

Devin Booker's buzzer-beating, turnaround jumper as time expired capped a 35-point effort, and Phoenix won its third straight to open the bubble restart, knocking off Los Angeles. Cameron Payne finished with 12 points off the bench and was one of five Suns to score in double figures. Deandre Ayton scored 19 points to go with seven rebounds and four assists, and Ricky Rubio added 18 points and four assists. The Clippers shot a dismal 8 of 29 from long range. Kawhi Leonard went 2 of 4 from outside en route to a team-high 27 points, and JaMychal Green shot 2 of 4 beyond the arc for 10 points. No other

Clipper made more than one 3-pointer. Paul George, whose 23 points were second on the team, finished 1 of 7 from behind the 3-point arc and 6 of 17 from the floor in total.

PORTLAND TRAIL BLAZERS 110 - HOUSTON ROCKETS 102

Damian Lillard registered 21 points, nine rebounds and eight assists to help Portland post a victory over



Turnaround jumper

Houston. CJ McCollum contributed 20 points and seven rebounds, and Jusuf Nurkic added 18 points, 19 rebounds and three blocked shots for the Trail Blazers, who moved within 1 1/2 games of the eighth-place Memphis Grizzlies in the Western Conference race. James Harden recorded 23 points and nine assists for the Rockets, who are tied with the Utah Jazz for the fourth-best record in the West. Russell Westbrook tallied 15 points as his streak of consecutive 20-point performances ended at 36.

INDIANA PACERS 120 - ORLANDO MAGIC 109

T.J. Warren made his first eight field-goal attempts on his way to 32 points, and Indiana led Orlando wire to wire. Warren continued his red-hot scoring touch since the season restarted from the COVID-19 hiatus. He has 119 points over three games, which ties a franchise record, and Indiana remains perfect since the restart. Myles Turner added 21 points, and Victor Oladipo chipped in 13 points in his return to the lineup after a scheduled rest on Monday. Nikola Vucevic led the Magic with 24 points and grabbed 10 rebounds. Aaron Gordon added 20 points, and Terrance Ross delivered his second 20-plus-point effort in as many games off the bench with 20 — all of which came in the second half.

MIAMI HEAT 112 - BOSTON CELTICS 106

Bam Adebayo produced a double-double with 21 points and a game-high 12 rebounds to lead Miami to a win over Boston. The Heat played without leading scorer Jimmy Butler, who sat out due to a sore right ankle, but Miami improved to 6-6 without him. Miami also got 21 points from Duncan Robinson and 20 from reserve point guard Goran Dragic. However, Dragic left the game with five seconds left due to a left ankle injury. Ex-Celtics center Kelly Olynyk added 15 points, a game-high eight assists and six rebounds while starting in place of Butler. The Celtics got 23 points and seven rebounds from Jayson Tatum plus 18 points and team-high 10 rebounds from Jaylen Brown. — AFP

Spain and Real Madrid legend Casillas retires

MADRID: Spain's World Cup-winning goalkeeper Iker Casillas announced his retirement on Tuesday, after being sidelined for more than a year with a heart problem. Casillas, 39, also won the European Championship twice with his country in a trophy-laden career which included more than 700 games for Real Madrid.

"Today is both one of the most important and most difficult days of my sporting life, the time to say goodbye has arrived," he said on Twitter. Casillas joined Portuguese side Porto in 2015 after a tearful departure from Madrid. He suffered a heart attack in May last year.

He played 167 times for Spain, winning the 2010 World Cup and the Euros in 2008 and 2012 in a golden age for Spanish football. He lifted five La Liga

titles and the Champions League on three occasions during his time at the Santiago Bernabeu. "The best goalkeeper in the history of Real Madrid and Spanish football joined us at the age of 9. He was formed here and defended our shirt for 25 years, becoming one of our most emblematic captains of all time," the club said in a statement.

"Today one of the most important footballers in our 118 years of history calls it a day as a professional player, a player we love and admire, a goalkeeper who has made the Real Madrid legacy bigger with his work and exemplary behaviour both on and off the pitch," they added.

Former club and country team-mate Sergio Ramos was among many players to praise the veteran, nicknamed 'The Saint', on social media. "Football thanks you, man. Forever a legend @IkerCasillas," Ramos tweeted.

Ex-Spain and Barcelona midfielder Andres Iniesta followed suit. "All the best for you and your family in this new stage that will be presented in your life", he tweeted. Madrid's current goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois also showed his appreciation for Casillas.

"Idol, companion, rival, reference... you are exem-

play in many facets, but the main one in being a great person!! Congratulations on the road @IkerCasillas and thank you for everything!!" he posted on Twitter.

'HERO'

Vicente del Bosque, who coached Casillas at Madrid and with Spain also hailed his efforts. "Casillas has been a hero of the national team and Spanish football," he said. Madrid president Florentino Perez said Casillas had left a lasting impression at the club.

"Iker Casillas says goodbye as a professional player, having contributed to further enhance the myth and legend of Real Madrid," Perez told the club's website. "His legacy will always be here. Iker knows that this is and will always be his home".

Former Italy captain Gianluigi Buffon, who played against Casillas on numerous occasions and is also seen as one of his country's finest ever goalkeepers, echoed Ramos and Del Bosque's praise. "They say competition makes us better than others but not perfect faced with ourselves. Maybe this futile pursuit of perfection is what made us who we are. #Gracias Iker, without you, everything would have been less meaningful," Buffon tweeted. — AFP



JOHANNESBURG: File photo taken on July 11, 2010 Spain's goalkeeper Iker Casillas celebrates with the trophy following the 2010 World Cup football final between the Netherlands and Spain on July 11, 2010 at Soccer City stadium in Soweto, suburban Johannesburg. — AFP