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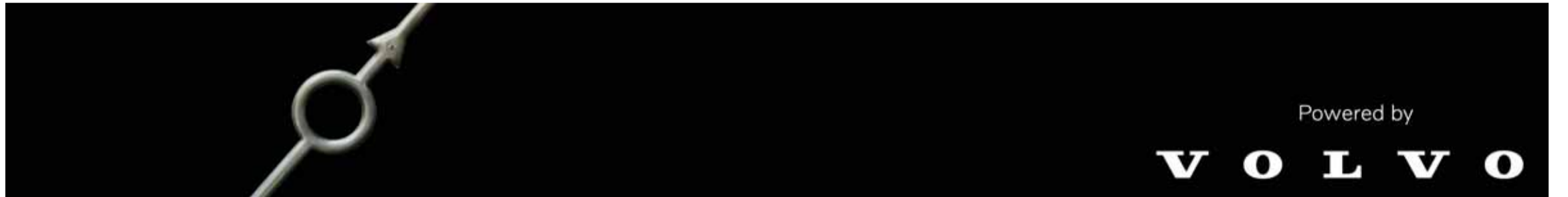
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US hails Kuwait as 'proud and indispensable' ally

Deputy Amir sends condolences over death of former US security advisor Scowcroft

KUWAIT: The US commemorated Friday the 30th anniversary of Operation Desert Shield, recognizing Kuwait as "a proud and indispensable ally". "Today marks 30 years since the United States led a coalition of 35 nations to launch Operation Desert Shield and stand against the occupation of Kuwait," Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said in a statement. "We remember and honor those who fought side by side, and we recognize Kuwait as a proud and indispensable ally," he added.

"The liberation of Kuwait is an important reminder of what countries can

achieve when they come together during times of crisis and fight for freedom and justice. The US-Kuwait friendship has never been stronger and our partnership is helping shape a more peaceful and prosperous Middle East," Pompeo affirmed. The US top diplomat concluded by saying "on behalf of the American people, I join Kuwait in commemorating the leadership, courage and sacrifices of our people 30 years ago".

Meanwhile, HH the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Friday sent a cable of condolences, including the sym-

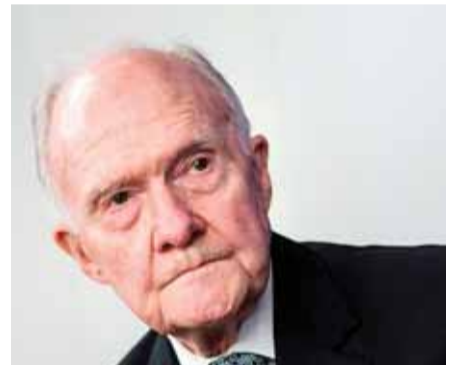
pathies of HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, to US President Donald Trump over the death of former national security advisor Brent Scowcroft. HH the Deputy Amir and the Crown Prince recalled Scowcroft's honorable role during the war to liberate Kuwait in 1991. HH Sheikh Nawaf sent a similar cable to Scowcroft's family as well. HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables.

Scowcroft, the respected national security advisor to two Republican presidents and a Washington heavyweight

who served administrations from Richard Nixon to Barack Obama, died aged 95, the George H W Bush Foundation announced Friday. An outspoken critic of the US-led invasion of Iraq, Scowcroft was a member of the Republican foreign policy establishment who nevertheless endorsed Democrat Hillary Clinton during the 2016 White House campaign won by President Donald Trump. He died of natural causes, a statement from the foundation said.

"No individual has provided as many commanders-in-chief as much national

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Brent Scowcroft

Ban on sheep shipments to Kuwait sought

CAPE TOWN: A South African animal rights group is seeking a court order banning a Kuwaiti firm from shipping tens of thousands of sheep across the equator to the Middle East during summer months in conditions it called "extreme cruelty". The case is the latest attempt by South Africa's National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (NSPCA) to block such sheep exports, and it is pressing the government to introduce new regulations on how live animals are transported.

On Thursday, the NSPCA asked Grahamstown High Court in the Eastern Cape for an interim court interdict preventing a ship belonging to Kuwaiti livestock exporter Al Mawashi from sailing out of South Africa's East London port with around 70,000 sheep. In court papers seen by Reuters, the NSPCA said they have been looking into Al Mawashi and its parent company, Livestock Transport and Trading Company (LTTC), since late last year.

The NSPCA said cramped spaces and extreme heat during these voyages could lead to some animals being "cooked alive" as temperatures as high as 60 degrees Celsius have been recorded onboard livestock ships in the Arabian Gulf. "Those (sheep) that survive death suffer a great deal over the two to three week ordeal," said the NSPCA. "The plight that these sheep have to endure - anywhere between 40,000 to 80,000 per shipment at a time - is horrific," the NSPCA added in its court submission.

Mawashi, which has local offices in East London, sailed its first shipload of sheep from South Africa to Kuwait in October followed by a second cargo in March. The company had to seek new livestock suppliers after Australia in 2018 banned the export of live sheep to the Middle East during the Northern Hemisphere's summer months. Mawashi denied all cruelty allegations and said it's ship, MV Al Messilah, was modified earlier this year with a new ventilation system that would help eliminate "heat stress" and ensure there was no cruelty to animals.

Mawashi said there were fundamental problems with the evidence relied on by the NSPCA and said the rights group had not inspected its ship in July 2020 when given an opportunity to do so. South Africa's Red Meat Industry Forum (RMIF) chairman Tim Davidson said, "if standards are set by the Department of Agriculture the current problem with the shipment of sheep on the Al Messilah would be resolved," adding the group was "totally opposed" to any form of animal cruelty. — Reuters

Rescuers shaken by 'blood, death' of India jet crash

KOZHIKODE, India: Indian authorities had practiced for years for a jet overshooting the "table-top" runway at Kozhikode airport, but local resident Fazal Puthiyakath was not prepared for the "blood and death" of the real thing. The 32-year-old businessman and his neighbors were first on the scene after an Air India Express plane crashed over the runway down a 10-m bank and broke in two during a fierce storm late Friday, killing 18 people and injuring more than 120.

Puthiyakath and others rushed out after hearing "a blast-like" roar. "All that we could hear were screams all around. People were soaked in blood everywhere, some had fractures, some were unconscious," he told AFP. The impact was so brutal that the nose of the Boeing 737 finished about 20 m from the back half of the jet. The two pilots were killed but rescuers said the death toll would have been much higher if the jet had caught fire.

Continued on Page 2



KARIPUR, India: Officials inspect the wreckage of an Air India Express jet at Calicut International Airport yesterday. — AFP

Seeing beyond antibodies in immunity hunt

PARIS: Could the ghosts of your previous colds help protect you from COVID-19, even if you have never been infected by the new coronavirus spreading across the planet? Scientists are investigating a poorly-understood immune mechanism in the body that they hope could help efforts to curb the pandemic. At the moment, people who think they have had the virus might get a serological test to

check for antibodies.

These proteins help fight off infection and may prevent them from getting the disease again in the future - but there are signs that with COVID-19 they could fade away within weeks. This leaves the other instrument in the body's toolkit - T lymphocytes - a type of white blood cell responsible for the second part of the immune response. With little yet known about how they operate against COVID-19, scientists are racing to fill in the gaps in our knowledge.

One hypothesis is that these T cells might help give people a level of cross-immunity protection from COVID-19 because they "remember"

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Youths fuel global rise in infections

MADRID: Health officials fighting the coronavirus pandemic say they have a new problem - carefree youths who are ignoring social distancing rules and letting loose around the world, fuelling a surge in infections. As authorities lifted restrictions on gatherings after months of lockdown and summer holidays began in the north-

ern hemisphere, bars and nightclubs have filled up with teens and young adults. And where venues are closed, young revelers are simply moving the party elsewhere - to beaches, parks and streets which have become COVID-19 hotspots.

Near the British city of Manchester thousands of people have gathered in outdoor rave parties organized on social media while the sprawling Bois de Vincennes park in Paris has regularly hosted illegal techno music parties featuring paper lanterns and electric generators that power turntables. "Partying is crucial," said one of the

Continued on Page 2



HANOI: A health worker wearing protective clothing conducts a swab test on a woman at a testing center for COVID-19 yesterday. — AFP



SAINT-DENIS, France: A woman hula-hoops among people enjoying an open air party north of Paris on Aug 1, 2020. — AFP

Local

Kuwait's Awqaf Ministry to contribute \$1 million for Lebanon

Red Crescent donates 10 ambulances, health ministry sends medical supplies



KUWAIT: Medical supplies donated by Kuwait to Lebanon are loaded into a Kuwait Air Force plane on Friday. — Defense Ministry photos

KUWAIT: Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Dr Fahad Al-Afasi announced on Friday that Kuwait's Awqaf Secretariat General prepares to contribute \$1 million to serve medical aid and supplies to Lebanese people. This donation comes on the instructions of His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah after Beirut's massive port blast, Afasi said. He also assured that the department's main role is to lend a hand to the harmed and affected people in Islamic societies, expressing condolences to victims' families and wished all injured speedy recovery.

Meanwhile, Kuwait's Ministry of Commerce and Industry announced sending food to the Lebanese capital after the terrible explosions that occurred Tuesday. In a statement to the press, the ministry said all aid was sent in cooperation with foreign and defense ministries, including aid from Kuwait's Flour Mills and Bakeries Company; on

the orders of His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Moreover, Assistant Undersecretary for Technical Affairs and Commerce Development



Commerce Ministry donates food

Mohammad Al-Enezi stated that all charities were given through both commerce and health ministries, besides Kuwait Red Crescent Society. Enezi also expressed his gratitude and apprecia-

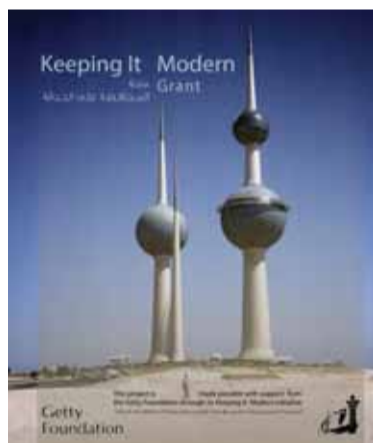
tion to Kuwait's Defense Ministry due to its huge efforts to ensure delivering the aid as soon as possible to the Lebanese people. In the meantime, Kuwaiti Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan called Lebanese Minister of Economy and Trade Raoul Nehme, examining Lebanon's aid needs.

Ten ambulances

The Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) had announced on Friday donating 10 fully equipped ambulance vehicles and three mobile blood donation vehicles for the Lebanese Red Cross. Dr Musaed Al-Enezi, the head of the KRCS mission in Lebanon, said in a press statement that the society kick started its field activities in Beirut by donating respirators to Al-Wardiah Hospital in the district of Al-Ashrafiya. The hospital was badly damaged in Tuesday's huge blast that ripped through Beirut Port and inflicted extensive damage throughout the capital. The KRCS has also

handed over to the hospital other medical kits and protective masks. The society's team was also set to deliver more aid to other hospitals yesterday, Enezi noted. KRCS has shipped in by air up to 36 tons of medical equipment, kits, medicines, surgery tools and supplies used for protection against the novel coronavirus.

Kuwait's Ministry of Health on Friday sent a new shipment of medical supplies for the Lebanese people to help them recover from the huge explosion. The shipment, the second sent to Lebanon since the massive blast, was prepared in coordination and cooperation with Foreign and Defense Ministries, and upon instructions of His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, an MoH official said. Dr Abdullah Al-Bader, Assistant Undersecretary for Pharmaceutical and Food supervision, said a military transport airplane carried the second shipment which arrived in Lebanon on Friday. — KUNA



NCCAL wins grant to preserve Kuwait Towers

KUWAIT: The National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) announced yesterday that it has won a Getty Foundation grant to study the sustainable protection of art designing and implementing metal plates that cover the spherical structures of the Kuwait Towers, designed by Danish architect Malene Bjorn in 1968. The council stated in a press release

that this grant comes through the 'Keeping It Modern' program, which preserves the urban heritage of the 20th century, especially buildings of exceptional global value, to witness an opportunity for scientific progress.

The Secretary General of NCCAL Kamel Al-Abduljalil said that this grant is considered an opportunity for scientific cooperation and knowledge exchange to preserve the heritage of modernity. He pointed out that 90 applications were submitted for this grant and 13 buildings were selected, one of which was Kuwait Towers. Kuwait Towers won the Aga Khan Award in Islamic Architecture in 1980 as it represents distinctive design and symbol of Kuwait modernity. — KUNA



Kamel Al-Abduljalil

News in brief

Judges, doctors exempt

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti authorities gave permission to exempt judges and doctors from a decision to ban expatriates flying from 31 countries to enter Kuwait, Al-Jarida daily reported quoting sources who explained that the exemption came as per the Cabinet's request based on local health authorities' recommendations.

Money laundering

KUWAIT: Detectives arrested an illegal resident in South Surra over suspicions of involvement in suspected money laundering operations, the Interior Ministry's Relations and Security Media Department said in a statement, noting that further investigations are still in progress.

Private schools e-learning

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Education issued decision number 76/2020 on July 29, 2020 on mandating all private schools to activate e-learning and using virtual classes and all possible learning resources starting at the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year on October 4 and until students are allowed back in classes. The decision also urges private schools to re-regulate their tuition fees for the 2020-2021 school year by deducting 25 percent of the fees, compared to those paid for the 2019-2020 school year, to be paid for the period starting from the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year until students are back in class. Violating schools will be penalized. The decision also stipulated that previous orders to halt tuition fee increases in all private schools remain in effect.

Road open

KUWAIT: The Interior Ministry's Traffic General Department announced the opening of Abdullah Al-Jaber Expressway (Buhaith expressway) north of the country. The road is 27.5 kilometers long with 3 lanes in each direction and two emergency lanes.

Stay safe. Stay home. Stay informed.



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New app notifies motorists with traffic citations

KUWAIT: Interior Ministry Undersecretary Lt Gen Essam Al-Nahham launched the new "Trafficw" App which allows the public to take advantage of various traffic department e-services from their smartphones. Meanwhile, assistant director of the Traffic General Department Brigadier Yousif Al-Khaddah further explained that the free app notifies citizens and residents with various citations filed against them, any road blockages, traffic congestions and accidents. It also provides other services such as locating traffic departments, paying fines online, booking appointments for driving tests, renewing an automobile's registration and others. Khaddah added that subscribers can register by entering their data so that the traffic department can verify them then send an email with special code numbers per subscriber to use the app.



Shamal Az-Zour Al-Oula Power & Water Company to debut on Boursa Kuwait

Kuwait's first Public-Private Partnership project

KUWAIT: Shamal Az-Zour Al-Oula Power and Water Company KSCP announced that it received approval to list on Boursa Kuwait's Premier Market on 16 August 2020. The first power generation and water desalination company and the first Private Public Partnership (PPP) project to be listed in Kuwait. NBK Capital is the listing advisor.

Shamal Az-Zour Al-Oula Chairman Husam Abdullah Al Roumi said: "We are happy to announce this historic milestone in the Kuwaiti power sector and the capital markets in the region. The listing adds diversification to the market that will attract local, regional and international investors, it is a testament to the strength of the private sector and its ability to take the initiative for economic development and increasing non-oil revenues. I would like to thank our shareholders, our founders, and the citizens of Kuwait for making this milestone possible."

NBK Capital CEO Faisal Abdullatif Al-Hamad said, "Shamal Az-Zour Al-Oula represents a unique opportunity for citizens to invest in a privately-operated infrastructure project. The company operates in the resilient utilities sector, and benefits from a stable revenue outlook (as indicated in the public offering's informational memorandum) as a result of a long-term contract with Kuwait's Ministry of Electricity and Water."

"NBK Capital is proud to be associated with this mega project, from leading the consortium that advised on the company's public offering in Q4 of 2019 to acting as the company's listing advisor," Hamad said. The listing follows the successful distribution of 50 percent of the Company's total shares to Kuwaiti citizens during the last quarter of 2019, which



Az-Zour North One Power and Water Plant

was oversubscribed by 1.27x and attracted close to 127,000 investors.

The remaining 50 percent of shares are owned by different public and private entities as follows: 40 percent is owned by a private investor, represented by Azour North One Holding Company KSCC, which is owned by a consortium comprising ENGIE Sumitomo Corporation, AH Al-Sagar and Brothers; and 10 percent is owned by the Kuwait Investment Authority and the Public Institution for Social Security, each with a five percent ownership.

Shamal Az-Zour Al-Oula Power and Water

Company KSCP, is Kuwait's first company established under the Independent Water and Power Plant ("IWPP") Law. The Company operates the Az-Zour North One Power and Water Plant, which commenced commercial operations in November 2016. The plant supplies about 10 percent of Kuwait's installed power capacity and 20 percent of Kuwait's water desalination capacity. Power and water produced by the company are entirely supplied to the national power and water grid operated by the Kuwait Ministry of Electricity and Water under a 40-year long-term Energy Conversion and Water Purchase Agreement ("ECWPA").

State property infringements continue

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: Kuwait Municipality recently removed many encroachments on state property, especially those blocking the way to beaches, after the issue was highlighted by Kuwait Times last month and many other people who reported cases of such violations. But new infringements on state property are continuing.

Visitors to a beach near Salwa were unpleasantly surprised when they found an empty yard leading to the sea blocked by a fence with a locked gate. Previously, the violator was blocking the yard with vehicle and shrubbery, but has now erected a fence to block it completely.



Kuwait Times reported this violation to the Municipality, which is in charge of violations of state property, through the new municipal hotline 24727732. The operator of the line demanded the caller's name, report type and full address, along with the location to be sent to this number.

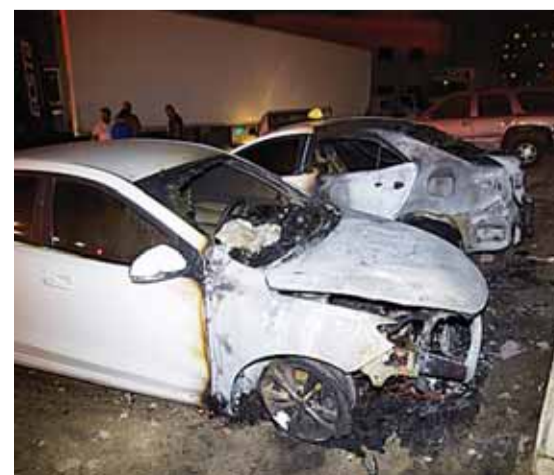
After sending full details of the location, nobody responded, even after repeated follow-up on this number. The Municipality hotline 139 is out of service without any intimation. Furthermore, its official website is unreachable. So people are currently not

able to report any violations.

The Municipality account on Instagram - @Kuwmun - is still operational, but comments on posts are blocked. And it seems nobody is answering direct messages. A post with statistics of complaints mentions these complaints were made through both hotlines. On its Twitter account @Kuwmun, the Municipality has posts mentioning receiving complaints through the WhatsApp hotline mentioned above. It also doesn't reply to most comments on Twitter.

Two vehicles catch fire

KUWAIT: Two vehicles recently caught fire in Khaitan as they were parked near a land cable that went ablaze, Kuwait Fire Service Directorate said in a press statement. Fire teams rushed to the scene and managed to contain the flames without reporting any casualties, they added. An investigation was opened into the case.



In my view

Construction, not destruction

By Abdellatif Sharaa

local@kuwaittimes.com

How nice and enjoyable it is to have people of all colors, races and backgrounds to be together and feel for each other and even worry about the wellbeing of one another, instead of competing for anything and everything, even the air we breathe!

The conflicts that are taking place across countries in many forms, and the painful confrontations between brothers of the same country, are useless and wasteful, as they are fought sometimes as a result of a power struggle, killing many young and old people, though they could be resolved with common sense and civil communications, instead of letting man's love of power destroy everything! I would like to share a story that I read earlier that shows how good it is to be constructive rather than destructive. Legend has it that a tailor decided to teach his grandson wisdom using his own way. The tailor picked his relatively-expensive pair of scissors and started to cut a large piece of cloth into several smaller ones. He then dropped his expensive scissors on the floor by his feet and picked a small needle and started to stitch the small pieces together into a very nice shirt. When he finished, he stuck his needle in the turban he was wearing on his head.

The grandson - who kept a close eye on what his grandfather was doing - could not keep silent and asked him: Why did you throw the expensive pair of scissors unceremoniously on the ground, and placed the cheap needle in your turban? The grandfather answered: The scissors cut the cloth into pieces, while the needle brought them back together in the form of a beautiful shirt.

He asked his grandson to be one who brings people together, not one who creates rifts among them. It is not necessary to be the best, but if someone has a problem, you should listen, and if one comes to apologize to you - forgive, and if a friend asks for a favor - help. Even if you harvest thorns in return, it is enough that you planted roses.

This is a great advice that we all must have the attitude to follow, and then see how peaceful and productive we all will be.

Finally: "Forgiveness is not about letting someone off the hook for their actions, but freeing ourselves of negative energies that bind us to them." —Satsuki Shibuya

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Virus rages in small town in India, and so does stigma

New York seeks to dissolve NRA over mismanagement

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MANAUS, Brazil: Photo shows an aerial picture of a burial taking place at an area where new graves have been dug up at the Nossa Senhora Aparecida cemetery in Manaus, in the Amazon forest in Brazil. — AFP

Latin America virus death toll mounts

India passes the milestone of two million infections

MONTEVIDEO: Latin America and the Caribbean have surpassed Europe to become the region hardest-hit with coronavirus deaths, as India passed the milestone of two million infections. The world's worst-affected region has reported 213,120 fatalities, 460 more than Europe, according to an AFP tally based on official data.

Worldwide there have been more than 19 million cases of coronavirus and over 715,000 deaths from the illness since it was first reported in China at the end of last year. The virus has flared up again in areas where it appeared to have been curbed and has steadily spread across India and Africa. India's cases have doubled in three weeks, reaching two million on Friday following a record daily jump of more than 60,000 new infections.

It is only the third country after the United States and Brazil to surpass two million cases. Official figures show the world's second most populous nation has also recorded 41,500 deaths. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government imposed one of the world's strictest lockdowns in late March, with tens of millions of migrant workers losing their jobs almost overnight.

But with the economy in tatters, restrictions have been steadily eased. Experts say the true numbers of cases and fatalities are grossly under-reported as causes of death in the country of 1.3

billion people are rarely properly recorded. The stigmatization of those infected has put off many from getting tested. "There's both the fear of the disease as well as of isolation and quarantine," Rajib Kumar, who heads the Centre of Social Medicine and Community Health at Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University, told AFP.

However, there have been some positive indicators in Africa, where health

ple like we used to see in Italy, like 1,000 people dying (a day), people tend to relax, they think the risk is not so much in Africa," said Stephen.

Mexico deaths rise

Much of the world is placing its hopes on an effective vaccine becoming available sooner rather than later. Up to 100 million COVID-19 vaccine doses could be made available for poorer countries by 2021, announced Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance. These vaccines, priced at a maximum of \$3 per dose, would be produced at the Serum Institute of India. In Latin America, which is already the region with the largest number of infections at 5.3 million, deaths continue to soar.

Over the last week, 44 percent of global fatalities from COVID-19 - 18,300 out of 41,500 - occurred in the region. More than half the region's infections, some 2.9 million, are in Brazil, which has also recorded 98,500 deaths among its 212 million people. Only the United States has been worse hit than Brazil. It added 1,062 new deaths on Friday to bring its toll to just over 161,000, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University. The second worst-affected country in Latin America, Mexico, passed 50,000 deaths on Thursday.

 **World records 715,000 deaths**

authorities warned against complacency amid hopes that the pandemic is peaking in some parts of the continent. "African countries are doing their best, despite... limitations" such as weak health systems, Mary Stephen of the World Health Organization's Africa office, told AFP. Some countries have seen declines of around 20 percent in cases but there remain fears of a second wave. "Because we don't see many peo-



SAO PAULO: Relatives mourn during the burial of 65-year-old Maria Joana Nascimento, who died suspected from the new coronavirus, at Vila Formosa Cemetery, on the outskirts of Sao Paulo, Brazil. — AFP

In the United States, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo said schools could reopen this fall if they meet certain criteria. Schools in several US states have reopened for in-person classes-but some have already been hit by large quarantines of students and staff following fresh outbreaks. The US economy regained 1.8 million jobs in July, according to government data, and the unemployment rate fell to 10.2 percent, but with COVID-19 cases spiking in several states economists raised concerns that the labor market could take a turn for the worse.

Cycling at risk

International sport continues to be affected by the virus despite many professional events restarting. Organizers of the world cycling championships, set to be held in Switzerland next month, warned the event may be called off because of local health rules. And two more top 10 women tennis players-Elina Svitolina and Kiki Bertens-withdrew from the US Open over virus concerns, joining women's world number one Ashleigh Barty of Australia and Spain's reigning men's champion Rafael Nadal. — AFP

Coronavirus hastens newspapers' slide into shaky digital future

PARIS: The coronavirus crisis has weighed heavily on print newspapers already battling for survival around the world, with the number of copies sold tumbling while less profitable digital readerships surge. Simply delivering printed papers to the shops-or having customers come in to buy them-has become a challenge, worsening a years-long decline in sales and advertising revenue. "Consumption of printed newspapers has fallen as lockdowns undermine physical distribution, almost certainly accelerating the shift to an all-digital future," the Reuters Institute's 2020 annual report said.

Major dailies in Brazil and Mexico have already switched to online-only or dropped some days' editions, while in the Philippines 10 of the 70 newspapers in the PPI association have shuttered. "Times are hard. There are no advertisers and no-one is reading us," PPI executive director Ariel Sebellino told AFP. The archipelago nation's small local newspapers were hardest hit during lockdown as street sales tumbled. "The industry is under siege and we've all taken bruises," Sebellino said.

Far from affecting only journalists, the disappearance of print papers deals out pain all up the production chain, taking in printers, paper makers and delivery people. Major British media brands could boast of 6.6 million new online readers in the first quarter in what their industry association said was a new record. But most have not seen the same bounce in print sales. The coronavirus has become "the greatest threat to the global news industry since the 2008 economic crash" wrote industry

publication Press Gazette-which itself moved online-only in 2013. Between 2005 and 2018, some 250 local papers closed across Britain, while today one in three journalists' jobs are believed to be under threat.

'Fond memory'

The picture is similar in the US, where dozens of papers have closed or merged with local competitors since the crisis. Between 2008 and 2019, half of all workers in American newspapers lost their jobs, according to a Pew institute count. Around the world, audiences have melted away for the free sheets once handed out in busy urban centers. Unable to count on funding from advertisers, some have paused publication, including Metro or Destak in Brazil or France's 20 Minutes.

With its ageing population used to holding a paper in their hands, Germany's newspaper publishers "were all making money before the coronavirus crisis, even if circulation figures kept falling," said Frank Ueberall, president of the DJV journalists' federation. "Things are different now," but "text journalism still has good days ahead," Ueberall said. "Old people in particular are far from adopting digital technologies en masse." "Printing is expensive, but it's swings and roundabouts," said Gilles Dechamps, head of a printing company in northern Paris, arguing that "it's important for readers and for advertisers to have the landmark" of a printed paper.

Despite efforts like cutting their size to save paper or investing in the web over the past 30 years, few papers have found the winning formula to make money from 21st-Century journalism. "Even in the smallest markets, Facebook and Google syphon three-quarters of the digital revenue," said Penelope Abernathy, a former Wall Street Journal and New York Times vice-president who now teaches media economics at the University of North Carolina. "That leaves all other legacy media fighting for the digital scraps." — AFP

Spanish ex-king Juan Carlos in Abu Dhabi

MADRID: Juan Carlos, the former king of Spain who has gone into exile in the face of corruption allegations, has travelled to Abu Dhabi according to Spanish newspaper ABC, contradicting earlier press reports about his whereabouts. Other media have singled out Portugal or the Dominican Republic as possible destinations for the former monarch who abdicated in 2014, but his exact location has yet to be pinned down. The royal palace has refused to reveal where Juan Carlos is living, saying he will announce it himself if necessary. Pro-monarchy newspaper ABC wrote that the 82-year-old boarded a private jet on Monday from Vigo in northeastern Spain along with one

aide and four bodyguards.

Seven hours later, the plane landed at a business airport in the capital of the United Arab Emirates. According to a flight plan ABC said it had seen, the jet was registered as departing from Paris to avoid arousing suspicion. In fact, it took off from Paris on Sunday before making a stop in Vigo to pick up Juan Carlos. The paper says he is now well shielded from paparazzi photographers in the luxurious Emirates Palace hotel, adding that high temperatures have so far kept him indoors.

But a manager at the hotel denied the former king was there, telling AFP: "We have no VIP guests." Juan Carlos has long had warm relations with the Gulf monarchies, and Spanish press reports say a transfer of \$100 million to one of his Swiss bank accounts from late Saudi king Abdullah has come into investigators' sights. After abdicating over corruption allegations stemming from public statements by a former mistress, Juan Carlos announced Monday that he was quitting Spain so as not to undermine his son King Felipe VI. — AFP



PALMA: A cyclist rides in front of the main gate of the Marivent Palace in Palma de Mallorca, where the Spanish Royal family will spend their summer holidays. — AFP

International

Lebanon sees possible 'external interference' in deadly port blast

Hezbollah leader suggests negligence and corruption at fault

BEIRUT: Lebanon's president said its investigation into the biggest blast in Beirut's history would examine whether it was caused by a bomb or other external interference, as residents sought to rebuild shattered homes and lives. Rescuers sifted rubble in a race to find anyone still alive after Tuesday's port explosion that killed 154 people, injured 5,000, destroyed a swathe of the Mediterranean city and sent seismic shockwaves around the region.

"The cause has not been determined yet. There is a possibility of external interference through a rocket or bomb or other act," President Michel Aoun told local media. Aoun, who had previously said explosive material was stored unsafely for years at the port, said the investigation would also weigh if the blast was due to negligence or an accident. Twenty people had been detained so far, he added. One source said an initial probe blamed negligence.

While the United States has said it did not rule out an attack, Israel, which has fought several wars with Lebanon, has denied any role. Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan said the cause was unclear, but compared the blast to a 2005 bombing that killed former Prime Minister Rafiq Al-Hariri. Sayed Hassan Nasrallah, leader of Lebanon's powerful Shiite group Hezbollah, denied what he said were "preconceived" comments both domestically and abroad that the Iran-backed group had arms stored at the port.

He called for a fair investigation and strict accountability for anyone responsible without any political cover. "Even if a plane struck, or if it was an intentional act, if it turns out this nitrate had been at the port for years in this way, it means part of the case is absolutely negligence and corruption," he said. The customs director and a predecessor were arrested later on Friday. At

Beirut's Mohammad Al-Amin mosque, next to Hari's grave, chief cleric Amin Al Kurdi told worshippers in a Friday sermon that Lebanese leaders bore responsibility.

"Who is the criminal, who is the killer behind the Beirut explosion?" he said. "Only God can protect, not the corrupt... The army only protects the leaders." Security forces fired tear gas at a crowd in Beirut on Thursday, as anger boiled over at the ruling elite, who have presided over an economic collapse. The small crowd, some hurling stones, marked a return to the kind of protests that had become a feature of life as Lebanese watched their savings evaporate and currency disintegrate, while government decision-making floundered.

'Where is the state?'

"There is no way we can rebuild this house. Where is the state?" said Tony Abdou, an unemployed 60-year-old. His family home is in Gemmayze, a district a few hundred meters from the warehouses where 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate were stored for years near a densely populated area. A security source and local media previously said the fire that caused the blast was ignited by welding work.

Volunteers swept up debris from the streets of Beirut, which still bears scars from a 1975-1990 civil war. "Do we actually have a government here?" said taxi driver Nassim Abiaad, 66, whose cab was crushed by wreckage as he was about to get in. "There is no way to make money anymore." For many, the explosion was symptomatic of years of neglect and corruption. "The problem is this government and all governments before it," said Dr Mohammed Kalifa, 31.

Officials have said the blast, whose impact was recorded hundreds of miles away, might have

almost every district, no matter how remote.

The state has recorded 100,000 cases. Its capital Lucknow is reporting more than 600 new infections every day, compared to only 100-150 just a few days ago. But the official number may be a big underestimate, experts say, with the real scale potentially hugely under-reported because of insufficient testing, and deaths not being properly recorded. Uttar Pradesh has conducted an impressive-sounding 2.8 million tests, according to a senior state official. But given its enormous population of over 200 million people, this equates to just 14,000 tests per million. In the US state of Texas, the rate is almost 10 times higher.

'Social boycott'

Nationally, India has tested around 16,500 people per million, compared to 190,000 in the United States and 260,000 in Britain, according to a tally by Worldometer. Apart from having one of the world's lowest rates of spending per capita on health care, part of the reason is that coronavirus sufferers often become pariahs.

This is particularly true in smaller conurbations and in rural areas, where some two-thirds of Indians live and where face masks and social distancing are rare sights. "A new disease with relatively high levels of complications and mortality, with accompanying directives on physical distancing, inevitably leads to fears, apprehensions and...

ket capitalization of HK\$5.32 trillion (\$686 billion), compared with Facebook's \$756 billion. While WeChat is available in various languages, its main user base is in mainland China, where potential rivals such as Facebook's WhatsApp messaging service are barred from competing. It is also a widely used among the Chinese diaspora, and foreigners doing business in the country, to keep in touch with people there. Tencent has shares in many American companies, including electric-car maker Tesla, social media company Snap, and top games developers such as Riot Games, Epic Games and Activision Blizzard.

Surveillance on WeChat

WeChat has been dogged by privacy concerns. The platform censors content for all users registered with Chinese phone numbers, even if they go abroad or switch to an international number, according to a University of Toronto study from 2016. Another report from the same university in May said accounts not registered in China were also subject to "pervasive content surveillance". Chinese authorities routinely censor online content and block Western websites such as Facebook,

which means the amount that exploded in Beirut (2,700 tons) is made almost every hour. Storing hundreds or even thousands of tons in the same place is frequent, and a single farmer can easily use several tons a year. Analyst firm IHS says just over three quarters of the world's supply goes to agriculture as a high-nitrogen fertilizer for crops.

The rest, in a higher and more volatile concentration, is used for explosives, particularly in mining and construction. The substance can be found in its natural state, particularly in Chile, where it is used to be mined. But it has been synthesized since the early 20th century and is now almost exclusively produced in factories. Most agricultural use of the chemical-more than 70 percent-is in Europe and the former Soviet Union, according to the International Fertilizer Association.



BEIRUT: A handout picture obtained from Qatar's Internal Security Force shows members of its search and rescue unit assisting their Lebanese counterparts in seeking survivors on the site of a massive blast at the Beirut port. —AFP

caused losses amounting to \$15 billion. That is a bill Lebanon cannot pay after already defaulting on a mountain of debt - exceeding 150% of economic output - and with talks stalled on a lifeline from the International Monetary Fund. Hospitals, many heavily damaged as shockwaves ripped out windows and ceilings, have been overwhelmed. "I lived through part of the civil war. I saw people being shot in front of me. But never has there been such a horror," said Dr. Assem Al Hajj at Beirut's Clemenceau hospital, which he said had treated 400 victims.

Hunting the missing

As exhausted rescuers combed wreckage to find any survivors, grieving families camped outside the port where their loved ones were last seen. Some

victims were hurled into the sea because of the explosive force. "We would like to go inside the port to look for my son but we can't get permission," said Elias Marouni, describing his son George, a 30-year-old army officer.

One weeping mother called a prime-time TV program to plead with authorities to find her son, Joe. He was found hours later: dead. Dozens are still unaccounted for. In Beirut's Karantina district, a Polish rescue team took a break near a once three-storey building that was completely flattened. One woman and her two teenage daughters were killed, a neighbor said. Charbel Abreeni, who trained port employees, showed Reuters pictures on his phone of killed colleagues. He was sitting in a church where the head of a Virgin Mary statue was blown off. —Reuters

COVID-19 rages in small town in India, and so does stigma

MEERUT: Sarthak Anand says his neighbors treated him like a "criminal" when he got coronavirus, a common experience in India's vast hinterland where the pandemic - and stigmatization - are now raging. "Even though I have recovered fully, no one wants to come near me," Anand, a government employee, told AFP outside his home in Meerut, a northern Indian city home to 3.4 million people. On Friday India's official caseload passed two million, and while previously metropolises like New Delhi and Mumbai were the hotspots, smaller cities and rural areas are now reporting sharp rises.

According to public health expert Preeti Kumar, the probable reason is the return home of millions of migrant workers who were left jobless by India's sudden lockdown imposed in March. "We are seeing the numbers rise especially in states like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, and with poorer healthcare systems, it is going to be a challenge," Kumar told AFP. The poor northern state of Uttar Pradesh, home to roughly as many people as France, Germany and Britain combined, has now seen the pandemic reach

TikTok and WeChat: Chinese apps dogged by security fears

BEIJING: The United States has fired a new salvo in its rivalry with China, ordering sweeping restrictions against Chinese-owned social media stars TikTok and WeChat. Here are some key facts about the platforms:

What is WeChat?

WeChat, known as "weixin" or micro-message in Chinese, belongs to tech giant Tencent and has grown to become ubiquitous in daily life across China since its 2011 launch. It has more than a billion monthly users and is a "super app" used for everything from messaging to ride-hailing and mobile payments, while also serving as a social media platform. Tencent surpassed Facebook's net worth after it became the first Asian firm to be valued at more than \$500 billion in 2017.

The Hong Kong-listed company now has a mar-

Ammonium nitrate: A fertilizer under scrutiny

STOCKHOLM: The storage of ammonium nitrate, the substance behind the deadly explosion in the port of Beirut on Tuesday, has come under increased regulation in recent years to avoid involvement of the ubiquitous product in accidents which, although rare, can be devastating.

Widely used and produced

The world's annual production of ammonium nitrate is over 20 million tons for fertilizers alone,



MEERUT: A medical staff (left) takes a sample from a man for a COVID-19 coronavirus test at Pyare Lal Sharma district hospital in Meerut in Uttar Pradesh state. —AFP

stigma," said Rajib Kumar, who heads the Centre of Social Medicine and Community Health at Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University. "There's both the fear of the disease as well as of isolation and quarantine," Kumar told AFP.

Anand in Meerut said that after becoming infected, he submitted a list of colleagues he had come in contact with to his office so that they could get tested as well. "But some of them were so angry," he said. "Even my seat in office has been changed." —AFP



WASHINGTON: In this photo illustration, comedian Sarah Cooper's page is displayed on the TikTok app. President Donald Trump has signed an executive order that bans any transactions between the parent company of TikTok, ByteDance, and US citizens due to national security reasons. —AFP

Twitter and the New York Times. WeChat's privacy policy says the platform only shares user information "where necessary" with governments and law enforcement agencies. —AFP

Accidents rare, but terrible

There have been a few dozen accidents over the past century, with appalling consequences. One of the earliest, at a BASF plant in Oppau, Germany, resulted in 561 deaths in 1921. In 1947, in Texas City, an explosion of two ships in port carrying 3,500 tons killed 581 people. Nearly half of the North Korean city of Ryongchon, home to about 120,000 inhabitants, was damaged in 2004 when two trains, one carrying petrol and the other ammonium nitrate, collided.

The collision caused a massive explosion that killed 150 people, according to North Korea, or 161 people, according to relief organizations. According to a European Commission memo, accidents have been recorded at production sites, warehouses and during transport. —AFP

Washington-Beijing ties plunge further

HONG KONG: China yesterday slammed the United States for imposing "barbarous" sanctions in response to Beijing's crackdown in Hong Kong, capping a dramatic week of deteriorating relations between the world's two biggest economies. In the toughest US action on Hong Kong since China imposed a sweeping new security law on the territory, Washington on Friday sanctioned a group of Chinese and Hong Kong officials-including the city's leader Carrie Lam.

The move came after President Donald Trump's administration forced Chinese internet giants TikTok and WeChat to end all operations in the US, in a twin diplomatic-commercial offensive set to grow ahead of the US presidential election in November. China yesterday criticized the sanctions as "barbarous and rude". "The ill intentions of US politicians to support people who are anti-China and messing up Hong Kong have been clearly revealed," Beijing's Liaison Office in Hong Kong said in a statement.

The Treasury Department announced it was freezing the US assets of Chief Executive Carrie Lam and 10 other senior officials, including Luo Huining-the head of the Liaison Office. It accused the sanctioned individuals of being "directly responsible for implementing Beijing's policies of suppression of freedom and democratic processes". The move criminalizes any US financial transactions with the sanctioned officials. In a short statement, Luo said he welcomed the blacklisting. "I have done what I should do for the country and for Hong Kong," he said. "I don't have a dime's worth in foreign assets."

Tensions spike ahead of election

Beijing's security law was imposed in late June, following last year's huge pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong, sending a political chill through the semi-autonomous city. Since then, authorities have postponed elections, citing the coronavirus pandemic, issued arrest warrants for six exiled pro-democracy activists and launched a crackdown on other activists. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said the security law violated promises made by China ahead of Hong Kong's 1997 handover that the city could keep key freedoms and autonomy for 50 years.

"Today's actions send a clear message that the Hong Kong authorities' actions are unacceptable," Pompeo said in a statement. The US measures come three months ahead of the November election in which Trump, who is behind his rival Joe Biden, is campaigning hard on an increasingly strident anti-Beijing message. As public disapproval has grown for his handling of the pandemic, Trump has pivoted from his previous focus on striking a trade deal with China to blaming the country for the coronavirus crisis.

TikTok, WeChat bans

On Thursday, Trump made good on previous threats against WeChat and TikTok-two Chinese-owned apps with major audiences that US officials say pose a national security threat. In an executive order, Trump gave Americans 45 days to stop doing business with the platforms, effectively setting a deadline for a potential, under-pressure sale of TikTok to Microsoft. —AFP

International

'#MeToo': Egypt's sex assault accusations spotlight stigmas

Accounts of sexual assault proliferate on social media

CAIRO: When dozens of Egyptians began posting accounts of sexual assault on social media last month, activists sensed a "#MeToo" moment in a nation where women have long felt disadvantaged. Like high-profile trials in the United States where the now global women's rights hashtag took off, prosecutors launched charges in Egypt's best-known recent case: a student from a wealthy background facing multiple accusations.

To encourage victims to come forward, the government approved a bill to better protect their identity. Yet when the administrator of the Instagram page that attracted the first testimonies tried to expose a second high-profile case, death threats came and she suspended the account at the end of July out of fear, she said. Furthermore, in what activists see as a move undercutting women's rights, prosecutors have recently charged several women for "inciting debauchery" with songs and dances in TikTok videos.

One had posted a video saying she had been raped and blackmailed and appealing for help. Campaigners say there remains a deep-rooted bias in the conservative, Muslim-majority nation to place more blame on women for behavior deemed provocative than on men for sex crimes. A United Nations' survey in 2013 found that 99% of Egyptian women had experienced harassment. "We are always told that we are the reason for all the wrongdoing happening to us ... whether

it's because of what you are wearing or the place you went to," said Amina Salah El-Din, a 25-year-old internet content creator who says she was a victim of assault last year.

The recent testimonies stemmed from the case of Ahmed Bassam Zaki, a former student at the American University in

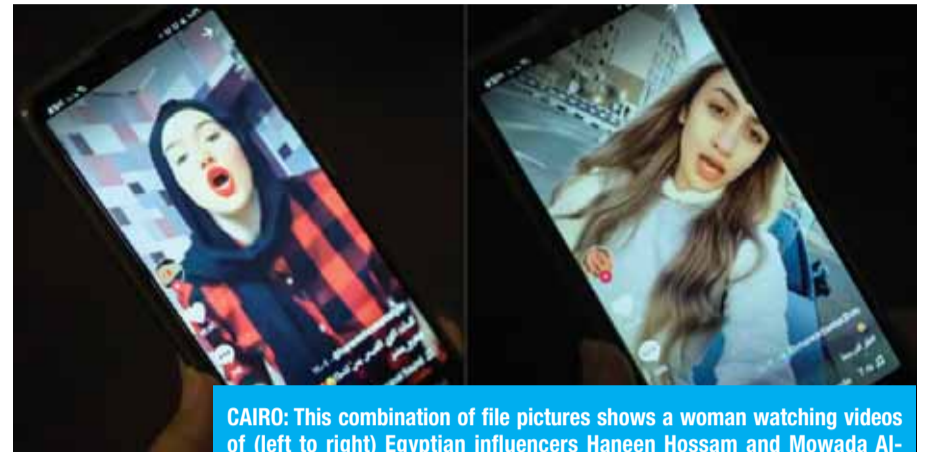
accusations publicly but denied some of them during questioning, according to a prosecution statement. Contacted by Reuters, his father declined comment.

Growing caseload

After Egypt's top Sunni Muslim authority - known as Al-Azhar - and the state-run National Council for Women urged more victims to come forward, accusations surfaced against three rights activists, one of whom publicly confessed and was fired, and a Coptic Church priest who was also dismissed. Attention also fell on an alleged gang rape at a luxury Cairo hotel in 2014, with more testimonies on @assaultpolice, before it was taken down.

Accounts continued on other pages, however, and the public prosecutor's office announced an investigation on Wednesday. Even so, judicial authorities remain ill-equipped to deal with harassment and assault crimes, according to activists, some of whom have been highlighting Egypt's assault problems since long before #MeToo trended in the West.

Egypt did introduce jail terms of at least six months or fines of at least 3,000 Egyptian pounds (\$188) for harassment in 2014, after attacks on women near Cairo's Tahrir Square during celebrations for President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi's inauguration. Female police officers now patrol on public holidays or celebrations. But the definitions of rape, assault and harassment still often let defendants get off lightly, campaigners say. Only forced vaginal



CAIRO: This combination of file pictures shows a woman watching videos of (left to right) Egyptian influencers Haneen Hossam and Mowada Al-Adham, who were sentenced to two years in prison on charges of violation public morals, on the video-sharing app TikTok. — AFP

intercourse is considered rape, with other forms defined as sexual assault.

"The problem is largely related to the legislative environment, which makes the system unable to deal with this issue," said Mohamed Fouad, a member of parliament who pressed for action on Zaki's case. A Justice Ministry spokesman was unavailable to comment and Egypt's state press centre and an Interior Ministry spokesman did not respond to questions. With their pursuit of the TikTok stars, prosecutors have called themselves "guardians of social morality" in targeting women deemed to be wearing suggestive clothes. Activists say the prosecutions violate freedom of expression.

Salah El-Din's case shows how women who confront social stigma by coming forward seldom have it easy. Chasing the man who assaulted her outside her apartment in a working-class Cairo neighborhood, she said she had to accuse him of theft to encourage bystanders to catch him. She then battled to persuade police to take on the case, though the man eventually got a three-year prison sentence. "They see it's rare for women to report sexual harassment and that no one follows this through to the end, so they thought it only natural that I would drop it, or file a robbery complaint instead," she said at an interview at a friend's home. — Reuters



Wealthy student prosecuted in a high-profile case

Cairo (AUC) in his early 20s, who was charged last month with indecent assault against at least three women. Allegations against Zaki were posted in previous years on a private Facebook group run by AUC students. Authorities reacted after the accusations surfaced on an Instagram account named @assaultpolice.

The volume of testimonies, and the fact they targeted someone from an elite background, was unusual. "There is this stereotype that sexual harassment only happens in certain (poorer) environments," said Azza Solaiman, an activist and lawyer who helped document the complaints. Zaki has not addressed the



TEXAS: A woman inspects a firearm in an exhibit hall at the Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center during the NRA's annual convention in Dallas, Texas. — AFP

New York seeks to dissolve NRA over mismanagement

NEW YORK: The state of New York has sued the National Rifle Association and its leader Wayne LaPierre for financial fraud and misconduct, aiming to dissolve the powerful US conservative lobby. State Attorney General Letitia James said LaPierre and three other top NRA officials used the dues and donations of members for years as their "personal piggy bank," spending tens of millions of dollars on themselves and cronies in violation of laws governing non-profit organizations. The four "basically looted its assets," leaving the once wealthy group that pumped millions into Republican political campaigns close to being insolvent, James said.

In a statement, the NRA accused James of filing the suit "to score political points" with a national election three months away. "This was a baseless, pre-meditated attack on our organization and the Second Amendment freedoms it fights to defend," NRA President Carolyn Meadows said. She said the NRA had countered with a lawsuit Thursday against James. "We not only will not shrink from this fight—we will confront it and prevail," Meadows said in the statement.

Political power

For decades the NRA has represented the views of millions of gun owners and enthusiasts across the United States, fighting with substantial success to loosen and eliminate laws on gun control, citing the Constitution's Second Amendment right to bear arms. Its

endorsements of "pro-gun" candidates have determined races and frightened moderate candidates from speaking out for even modest firearms regulations.

LaPierre, who has run the NRA for nearly three decades from his position as executive vice president, became one of Washington's top power brokers. He claimed a major role in Trump's 2016 election, and Trump's sons Eric and Donald Jr are members and regularly participate in NRA events. Asked about the lawsuit, Trump said at the White House that it was "a terrible thing." "I think the NRA should move to Texas, and lead a very good and beautiful life," he told reporters.

Private jets, safaris

But James said LaPierre illicitly used NRA funds to pay for private jets to carry his family on frequent luxury vacations to the Bahamas, and transport members of his extended family around the country. He billed the NRA for safari trips his family took in Africa and his personal golf course membership, without the NRA having officially determined they should be reimbursed.

He kept his own \$26,500 a month "travel consultant" in Los Angeles despite the NRA having a regular travel agent, and accepted luxury yacht vacations and other gifts from companies who earned tens of millions of dollars as vendors to the NRA. The lawsuit also accuses LaPierre of giving himself a \$17 million retirement package without the approval of the association's board. —AFP

Belarus 'waking up', surprise opposition candidate says

MINSK: The surprise opposition candidate mounting the most serious challenge in years to Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko said Friday that her country was waking up, but warned that the strongman planned to rig the vote. Political novice Svetlana Tikhanovskaya has emerged as the rising star of the opposition in her ex-Soviet nation, ruled by Lukashenko since 1994 and sometimes described as Europe's last dictatorship.

Speaking to AFP in central Minsk after a gruelling campaign that has seen her attract big crowds of supporters, Tikhanovskaya said it seemed something in her country had changed ahead of Sunday's election. "People are waking up, rediscovering their self-respect," the 37-year-old said, wearing the white bracelet that has become the symbol of Belarus's opposition. Tikhanovskaya decided to run after her 41-year-old blogger husband, Sergei Tikhanovsky, ended up in jail and could not submit his own presidential bid in time.

She said she expected Lukashenko to rig the election but warned that he needed to quit power peacefully if he lost. "We won't be able to prevent falsifications. We've seen over the past couple of days how brazenly this election is being falsified. There is no hope that they will count honestly. We have to be realistic." Early voting began in the country of 9.5 million

people on Tuesday, with official turnout over the past three days already at more than 22 percent.

Tikhanovskaya said the opposition would conduct an alternative count and would know if the election had been rigged, but said she would not urge her supporters to take to the streets. "At this stage each one has to decide for himself," she said, warning that Lukashenko would only encourage protests by quashing dissent. "They are doing everything for the peaceful protests to become bloody ones. And I don't want this."

Switching from Russian to English, a language in which she trained as a teacher, Tikhanovskaya said: "People are tired. Twenty-six years is enough." She said that if an alternative candidate ends up winning the vote, the 65-year-old strongman should "step away peacefully" and let the country "move forward with a new leader". "It's very simple. —AFP

Outrage over Ivory Coast president's third term bid

ABIDJAN: Ivory Coast President Alassane Ouattara's decision to run for a third term in October's presidential election triggered outrage among opposition and civil society groups, who labeled it a "coup" that risked tipping the country into chaos. Ouattara, in power since 2010, said in March that he would not run for re-election, which the opposition has strongly maintained he was unable to do anyway because the constitution limits presidents to two terms.

But the race was turned on its head by the sudden death of prime minister Amadou Gon Coulibaly - seen as Ouattara's anointed successor - from a heart attack in July. The shock news ramped up the volatility for the tense October 31 vote, which takes place in the shadow cast by political violence following 2010's election in which around 3,000 people died.

Ouattara said on Thursday that he would run after all, citing "a case of force majeure" after the death of his ruling RHDP party's candidate Coulibaly "left a void". The constitution limits presidents to two five-year terms. But a new constitution was adopted in 2016, which Ouattara and his supporters argue reset the clock, allowing him to run again - an interpretation strongly contested by the opposition. Assoa Adou, the general secretary of the Ivorian Popular Front (FPI), one of the country's two main opposition parties, said: "Alassane Ouattara cannot in any case stand in the election. His own experts have said so."

'Organized state coup'

N'Goran Djedri of the West African country's largest opposition party PDCI said Ouattara "is not above the law". "The people of Ivory Coast must demand the exact application of the 2016 constitution, which stipulates in article 183 that the legislation currently in force remains applicable." Moussa Toure, the communications director of presidential candidate and former prime minister Guillaume Soro, said: "We are facing an organized state coup in the sense that Mr Ouattara's plan constitutes a serious violation" of the constitution. "His decision to run for a third term takes us back 10 years and risks plunging Ivory Coast back into a period of fear, division and chaos," Toure added. It was not just opposition parties expressing outrage.

"By succumbing to the temptation of political eternity, you risk driving Ivory Coast into chaos," popular Ivorian singer Meiwai said on social media. "Are you to sacrifice everything you have built to put yourself on the wrong side of history?" Satirical writer Gauz said the "old are not wise, they act like they're in a playground," referring to both 78-year-old Ouattara and his arch-foe and biggest rival, 86-year-old former president Henri Konan Bedie of the PDCI. "It is despairing for the youth who represent four fifths of the Ivorian population," Gauz added. —AFP



ABIDJAN: Ivory Coast President Alassane Ouattara (center), flanked by Ivorian Prime Minister Hamed Bakayoko, salutes during a ceremony to mark the 60th anniversary of the country's Independence from France on August 7, 2020. — AFP

News in brief

Heavy rains kill 19 in Niger

NIAMEY: Heavy rains that have struck Niger since June have claimed 19 lives and inflicted economic harm on tens of thousands more, the government said on Friday, while the impoverished Sahel state faces a "major threat" of invasion by locusts. Of the 19 believed killed by the rains, 10 died by drowning and nine when homes collapsed, Niger's interior ministry said in a statement. Disaster management offices tallied some 6,215 households - or 53,000 people - that have suffered financial damage from the rainfall, the ministry said. A previous official count last month put the number of dead at nine and the number of people economically impacted at 20,000. Niger's southwestern regions of Maradi, Tahoua, Tillaberi and Dosso have been worst affected. — AFP

Dozens feared drowned

NOUAKCHOTT: About 40 people are feared dead after a migrant vessel sank off the coast of Mauritania, the UN said Thursday, in a fresh tragedy along the Atlantic migration route to Europe. In a tweet, the UN refugee agency's special envoy for the central Mediterranean, Vincent Cochetel, said one person from the West African state of Guinea had survived. The boat sank off the northern city of Nouadhibou, Mauritania's second largest, according to Cochetel. "New shipwreck off the coast of Nouadhibou #Mauritania of approximately 40 persons on board, there is one survivor (from Guinea)" Cochetel said on Twitter, without specifying when the incident happened. Other details about the event remained unclear and some accounts were conflicting. — AFP

Almost 150 extrajudicial killings

BAMAKO: Almost 150 people were extrajudicially killed by Malian and Burkinabe security forces in Mali between April and June, the UN said. A 2012 revolt in northern Mali has since spread to the centre of the poor Sahel country, as well as to Burkina Faso and Niger despite the presence of thousands of French and UN troops. The Mali-based United Nations mission, MINUSMA, reported "an increase in serious human rights violations attributable to the Malian security forces", which it held responsible for 94 such killings over the three-month period. The quarterly report also found 50 extrajudicial killings in late May by Burkina Faso troops in the village of Boulkessi, and settlements close to the nation's Mali border. — AFP

Gunmen kill 21 in Nigeria

LAGOS: Gunmen have killed 21 villagers in northern Nigeria's Kaduna state, police said Friday, in the latest deadly violence between ethnic Fulani herders and local farmers over grazing and water rights. Community leaders however said a higher total of 33 people were killed in the assaults on the remote five villages which took place early on Thursday. Motorcycle-riding gunmen suspected to be Fulani herders stormed the villages in the predominantly Christian district of Zangon Kafaf, shooting residents as they fled their homes, state police spokesman Mohammed Jalinge said. "The villages were attacked by gunmen on motorcycles in which 21 people were killed and three were injured," Jalinge said. — AFP

Business

SUNDAY, AUGUST 9, 2020

Trump moves may create internet 'firewall'

Presidential orders ban video app TikTok, social network WeChat

WASHINGTON: A ban by President Donald Trump's administration on Chinese mobile apps such as TikTok and WeChat risks fragmenting an already fragile global internet and creating an American version of China's "Great Firewall."

Fears about the global internet ecosystem intensified this week with Trump's executive orders banning the popular video app TikTok and Chinese social network WeChat, following a US government directive to prohibit the use of other "untrusted" applications and services from China. The restrictions announced on the basis of what Trump called national security threats move further away from the long-promoted American ideal of a global, open internet and could invite other countries to follow suit, analysts said.

"It's really an attempt to fragment the internet and the global information society along US and Chinese lines, and shut China out of the information economy," said Milton Mueller, a Georgia Tech University professor and founder of the Internet Governance Project.

Mueller said this represents a move "to create a Western firewall" similar to the Chinese barrier, which would be enforced with US economic sanctions globally.

This could backfire on Silicon Valley giants which dominate the online world outside China because "there are lots of nationalistic governments around the world which could make the same claims about Apple and Google and Facebook and Twitter, that they are sucking up data," Mueller said. "It will be open season on nationalistic blockages and regulations on these social media apps."



Fears about global internet ecosystem grow

'Clean Network' plan
Trump made good this week on his threats against WeChat and TikTok—two apps with major audiences. Using executive order authority, Trump gave Americans 45 days to stop doing business with the Chinese platforms, effectively setting a deadline for a potential, under-pressure sale of TikTok by its parent firm ByteDance to Microsoft.

His actions follow a "Clean Network" directive from the State Department that would bar "untrusted" apps and services from China from being used by American carriers and installed on devices in the US. This could lead to a competitive and confusing situation in parts of the world forced to choose between the US and Chinese ecosystems, said independent technology analyst Richard Windsor. "The digital divide between China and the West is coming down and countries caught in the middle (Africa and parts of Asia) will have to decide on which side they wish to remain," Windsor said on his Radio Free Mobile blog.

'Cyber sovereignty' move
Adam Segal, director of the digital and cyberspace policy program at the Council on Foreign Relations, said the US actions point to a notion of "cyber sovereignty" long promoted by China and opposed by the United States. "This is really a Chinese idea, that (a country) has the right to separate itself from the global internet by banning or limiting foreign technology," Segal said. "The US used to argue the opposite, that we want a free and open internet." Segal noted that the global internet has been "on



This file combination of pictures shows the logo of the social media video sharing app Tiktok and US President Donald Trump at the White House in Washington, DC. — AFP

shaky ground" amid moves in Russia, India and other countries to limit data flows. But the actions by Washington this week "undermine the US ability to promote these ideas, and could have some backlash for US companies," he said.

Daniel Castro of the Information Technology and Innovation Foundation said the US actions suggest "a serious risk of internet fragmentation" if carried out. "The United States should be careful about arguing that there is an inherent national security risk of using technologies from foreign companies,"

Castro said. "If other countries apply that same logic, US tech companies will be locked out of many foreign markets."

Mueller said Trump's actions are based on nebulous security concerns and a misguided notion of countering China's rising power. "The Trump administration thinks they can somehow stifle China's development as an economic and technological power," he said. "The idea that we can stop Chinese development by cutting them off is stupid, it's not going to happen." — AFP

Canada to slap counter-tariffs on US aluminum

OTTAWA: Ottawa will hit American aluminum products with Can\$3.6 billion (\$2.7 billion) in counter-tariffs, Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland said Friday, in response to "absurd" US levies announced on Canadian goods. US President Donald Trump said Thursday he was reimposing a 10 percent tariff on Canadian aluminum, accusing Canada of flooding the US market with the metal.

"In imposing these tariffs, the United States has taken the absurd decision to harm its own people," Freeland told a news conference. The deputy prime minister said Ottawa would hold 30 days of consultations with Canadian industry—which employs 10,000 workers—on which US items to target with tariffs.

A preliminary list published by the Canadian government includes soda and beer cans, bicycles, golf clubs and washing machines. "We will not escalate and we will not back down," Freeland said. "And we do hope that when Americans look at this list, they will understand why having a tariff dispute is a really bad idea." The deputy prime minister also commented that a trade war in the midst of the pandemic would be devastating to both countries, and urged the Trump administration to reconsider.

"A trade dispute is the last thing anyone needs," she said. "It will only hurt the economic recovery on both sides of the border." The US tariffs, which take effect August 16, are in response to what Washington called a 27 percent "surge" in aluminum imports from Canada over the past year which "threatens to harm domestic aluminum production." "I have determined that the measures agreed upon with Canada are not providing an effective alternative means to address the threatened impairment to our national security from imports of aluminum from Canada," Trump said in his proclamation. Ottawa has long rejected the national security concerns coming from a close ally, and Freeland on Friday doubled down, calling the notion "ludicrous." Trump imposed punitive levies on imports of Canadian aluminum and steel in June 2018, and then relented as part of a free trade deal between the two countries and Mexico.

But he made the exemption conditional on Canada ensuring it would not "flood our country with exports and kill all of our aluminum jobs." "Canadian aluminum producers have broken that commitment," Trump said on Thursday. The Canadian aluminum industry disputed the US data, saying there was "no surge" and that shipments actually fell in recent months.

It noted that the United States consumes six times more aluminum than it produces and so relies on imports. Attacking Canadian suppliers, it said, would open the door to increased aluminum shipments from China. — AFP

Stimulus worries weigh on Nasdaq

NEW YORK: The Nasdaq closed lower on Friday, as data showed a sharp slowdown in US employment growth and investors worried lawmakers would fail to agree on another fiscal stimulus bill to bolster the economy from a coronavirus-induced recession. The S&P 500 and the Dow Jones index ended flat to slightly higher on the day. With the benchmark S&P 500 index now about 1.5 percent below its record high, defensive sectors including utilities and real estate were among the gainers. Tech-related stocks, which have fueled a Wall Street rally since March, posted the biggest declines and helped push the Nasdaq down more than 1 percent during the session.

Along the same line, value names, which have been unable to close the performance gap with growth stocks in recent years, advanced, with financials gaining more than 2 percent. The S&P 500 value index rose 1.13 percent, while the S&P 500 growth index fell 0.63 percent.

The US Labor Department's closely watched report showed nonfarm payrolls increased 1.76 million in July, much lower than the record 4.8 million in June. However, the figure still topped economists' expectations and analysts said it could take the

Slow US job growth, new virus cases raise doubts on recovery's strength

WASHINGTON: US employment growth slowed considerably in July, underscoring an urgent need for additional government aid as a resurgence of COVID-19 infections threatens to snuff out the nascent economic recovery. The Labor Department's closely watched employment report on Friday came as Democratic leaders in Congress and top aides to President Donald Trump struggled to negotiate a fiscal package. Trump, who lags former Vice President Joe Biden, the presumptive Democratic Party nominee, in polls ahead of the Nov. 3 election, threatened to bypass Congress with an executive order.

"The jobs recovery is on very shaky ground and without seat belts for the unemployed provided by additional fiscal stimulus the economy could be in for a very bumpy ride," said Chris Rupkey, chief economist at MUFG in New York. "There cannot be sustainable economic growth if the country has to carry on with the crushing weight of massive unemployment." Nonfarm payrolls increased by 1.763 million jobs last month after a record rise of 4.791 million in June. Excluding government employment which was artificially boosted by a seasonal quirk related to local and state government education, and temporary hiring for the 2020 Census, payrolls rose 1.462 million, stepping down from 4.737 million in June.

Economists polled by Reuters had forecast 1.6 million jobs were added in July. While the number

exceeded expectations, the economy has regained only 9.3 million of 22 million jobs lost between February and April. Blacks continued to experience high unemployment. Racial inequality is a dominant theme in November's election.

Economists believe July was probably the last month of employment gains related to the rehiring of workers after the reopening of businesses. A \$600 weekly unemployment benefit supplement, which made up 20 percent of personal income, expired last Friday. Thousands of businesses have

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In this file photo, protesters rally demanding economic relief during the coronavirus pandemic, at Times Square in New York City. — AFP

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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

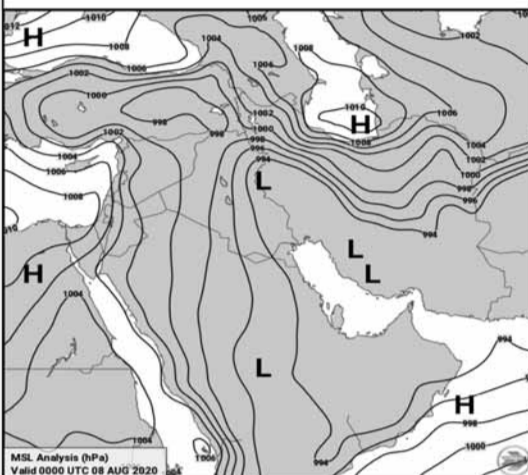
BY DAY: Very hot with light to moderate freshening at times north westerly wind with speed of 15 - 42 km/h and some high clouds will appear.

BY NIGHT: Hot to rather hot with light to moderate north westerly wind with speed of 15 - 35 km/h and some high clouds will appear.

WEATHER WARNING: No Current Warnings

STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	47 °C	36 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	48 °C	35 °C
ABDALY	48 °C	31 °C
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C
JAHRA	49 °C	35 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	45 °C	34 °C
SALMIYAH	43 °C	36 °C
AHMADI	- °C	- °C
NUWAISIB	44 °C	33 °C
WAFRA	47 °C	33 °C
SALMY	47 °C	31 °C

SFC. CHART 08/08/2020 0000 UTC



DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Sunday	08/09	Very hot and some scattered clouds will appear	48 °C	32 °C	NW	15 - 35 km/h
Monday	08/10	Very hot and some scattered clouds will appear	48 °C	33 °C	NW	15 - 45 km/h
Tuesday	08/11	Hot with a chance for rising dust over open areas	46 °C	31 °C	NW	15 - 45 km/h
Wednesday	08/12	Hot	46 °C	30 °C	NW	15 - 40 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	03:45
Sunrise	05:12
Zuhr	11:54
Asr	15:29
Sunset	18:35
Isha	19:59

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	48 °C
MIN. Temp.	29 °C
MAX. RH	33 %
MIN. RH	09 %
MAX. Wind	NW 39 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

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

CHANGE OF NAME

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

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Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
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Khaldiya	24848075
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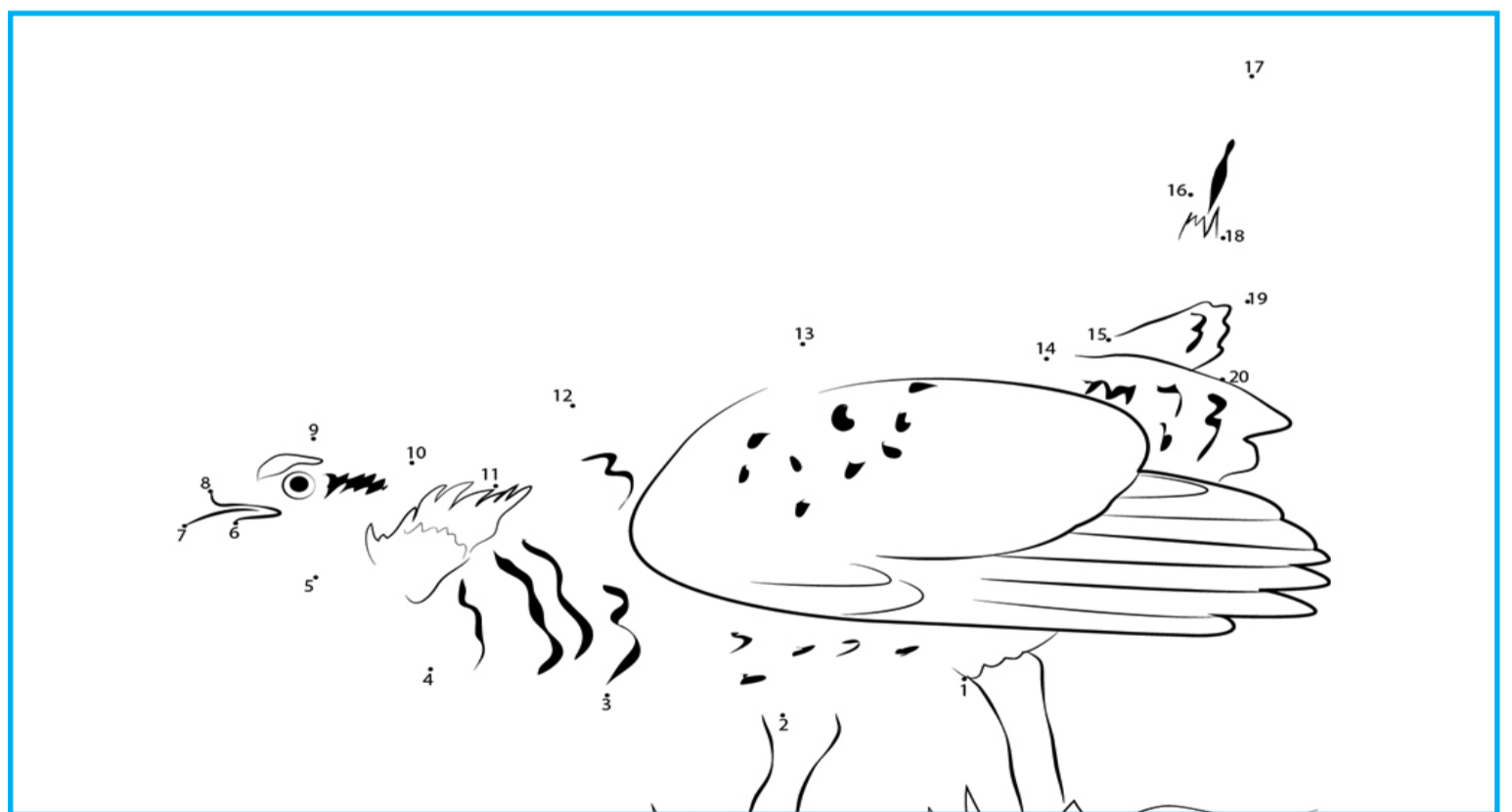
Astrology Word Search



- AQUARIUS
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- BIRTHDAY
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- CANCER
- CAPRICORN
- CHART
- CRAB

- FISH
- GEMINI
- GOAT
- HOUSE
- LEO
- LIBRA
- LION
- PISCES
- RAM
- SAGITTARIUS
- SCORPIO
- SCORPION
- SIGN
- STARS
- TAURUS
- TWINS
- VIRGIN
- VIRGO
- WATERMAN
- ZODIAC

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STAR TRACK

Aries (March 21-April 19)
 Changes taking place in your home could cause some temporary frustration tense nerves on the part of family members, Aries. Perhaps you're moving or refurbishing or trying to do a thorough cleaning and everyone is getting into everyone else's way. Just try to get the job done as quickly as possible. Once it's done, tempers will subside, and all will be well.

Cancer (June 21-July 22)
 Someone who interests you could seem to be showing interest in someone else. This might arouse your insecurities and cause a bit of jealousy. Don't make yourself crazy, Cancer. All may not be as it seems. Try to discern the facts. Invitations to do more than one thing on the same night might force you to make an uncomfortable choice. Make the one that suits you best.

Libra (September 23-October 22)
 A female visitor who needs some sympathy could contact you today. She may want advice on some problems, Libra, but she could also bring information, possibly involving new scientific or metaphysical studies that you find fascinating and that you'll want to relate to others. This information could trigger your own insights. Write down your ideas. You'll want to remember them.

Capricorn (December 22-January 19)
 Jealousy could rear its ugly head today, Capricorn. This could involve a romantic relationship. Jealousy is often groundless, so avoid it by doing some communicating. This is the time to make the effort to turn a disadvantage into an advantage. Strong emotions can work for you under some circumstances. A passionate reconciliation is better than an angry estrangement.

Taurus (April 20-May 20)
 Miscommunication with someone from far away could lead to bruised egos, heightened emotions, and angry phone calls. It's best not to get drawn into a quarrel, Taurus. Try to straighten it all out. Changes in your neighborhood could cause problems with travel, so be prepared for blocked streets and heavy traffic. Walk - it will clear your head and get you where you're going more quickly.

Leo (July 23-August 22)
 Someone is keeping secrets from you. We all have private issues, Leo, but this situation affects you. Your intuition will probably tell you who the person is. Try to get them to open up without exerting pressure. Unfinished tasks could drive you crazy. You may try to race through them, which can cause too much stress. Get the crucial ones done and let the others go. Relax with a movie tonight.

Scorpio (October 23-November 21)
 Some important plans, perhaps involving a vacation or education, could be temporarily blocked by circumstances beyond your control, Scorpio. This can make you upset and might even set your temper on edge. You may be tempted to take out your frustrations on others. It would be more productive - and challenging - to find ways to make your plans work, even if they're delayed.

Aquarius (January 20- February 18)
 Nervous tension could cause a temporary malaise that keeps your energy very low today. But there are tasks that need to be done, Aquarius, so you'll probably try to do them in spite of the way you feel. Try not to overwork yourself or take your weariness out on others. It's better to let some things go than make yourself and everyone else that much more stressed out.

Gemini (May 21-June 20)
 Your talents as a psychologist could be put to work today when misunderstandings arise. Your companions aren't likely to be thinking straight and may not respond to reassurance, Gemini. Use your intuition to find the best way to defuse the situation. Finances might cause some worry right now, but your ingenuity and money sense should put things right. Go out and have fun tonight.

Virgo (August 23-September 22)
 Circumstances beyond your control might get in the way of attending a group event. This could cause some disappointment for you and others, Virgo. It's best to find something else to do. Your own project is likely to need some attention, and this could prove to be a challenge that keeps you engrossed for hours. Treat yourself to takeout tonight.

Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)
 A letter or call could arrive today bringing upsetting news about money, Sagittarius. Your first reaction might be to blame yourself or someone else, but the circumstances are probably beyond anyone's control. Chances are it can be set right. Before anyone gets too upset, it's best to investigate and find out what needs to be done. It might take some effort, but all will be well.

Pisces (February 19-March 20)
 A group with which you're affiliated may be temporarily torn apart by quarrels among its members, Pisces. It's best to stay out of it. A friend could be having trouble and come to you for advice and help. Don't let yourself get too frustrated by his or her weakness. This could be a frustrating day for you, and one best spent concentrating on projects. All will be better tomorrow.

Lifestyle | Features



Muslims pray in a mosque following reopening of mosques and lifting of restrictions on religious gatherings by the government as precaution to curtail the spread of COVID-19 Coronavirus at the Secretariat Community Central Mosque, Alausa in Lagos, on August 7, 2020. — AFP photos



Muslims pray in a mosque following reopening of mosques and lifting of restrictions on religious gatherings by the government.



A woman's temperature is being checked with infrared thermometer as she arrives at a mosque in Lagos.



A man washes his hands with sanitizer as he arrives at a mosque following reopening of mosques and lifting of restrictions on religious gatherings by the government in Lagos.

Jubilant worshippers return to Lagos mosques

In a crowded district of Lagos Island, 44-year-old Isiaka Babatunde weaves through a throng of people and stops at a shop piled high with hats. Wearing a green face mask and a crisply pressed traditional white suit, he carefully selects a matching white kufi cap on his way to join fellow Muslims at a mosque for the first time in four months in Nigeria's com-

mercial capital. "I am very happy today," Babatunde told Reuters. "We have been praying at home all this while due to the pandemic. There was nothing we could do about it."

Lagos state is allowing in-person religious services from Friday for the first time since it implemented a lockdown in March to halt the spread of the coron-

avirus. Services can be no more than 50% full, and only held once per week. Lagos is the epicenter of the outbreak in Nigeria, Africa's most populous country. The state, which is home to the 20-million-strong megacity of the same name, currently has 15,627 confirmed cases and 192 deaths. Religious services have been linked to mass outbreaks else-

where in the world, including France and the United States.

But religion plays a large role in the lives of most Nigerians, who are broadly split between Christianity and Islam. Many are keen to return to the services and communities they left at the start of the outbreak. In the streets surrounding the mosque, where worshippers prayed

at a distance, there was little space between the vendors and shoppers. So some felt the mosque, with its restrictions, was safe. "I was scared of coming today," said female entrepreneur Rafiat Ajoke-Thomas. "But when I learnt that ... it is going to be like a hundred people, I felt like coming." — Reuters

Seeking eco-friendly beachwear? Try flip flops made of algae

Scientists in California have devised a new way for sunseekers to care for the environment when they hit the beach - biodegradable flip-flops made from algae. Working in partnership with tech start-up company Algenesis Materials, researchers at the University of California San Diego have spent years trying to produce a solid foam-like material out of oil extracted from algae to make the green beach sandals.

They hope the sustainable footwear, which is due to be launched through a major flip-flop brand next year, will cut the amount of plastic ending up in oceans and landfill sites. "There are over one billion flip-flops made in the world every year and are actually a major plastic pollution in the oceans," Stephen Mayfield, one of the project's leaders, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation on Friday.

Mayfield, director at the California Center for Algae Biotechnology and Associate Director, Michael Burkart co-led the project with graduate student, Natasha Gunawan and Marissa Tessman, a research scientist at Algenesis Materials. Plastic pollution in the oceans is expected to triple by 2040, according to a study by the International Solid Waste Association, an NGO. "People are ... starting to demand products that can address what has become an environmental disaster," said Tom Cooke, president of Algenesis Materials. — Reuters



An aerial view shows people cooling off at the Silbersee 2 lake in Haltern am See, western Germany as temperatures topped 36 degrees Celsius. — AFP

A sweetheart deal: Germany to exempt **unmarried couples** from COVID border controls

Germany will give a welcome break to the coronavirus lovers from tomorrow - easing its border controls to allow unmarried couples to reunite after what has been months of separation for some. The exemption will apply to the partners of Germans from countries that Germany considers high-risk - currently most of the world outside the EU - and couples will have to provide some proof that they were in a relationship before the pandemic, the interior ministry said on Friday.

Most European Union borders have

been closed to non-EU travelers since March, unless they are essential workers or married to an EU resident. On social media, separated couples have been lobbying under the hashtags #LovesEssential and #LovesNotTourism for governments to allow them to reunite. A few European countries including Austria, Norway and Denmark, have heeded the call, introducing "sweetheart visas" that exempt couples from the travel ban.

In Germany, couples will have to present an invitation by the partner who

lives in Germany and sign a statement confirming that they are in a relationship. They must also provide proof, such as stamps in passports or plane tickets, that they have met in person in Germany at least once or that they have lived abroad together. The European Commission on Friday renewed a call for the remaining EU member states to exempt the unmarried partners of European citizens from travel restrictions into their countries. — Reuters



Anthony Mmesoma Madu

Leap of faith: Nigerian boy captivates the world with his ballet

Gracefully spinning among a group of dancers clad in pink, 11-year-old Anthony Mmesoma Madu stands out in black leggings, a white turtleneck and poise beyond his years. His parents in Lagos, Nigeria's teeming lagoon city, wanted him to become a priest. Instead, he has captivated millions with his ballet. "When I am dancing, I feel as if I am on top of the world," he told Reuters. A video of him dancing barefoot in the rain on concrete outside the studio where he trains, the Leap of Dance Academy, went viral last month.

More than 15 million people have watched his joyful leaps and pirouettes, undeterred by the rain and coarse surface. The video caught the eye of the elite American Ballet Theatre, which gave him a scholarship and arranged internet access for virtual training this summer. Next year, he will train in the

United States on a scholarship from Ballet Beyond Borders. "When my friends see me dancing, they feel like, what is this boy doing, is he doing a foreign dance?" he said. "Now I have won a grand prize to go to the US ... I will be in the plane and this is what I am waiting for, and ballet has done it for me."

The video also sparked a flood of donations to the academy, which teaches its students for free. Founder Daniel Ajala Owoseni said he will use the money, and fame, to promote ballet in Nigeria, a country where it is not yet widely practiced. "I saw the need to bring a form of art that shows discipline, dedication and commitment," he said. "Students who are able to learn all of these can ... transfer (them) into other spheres of their lives." — Reuters

Tired of Zoom calls? Firm offers at-home hologram machines

Looking for a new way to communicate during the pandemic? A Los Angeles company has created phone booth-sized machines to beam live holograms into your living room. The device made by PORTL Inc lets users talk in real time with a life-sized hologram of another person. The machines also can be equipped with technology to enable interaction with recorded holograms of historical figures or relatives who have passed away. Each PORTL device is seven feet (2.1m) tall, five feet (1.5m) wide and two feet (0.6m) deep, and can be plugged into a standard wall outlet. Anyone with a camera and a white background can send a hologram to the machine in what Chief Executive David Nussbaum calls "holoportation."

"We say if you can't be there, you can beam there," said Nussbaum, who previously worked at a company that developed a hologram of Ronald Reagan for the former president's library and digitally resurrected rapper Tupac Shakur. "We are able to connect military families that haven't seen each other in months, people from opposite coasts," or anyone who is social distancing to fight the coronavirus, Nussbaum added.

Prices for the machine start at \$60,000, a cost that Nussbaum expects will drop over the next three to five years. The company also plans a smaller tabletop device with a lower price tag early next year. The devices can be equipped with artificial intelligence technology from Los Angeles-based company StoryFile to produce hologram recordings that can be archived. Adding that to the current device brings the cost to at least \$85,000.

The companies are promoting to museums, which could let visitors question a hologram of a historical figure, and to families to record information for future generations. People can feel like they are having a conversation with a recorded hologram, said StoryFile Chief Executive Heather Smith. "(You) feel their presence, see their body language, see all their non-verbal cues," she said. "You feel like you've actually talked to that individual even though they were not there." — Reuters

Lifestyle | Features



Leo, a British longhair cat sits atop a table at Ngao's Home - a one of its kind cafe and cat rescue place in Hanoi ahead of the International Cat Day. International Cat Day, created in 2002, is celebrated on August 8 every year.



Nguyen Thanh Binh, owner of Ngao's Home plays with his cat.



Leo, a British longhair cat gets her wounds treated at Ngao's Home.



A woman enjoys a drink at Ngao's Home. — AFP photos

VIETNAM CAT CAFE OFFERS PURR-FECT PICK-ME-UP FOR RESCUED FELINES

If your idea of the purr-fect day is spending it curled up with convalescent rescue cats and a coffee, then one cafe in Vietnam has you covered. Ngao's Home Cafe in Hanoi is a loving home for 15 felines, many of whom were abandoned or found injured after being bitten by dogs or suffering serious accidents. "I try to help cats with difficult

backgrounds, to heal their physical and mental wounds," said 24-year-old cafe owner Nguyen Thanh Binh ahead of International Cat Day on Saturday.

The cafe has clawed its way up the favorite list of many cat lovers since it opened last month, offering coffee and cuddles but also the chance to give the animals medicine and even engage with

them on a deeper level. "When I come to this cafe, apart from playing with the cats, I can hear their stories and empathize with them," 20-year-old student and customer Le Hoang Yen told AFP. Many cats in Vietnam are cherished pets but others are sold for their meat, which is considered a delicacy in parts of the country. Thieves have been known

to steal cats which can then be sold on for consumption.

Owner Binh was inspired to start the coffee house, which runs as a non-profit, after spotting cats in cages, and others who had been injured by thieves. "Once me and my friends have the cats, we first bring those who with injuries or medical problems to a vet. Then when they get

better, I take them here to the cafe for even better care," he said as he stroked a fluffy white feline, blind in one eye. He also hopes one or two customers might be tempted to take home more than a coffee. "I will help them find new owners who really love them." — AFP



In this file photo, festival goers cheer during a concert at the EXIT festival near Novi Sad. — AFP photos



A reveler poses during the EXIT festival near Novi Sad.



Members of the 'Dingospo Dali' band rehearse at their studio in Belgrade.



In this file photo, fans cheer during the EXIT festival in Novi Sad.

Diego Luna shows his activist side in latest TV show

Migration, racism, corruption and the coronavirus pandemic are among the thorny issues that Hollywood star Diego Luna will tackle at the dinner table in his latest television project. The Mexican actor is bringing together politicians, experts and opinion makers to highlight social issues on "Pan y Circo" (Bread and Circus), a series of discussions that he will moderate starting Friday on Amazon Prime Video.

It reflects a growing tilt towards social activism for Luna, known internationally for his roles in movies including "Rogue One: A Star Wars Story", "Milk" and "The Terminal". His latest project marks a radical departure from his role as drug trafficker Miguel Angel Felix Gallardo in the Netflix series "Narcos: Mexico". "Turning attention toward the issues that concern... is a responsibility that comes with the spotlight," Luna told AFP in a video interview.

Gael Garcia Bernal, his co-star in the 2001 racy road-trip movie "Y tu mama tambien" and former Colombian president and Nobel laureate Juan Manuel Santos are among the guests who will gather in a dinner party setting. "This conversation already happens at other tables. We're simply bringing it to ours to amplify the debate," Luna said. "So that's where the effort goes... reflecting more and more and questioning the reality in which we live," added the 40-year-old. The actor-director has stepped up his activism in recent years and in 2018 founded a platform bringing together numerous organizations and social movements in Mexico. — AFP



Mexican actor, director and producer Diego Luna visits 'The IMDb Show' in Santa Monica, California. — AFP

SERBIA MUSICIANS BATTLE THE CORONAVIRUS BLUES

In a studio embedded deep inside an old Belgrade printing factory turned artists' space, the rock group Dingospo Dali rehearses for a show they are not sure will come to pass. Like musicians around the world, the group's plans have been disrupted by the coronavirus pandemic, which has silenced the concert scene in Serbia and thrown Balkan artists into an even more precarious existence.

"I lost a lot of work, as a musician and also as a sound engineer," Nikola Vidojevic, the band's 33-year-old drummer, told AFP. "The pandemic stopped everything." The six rockers still jam in their studio in the former BIGZ printing and publishing house on the Sava river which has become a mecca for independent musicians and artists in the Serbian capital. Built in the 1930s, the building housed one of the largest printing works in the region before Yugoslavia's collapse.

Over the past 15 years, its rooms have been reclaimed as a hub for

independent rock and alternative art. Music wafts through the building's huge network of graffiti-streaked hallways, with rooms occupied by dozens of bands, nightclubs and art studios, helping cut the loneliness of the pandemic. But today the moody neon-lit corridors carry a new heaviness, with many artists now in dire financial straits. "Most of the tens of thousands of musicians in Serbia have no other source of income than music," said Nikola Jovanovic, owner of a music publishing house and concert organizer.

Exit out
The loss of Serbia's popular summer festivals, including Exit, one of Europe's biggest events, as well as Beer Fest and the Nisville Jazz Festival, have spread the anguish across a whole economy of entertainment workers. Sreten Kovacevic, 63, who runs a company that builds stages for Exit and Nisville, has had to let go of seven of his eight employees.

"The people who used to work for us - technicians, sound and lighting people, sound engineers — are now probably also looking for alternative ways to make money. It's all stopped. The future is very bleak," he said. Previously graced by the likes of Manu Chao and The Cure, the Exit festival was initially postponed to August and then cancelled altogether due to the resurgence of coronavirus.

"For the first time in its 20 years of existence, the festival won't be taking place," lamented Exit manager Zdravko Vulin. A thousand jobs are ultimately threatened, he said. "It's an absolute catastrophe for the industry as a whole," added Ivan Blagojevic, 60, director of the Nisville festival, which has previously hosted global stars like Candy Dulfer and Tony Allen. He's wishing for the festival to be able to go ahead in September but the worsening course of the pandemic leaves little room for hope, with hundreds of new cases recorded daily.

Plea for help

Deprived of concerts, artists have asked for financial support from the government - so far, with little luck. "We went to the ministry of culture, we didn't get an answer, to the ministry of finance who never answered us, just like the chamber of commerce," says Jovanovic. The chamber of commerce told AFP that it was examining "all aspects of the crisis" to seek solutions, acknowledging that income from copyrights was on course to contract significantly this year, by nearly 50 percent. The culture and finance ministries did not respond to AFP's requests for comment. In the meantime, groups like Dingospo Dali are figuring out how to survive. Singer and lyricist Sandra Vidojevic, 31, is pessimistic. "I gave up my job to devote myself to music, maybe I shouldn't have," says the former airline employee. — AFP

Baby's back: New 'Dirty Dancing' movie confirmed

A new "Dirty Dancing" movie is in development, with Jennifer Grey expected to reprise her iconic role as Frances "Baby" Houseman after more than three decades. The original 1987 romantic smash hit about a teenage girl who falls for her summer camp dance instructor propelled Grey and co-star Patrick Swayze to global fame.

Its climactic scene in which Swayze vows "Nobody puts Baby in the corner" before capping a dance routine by lifting Grey above his head has entered movie folklore. Grey will star in and executive produce the new movie, Lionsgate CEO

Jon Feltheimer said in an earnings call Thursday. "It will be exactly the kind of romantic nostalgic movie that the franchise's fans have been waiting for and that have made it the biggest selling library title in the company's history," he said.

"Dirty Dancing"-a low-budget movie which went on to gross over \$210 million worldwide-has already spawned a prequel, 2004's "Dirty Dancing: Havana Nights." Feltheimer joked that the new film was "one of the worst kept secrets in Hollywood." But no plot details were revealed, and it is not known if the movie will be a direct sequel. —AFP

PATRICK SWAYZE · JENSIFER GRE



Oprah Winfrey putting Breonna Taylor billboards up in Kentucky city

First Oprah Winfrey gave up her usual place on the cover of O magazine to Breonna Taylor. Now she is posting billboards of the slain emergency room technician, seeking criminal charges for the police who killed the Black woman in her own apartment. O, The Oprah Magazine said it is posting 26 billboards with Taylor's image around Louisville, the Kentucky city where Taylor was killed in her home on March 13 in a case that has motivated activists for racial equality across the United States.

"Demand that the police involved in the killing of Breonna Taylor be arrested and charged," reads the billboard, which

is similar to the cover of the September issue of O going on newsstands on Aug. 11. It will be the first time in 20 years that a photo of Winfrey has not graced the cover of her own magazine. The cover and billboard also feature a quote by Winfrey, the actress and entertainment and lifestyle mogul, which reads: "If you turn a blind eye to racism, you become an accomplice to it." The billboards began going up on Thursday and will be installed by Monday, the magazine said. They will stay up for a month. —Reuters

Photo of the Day



Sam Sunderland (GBR) of Red Bull KTM Factory Team races during stage 2 of Rally Dakar 2020. — Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

Karolina Pliskova
eager to play
US Open: Report

PRAGUE: World number three Karolina Pliskova said Friday she was looking forward to playing at the US Open, bucking a wave of withdrawals due to coronavirus concerns. "Even though I keep thinking the situation is changing every day, nobody knows what will come, but I really believe we will play," Pliskova told the Czech News Agency.

Her words are in stark contrast to a series of withdrawals from the tournament held in a country which has been hit the worst by the COVID-19 pandemic. Top 10 players Elina Svitolina and Kiki Bertens on Friday became the latest to announce they were skipping the tournament, alongside number one Ashleigh Barty.

Four-time US Open champion Rafael Nadal is also staying at home. But Pliskova has a special fondness for the New York event where she reached the final in 2016, her best Grand Slam result to date.

"The worst-case scenario would be if we left and they sent us back. We've already had this experience," said the 28-year-old Czech. In March, Pliskova travelled to the United States only to find out the Miami and Indian Wells tournaments were scrapped over the virus outbreak.

She also waved aside the expected tight security measures at Flushing Meadows. "I've decided I want to play and this shouldn't be a problem," said Pliskova, who even found an advantage to the planned restrictions.

"I'm pretty tired. So I'm looking forward to closing my door... and being alone in my room for 24 hours," she said. Pliskova is skipping next week's WTA tournament in Prague, just like fellow Czech Karolina Muchova, the world number 26, who is also getting ready for a trip to New York. — AFP

Tigers beat Pirates in 30-run affair, Senzatela guides Rockies past Mariners

Moreland, Verdugo power Red Sox past Blue Jays

PITTSBURGH: Niko Goodrum drove in five runs, including a two-run double in a four-run 11th inning, and the Detroit Tigers captured a wild 17-13 victory over the host Pittsburgh Pirates on Friday in the Tigers' first game since Sunday. Jeimer Candelario knocked in the go-ahead run and finished with three hits, two runs and three RBIs. C.J. Cron homered and reached base three times while scoring two runs and driving in two more for Detroit. Bryan Garcia (2-0), who tossed an inning of relief, was credited with the win. Erik Gonzalez hit a two-run homer and drove in a career-high six runs for the Pirates, and Phillip Evans homered and knocked in a career-best four runs. Adam Frazier socked a tying two-run homer to cap a three-run ninth. Dovydas Neverauskas (0-2) allowed the four runs (three earned) in the 11th. He gave up three hits and a walk with one strikeout. The Tigers' four games against St. Louis scheduled for earlier this week were postponed due to the Cardinals' coronavirus outbreak.

MARLINS 4, METS 3

Francisco Cervelli's three-run homer highlighted a four-run second inning and Miami continued its hot start behind six pitchers — including starter Humberto Mejia, making his big league debut after never pitching above Class A prior to this season — with a win over host New York. The Marlins, who had seven games postponed from July 27 through Aug. 3 after 18 players tested positive for the coronavirus, have won six straight and are 7-1 for just the fourth time in franchise history and the first time since 2009. The Mets have lost seven of nine. Mejia, 23, became the first Miami pitcher to make his big league debut by jumping from Class A since the late Jose Fernandez, also against the Mets, on April 7, 2013. The right-hander struck out the side in the first and allowed one run on two hits and two walks while striking out six over 2 1/3 innings. Lefty Stephen Tarpley (2-0) retired all six batters he faced to get the win in relief.

ORIOLES 11, NATIONALS 0

Renato Nunez hit a three-run homer, and Baltimore rediscovered its offense after losing four straight, defeating host Washington. Orioles shortstop Jose Iglesias went 4-for-4 with three RBIs, and Pedro Severino and Austin Hays added three hits apiece. Nunez homered in a four-run sixth inning that broke open the game. Baltimore starter Tommy Milone (1-1) made his second consecutive good start and threw six shutout innings, allowing three hits and striking out three without a walk. Baltimore finished with 19 hits, roughing up Washington starter Anibal Sanchez (0-2). The right-hander gave up five runs on 10 hits in 5 1/3 innings. He walked three and struck out four.

RAYS 1, YANKEES 0

Pinch hitter Michael Perez's sacrifice fly drove in the game's only run, and six pitchers combined on a two-hit shutout in Tampa Bay's win over New York at St. Petersburg, Fla. With the game scoreless in the eighth inning, Yankees reliever Adam Ottavino (2-1) issued two walks to put runners on first and second with one out, then uncorked a wild pitch to advance the runners before Perez's run-scoring fly-out. Chaz Roe (2-0) pitched two scoreless innings as Tampa Bay claimed the first game of the four-game series between the American League East rivals. The Yankees had homered in all 12 games — tied for the fifth-longest streak to start a season in major league history — but saw the streak come to an end in an anemic offensive performance.

ATHLETICS 3, ASTROS 2 (13 INN.)

Austin Allen tied the game with a two-out RBI single, and Marcus Semien followed two batters later with a walk-off single in the bottom of the 13th inning as host Oakland overtook Houston. The Athletics won their seventh straight, while the Astros lost their third in a row. After neither team scored in the first three extra innings, the Astros took the lead when Alex Bregman delivered Garrett Stubbs from third with a one-out double in the top of the 13th. Astros reliever Cy Sneed (0-2) then got within one out of a win, but after an intentional walk to Robbie Grossman, Allen came through with



Big league debut

his clutch game-tying hit. A walk to Tony Kemp loaded the bases, and Semien followed with his liner to right-center. J.B. Wendelken (1-0), who worked three innings and allowed one unearned run, got the win.

DODGERS 7, GIANTS 2

Mookie Betts hit a home run while making his first start in five days and host Los Angeles rolled over San Francisco Giants, despite losing All-Star shortstop Corey Seager in the third inning because of a lower back injury. Max Muncy, Will Smith and Edwin Rios also hit home runs as the Dodgers won for the fifth time in their last six games and the eighth time in their last 10. Julio Urias gave up one run over four innings, while Dylan Floro (1-0) pitched a scoreless inning in relief to earn the victory. Betts' third-inning solo home run off Giants starter Jeff Samardzija (0-2) was his team's first run of the game, and his third homer of the season. Samardzija gave up six runs (five earned) on seven hits over four innings with two walks and three strikeouts.

ROYALS 3, TWINS 2

Ryan McBroom's solo home run in the sixth inning broke a tie and proved to be the difference as host Kansas City won its second straight with a victory over Minnesota. The Twins, who dropped their second straight following a six-game winning streak, were 0-for-13 with one walk and five strikeouts against four Kansas City relievers. Greg Holland (2-0) picked up the win with 1 1/3 innings of hitless relief. Trevor Rosenthal earned his second save with a perfect ninth inning, including two strikeouts. Minnesota reliever Matt Wisler (0-1) gave up McBroom's home run.

WHITE SOX 2, INDIANS 0

Adam Engel homered to lead off the eighth inning, and four pitchers combined on a four-hit shutout to lift host Chicago to a victory over Cleveland. Rookie Luis Robert hit safely for the 12th time in 14 games and scored the contest's first run to help the White Sox record their seventh win in their past nine outings. Dylan Cease (2-1) overcame five walks and worked out of a bases-loaded jam in the fifth to cap his 99-pitch performance. Cleveland's Aaron Civale (1-2) sustained the hard-



PITTSBURGH: JaCoby Jones #21 of the Detroit Tigers scores in front of John Ryan Murphy #18 of the Pittsburgh Pirates during the tenth inning at PNC Park on August 7, 2020 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. —AFP

luck loss despite allowing only one run on five hits in seven innings.

ROCKIES 8, MARINERS 4

Antonio Senzatela pitched six quality innings to match the major league lead with his third victory of the season, and he was backed by three home runs as Colorado doubled-up host Seattle. Garrett Hampson, Charlie Blackmon and Daniel Murphy homered for the Rockies. Murphy also had a two-run single as part of a four-RBI night. Austin Nola homered for Seattle, which dropped to 2-6 at home. Senzatela (3-0) allowed three runs, two earned, on five hits in six innings. He walked one and struck out five. Mariners left-hander Yusei Kikuchi (0-1) allowed four runs on six hits in 5 2/3 innings with one walk and three strikeouts.

RANGERS 4, ANGELS 3

Texas scored three unearned runs in the fourth inning and held on for a win against Los Angeles in

the opener of the three-game series in Arlington, Texas. Jordan Lyles (1-1) earned his first win with the Rangers. The veteran right-hander went 5 1/3 innings, allowing three runs and six hits, striking out five and walking two. On his 29th birthday, Angels center fielder Mike Trout slammed a two-run homer to deep left-center field in the first inning, the fifth time he has homered on his birthday in his 10-year career.

RED SOX 5, BLUE JAYS 3

Mitch Moreland hit a two-run homer and had three RBIs. Alex Verdugo hit two solo shots, and host Boston defeated Toronto. Cavan Biggio led off the game with a homer for the Blue Jays, who have lost two in a row. The Red Sox have won two straight. Toronto starter Tanner Roark (1-1) allowed four runs, three hits and five walks in three innings. He struck out one. Boston starter Ryan Weber allowed two runs, five hits and two walks with three strikeouts in three-plus innings. — Reuters



KUWAIT: Kazma Sports Club handball team resumed training in preparation for upcoming events as well as the new season following the break that was forced by the COVID-19.

14 Tigers beat Pirates in 30-run affair



15 Guardiola targets 'next step' in CL after City dump out Real



15 Woakes hails 'miracle man' Stokes as England fight back



ORLANDO: Markelle Fultz #20 of the Orlando Magic drives to the basket during the game against the Philadelphia 76ers on August 7, 2020 at The HP Field House at ESPN Wide World Of Sports Complex in Orlando, Florida. — AFP

Nets, Magic fill out East playoff field

Celtics produce wire-to-wire win over Raptors

PHILADELPHIA: Tobias Harris scored 23 points and grabbed 15 rebounds to lift the host Philadelphia 76ers past the Orlando Magic 108-101 Friday near Orlando, but the Magic ended up the day's big winner nonetheless.

Despite the loss, Orlando clinched the Eastern Conference's final playoff spot after the Washington Wizards lost to the New Orleans Pelicans later in the day. Joel Embiid added 23 points and 13 rebounds while Alec Burks scored 22 points. Al Horford had 21 points and nine rebounds and Shake Milton handed out a career-high eight assists for the Sixers, who won their third in a row. The Sixers played without All-Star Ben Simmons, who will remain sidelined indefinitely with a partially dislocated left kneecap. Nikola Vucevic led the Magic with 21 points and 12 rebounds while Evan Fournier added 22 points. D.J. Augustin scored 16 points, James Ennis III added 14 and Markelle Fultz had 13 for the Magic, who fell to 32-38. Terrence Ross missed all 10 of his field-goal attempts and did not score a point.

BROOKLYN NETS 119 - SACRAMENTO KINGS 106

Brooklyn improved to 3-2 since the restart and rebounded nicely from a 149-115 loss to the Boston

Celtics on Wednesday night to join the Magic in clinching an Eastern Conference playoff spot. Caris LeVert made 9 of 21 shots and also handed out seven assists as the Nets shot 48.8 percent, made 17 3-pointers and handed out 30 assists. Joe Harris added 21 points and center Jarrett Allen nearly posted a triple-double with 17 points, 11 rebounds and a career-high eight assists. The Kings fell to 1-4 since the restart after going 10-5 in their final 15 games before the pause on March 11. Sacramento dropped to 13th in the Western Conference, 3 1/2 games behind eighth-place Memphis. Bogdan Bogdanovic led Sacramento with 27 points on 11-of-19 shooting.

BOSTON CELTICS 122 - TORONTO RAPTORS 100

Jaylen Brown scored 20 points and Jayson Tatum added 18 as Boston rolled to a victory over Toronto. The Raptors had won seven consecutive games, including their first three contests, since the resumption of play.

Kemba Walker scored 17 points in a contest in which Boston never trailed and led by as many as 40. Brad Wanamaker added 15 points, Daniel Theis contributed 11 points and 11 rebounds, Semi Ojeleye tallied 11 points and Robert Williams III scored 10 for

the Celtics. Fred VanVleet scored 13 points to lead Toronto. Rondae Hollis-Jefferson, Kyle Lowry, Norman Powell and Pascal Siakam added 11 points apiece and Terence Davis had 10.

SAN ANTONIO SPURS 119 - UTAH JAZZ 111

Derrick White poured in 24 points and Jakob Poeltl added 19 points and 10 rebounds as San Antonio overwhelmed short-handed Utah at the HP Field House near Orlando in a key NBA seeding game. The Jazz played without four starters - Mike Conley (right knee soreness), Rudy Gobert (rest), Donovan Mitchell (left peroneal strain) and Royce O'Neale (right calf soreness). Lonnie Walker IV and Rudy Gay added 14 points for the Spurs. DeMar DeRozan hit for 13 and Dejounte Murray scored 11 for San Antonio. Jordan Clarkson scored 24 points off the bench for the Jazz, with Tony Bradley adding 15 points and 11 rebounds, Miye Oni and Emmanuel Mudiay contributing 14 points each, and Joe Ingles pumping in 12.

MEMPHIS GRIZZLIES 121 - OKLAHOMA CITY THUNDER 92

Dillon Brooks scored 22 points to lead Memphis to a win over Oklahoma City. The Grizzlies win

snapped a five-game losing streak that dated back to before the season was put on hold by the pandemic. It also kept Memphis in the eighth spot in the Western Conference, a game ahead of Portland with three games remaining. Memphis shot 55.4 percent from the field, including 8 of 11 shooting for Jonas Valanciunas, who added 19 points. Ja Morant also scored 19. Chris Paul led the Thunder with 17 points. Oklahoma City shot just 35.1 percent from the field, its worst shooting performance of the season.

NEW ORLEANS PELICANS 118 - WASHINGTON WIZARDS 107

Jrue Holiday scored 28 points as New Orleans overcame the absence of Zion Williamson to keep Washington winless in five games since the restart.

Williamson, who has been on a minutes restriction (conditioning), was held out as the Pelicans were playing their second game in as many days. Brandon Ingram added 17 points, JJ Redick started in Williamson's place and scored 15. Frank Jackson scored 13 and Derrick Favors had 12 points and 10 rebounds. Rui Hachimura led Washington with 23 points, Thomas Bryant scored 22, Troy Brown Jr. had 20 points and 10 rebounds, and Ish Smith had 18 points and 10 assists. — Reuters

Lydia Ko takes lead at LPGA Marathon Classic

WASHINGTON: Lydia Ko produced a barnstorming finish to snatch a one-shot lead with a six under-par second round at the LPGA Marathon Classic on Friday. The former world number one from New Zealand bagged back-to-back birdies on the 17th and 18th holes to leapfrog England's Jodi Ewart Shadoff for sole possession of the lead at Highland Meadows in Sylvania, Ohio.

Ko believes that being able to pick up strokes on the 17th and 18th holes at Highland Meadows — both par-fives — could be crucial over the weekend. "To finish off with a couple birdies on the last two holes is nice," Ko said. "I think that's going to be the key for this golf course, and es-

pecially in the final groups, whether that's me or for any other players. Because it is two par-5 finishing holes, there could be a huge turnaround."

Ko's pair of closing birdies bookended a blistering start to her round, when she reeled off four consecutive birdies over the first four holes to move into the lead. Her roller-coaster 65 included nine birdies, three bogeys and six pars, leaving her at 13 under after 36 holes.

For most of the second round, it looked as if Ko would have to settle for a share of the lead with playing partner Ewart Shadoff. The 32-year-old from Yorkshire was flawless in compiling an eight-under-par 63, making five birdies before the turn with two more on the 11th and 13th holes.

Ewart Shadoff then briefly took the lead with a birdie on the par-five 17th to move to 12 under, before Ko's strong finish left the Englishwoman a shot off the pace. Ewart Shadoff said her game had benefited from playing with the in-form Ko.

"We get on really well, and obviously our games are kind of bouncing off each other," she said. "To play with each other tomorrow we'll

have a similar vibe as today, so that's a nice feeling to have."

Ewart Shadoff's round follows her strong showing at last week's Drive On Championship at Inverness Club in Ohio, where she led going into the final round before fading from contention. World number two Danielle Kang, who had shared the overnight lead with Ko after an opening 64 on Thursday, had also looked poised to challenge at the top of the leaderboard with another blemish-free round.

Kang lost ground with a bogey on the 17th, however, before a birdie on the 18th gave her a four-under-par 67, to leave her in third on 11 under, two off the lead. Ko, Ewart Shadoff and Kang have put clear daylight between themselves and the rest of the field.

The chasing pack is led by Mexico's Maria Fassi, who is fourth on nine under after a five-under-par 66. Kristen Gillman and Megan Khang are tied in fifth place on eight under, five off the lead, while Australia's Minjee Lee is seventh on six under after a four-under-par 67 on Friday. — AFP



SYLVANIA: Lydia Ko of New Zealand hits a tee shot on the seventh hole during the second round of the Marathon LPGA Classic at Highland Meadows Golf Club in Sylvania, Ohio. — AFP