

5 Nagasaki marks 75 years since atomic bombing



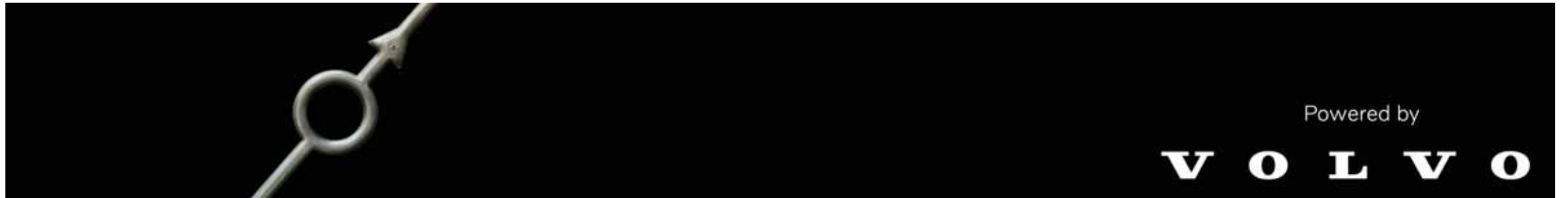
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Assembly committee reviewing measures to cut expat numbers

Proposals focus on 'marginal' laborers, 'bachelors', nationality quotas

'Back to school' for 12th graders



KUWAIT: Education Minister Saud Al-Harbi (right) visited a number of schools yesterday to inspect work on the first day of school for grade 12 students. Classes are being held via remote learning. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh (See Page 3)

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The National Assembly human resources committee has started reviewing government and parliamentary proposals aimed at adopting policies to cut the number of expats in the country. Head of the panel MP Khalil Al-Saleh said the committee plans to meet Minister of Social Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel, who will submit the government plan on the issue that calls to reduce hundreds of thousands of expats.

The committee will also review seven proposals submitted by MPs, with one of them calling to impose quotas for each expat community in the country, while another proposes to substitute some 100,000 expat employees in the government with Kuwaitis. According to the government plan, published by Al-Rai newspaper, the government proposes to gradually replace as many as 160,000 expat jobs in the public sector with Kuwaitis, but did not provide timeframes.

The plan also states that as many as 370,000 expats who have a "negative impact" on the country or are illegal residents can be cut by taking short-term measures. The government is also proposing to reduce the number of "marginal" laborers by 25 percent by adopting a "smart recruitment" system, but also provided no specific timeline. It also expects to reduce temporary employment contracts

by 30 percent in government jobs.

In its presentation, the government admits a massive imbalance between expats and Kuwaitis, saying that between 2005 and 2019, the population of Kuwait more than doubled to 4.42 million. It said during the same period, citizens grew by just 55 percent - from 860,000 to 1.335 million - while expats grew by more than 130 percent from 1.33 million to 3.08 million.

The government plan acknowledges that the population imbalance has negative security, social, economic and cultural consequences on the country. Certain communities have "inflated" numbers and are concentrated in specific areas, in addition to the rise in the number of single uneducated men, which poses a security risk, the government states.

It also said that the number of expat men far exceeds that of women by three to one, which could result in undesirable practices, while the government policy of subsidies is impacting the domestic economy as the large number of expats benefit from it.

Meanwhile, MP Abdullah Al-Kandari proposed the formation of a government team from various concerned departments to inspect stores for dangerous chemicals to prevent destructive explosions like the one in Beirut. He said the team must ensure that these dangerous materials are stored properly and to ensure that such stores are not present in Kuwait City or its suburbs.

Taiwan airlines offer 'flights to nowhere'

TAOYUAN, Taiwan: Faced with the coronavirus collapse in travellers, Taiwanese airlines have begun offering sight-seeing "flights to nowhere" on their passenger jets - including flight attendant lessons for children. At the headquarters of Taiwan's China Airlines in Taoyuan on Saturday, 50 children took a morning course on how to serve passengers aboard a mock cabin. Cheng Yu-wei, who works in the fashion apparel business and enjoys travelling abroad, came with his wife and six-year old daughter to "revive that old feeling of travelling". "Maybe it's because we have been bored for too long," Cheng said to AFP.

Later in the day, the excitable gaggle of kids took to the skies in their new uniforms for a two hour flight over the island and the soaring mountain range that runs down its spine. The flights are part of an innovative attempt by airlines to scramble up some extra cash at a time when their business has all but dried up. Like most airlines around the world, both China Airlines and its main competitor Eva Air have had to mothball a huge chunk of their fleet as international travel evaporates during the pandemic. The two also have a limited domestic business to fall back on.

On Saturday, an Eva A330 from Taoyuan International Airport flew over Taiwan's northeast cape, circled Japan's Ryukyu Islands before returning home via the picturesque and rural southeast coast. The total flight time was two hours and 45 minutes. — AFP



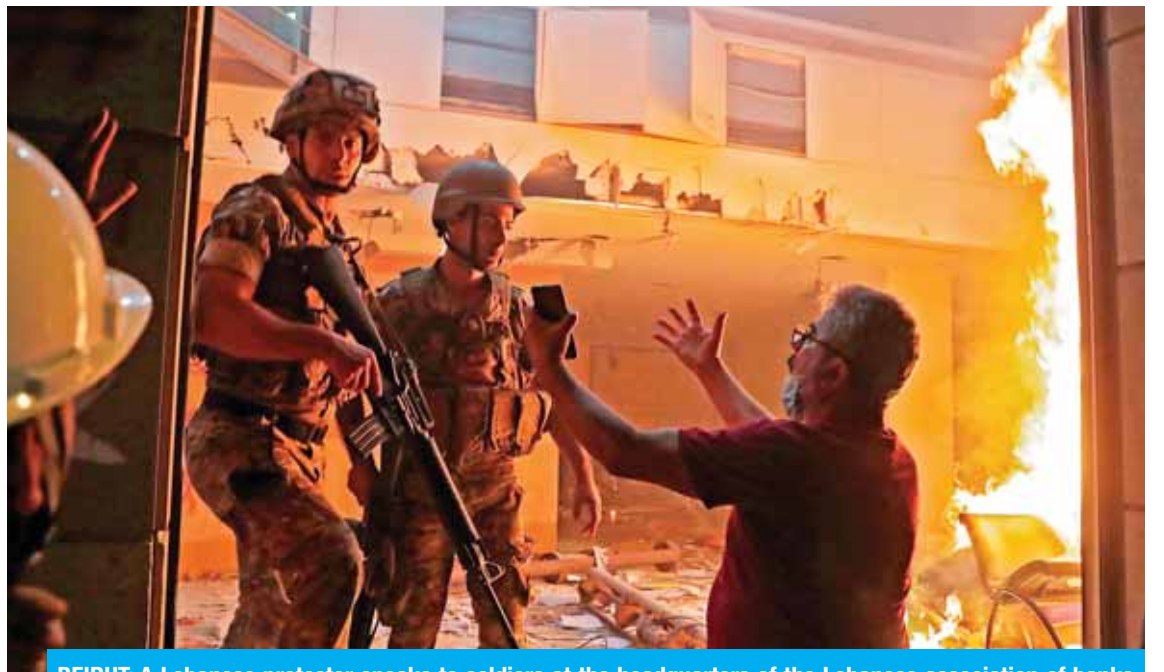
TAOYUAN, Taiwan: Flight attendants take part in a 'fly to nowhere' event for children at China Airlines' campus on Saturday. — AFP

Furious Lebanese vow new protests over deadly blast

BEIRUT: Lebanese protesters enraged by official negligence blamed for Beirut's enormous and deadly explosion vowed yesterday to rally again after a night of street clashes in which they stormed several ministries. "Prepare the gallows because our anger doesn't end in one day," warned one message circulating on social media in response to Tuesday's earthquake-strength blast of a huge pile of industrial chemicals.

The calls for renewed protests came as French President Emmanuel Macron in Paris was to oversee a UN-backed virtual donors conference to raise aid for Lebanon, a country already mired in a painful economic crisis. In Beirut, the fury on the streets has further shaken the embattled government of Prime Minister Hassan Diab, which saw its first cabinet resignation when the information minister, Manal Abdel Samad, quit yesterday.

Continued on Page 2



BEIRUT: A Lebanese protester speaks to soldiers at the headquarters of the Lebanese association of banks late Saturday following a demonstration against the political leadership. — AFP

Egypt highway uproots homes in City of Dead

CAIRO: Egyptian mother-of-three Menna said she was caught off guard when a bulldozer clearing space for a controversial highway flattened much of a mausoleum that doubled as her home in a sprawling cemetery. "The earthmover suddenly hit the wall and we found ourselves throwing our things in a panic" outside, she told AFP. "They kicked us out on the street," she said, surrounded by rubble and dust in the UNESCO-listed world heritage site.

Menna's parents and grandparents had made their home among the graves of the City of the Dead, the oldest necropolis in the Muslim world. For those unable to afford prohibitively high rents in Egypt's capital, the

burial chambers provide shelter for thousands like her. Many built extensions to the original mausoleums, eking out a largely tranquil, if bizarre, existence side-by-side with dead sultans, singers and saints in the sprawling east Cairo cemetery.

But Menna said her peace - and that of the dead - was shattered by the arrival of workmen. "It was awful. We moved the dead on straw mats," she said. She and her husband shifted several bodies, including the remains of her father, to a segment of her home still intact. Menna is now living with neighbors in part of the cemetery that is not in the demolition area. Dozens of bodies were displaced by the construction work in the second half of July, according to local media, to make way for the 17.5 km Al-Ferdaous, or Paradise, highway.

Ferdaous, connecting major Cairo road arteries, is the latest installment of President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi's urban vision.

Continued on Page 2



CAIRO: This picture taken on July 22, 2020 shows a view of a cemetery undergoing demolition amidst ongoing roadworks in the historic City of the Dead necropolis of Egypt's capital. — AFP

Local

Deputy Amir receives state officials at Seif Palace



KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem. — KUNA photos



His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Deputy Prime Minister, Interior Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Khaled Al-Saleh.



His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Foreign Minister and Acting Defense Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Mohammad Al-Sabah.



Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Mohammad Al-Sabah meets with Ambassador of Guyana to Kuwait Dr Shamir Ally.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Seif Palace yesterday National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem. His Highness the Deputy Amir also received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, as well as Deputy Prime Minister, Interior Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Khaled Al-Saleh. Furthermore, His Highness Sheikh Nawaf received Foreign Minister and Acting Defense Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Mohammad Al-Sabah.

In other news, Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Mohammad Al-Sabah received yesterday Ambassador of Guyana to Kuwait Dr Shamir Ally on the occasion of ending his tenure. Sheikh Dr Ahmad commended

contributions of Ally in promoting bilateral relations. The meeting was attended by Assistant Foreign Minister for the Minister's office Saleh Al-Loughani.

Separately, Sheikh Dr Ahmad Al-Sabah cabled US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Saturday, expressing condolences on the death of the former US national security adviser General Brent Scowcroft. In the cable, the foreign minister eulogized General Scowcroft who robustly stood on Kuwait's side in the face of the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. The Kuwaiti people will not forget his support during the dark days of Kuwait and the Gulf. Sheikh Dr Ahmad wrote to Pompeo. Moreover, he has underlined the historic and deep-rooted ties bonding the State of Kuwait with the United States of America. — KUNA

Coronavirus in Kuwait: What we know so far

KUWAIT: Kuwait has recorded 71,713 cases infected with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) as of yesterday, in addition to 478 deaths. With the exception of 115 cases in intensive care, all infected cases are in stable condition and are recovering in quarantined locations designated by the government for this purpose, while tens of thousands have been discharged from quarantine after exhibiting no symptoms during their 14-day quarantine period, the Ministry of Health confirmed. Meanwhile, 63,519 people have recovered completely after previously being infected with the virus, while there are 7,716 people receiving treatment.

Curfew

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

Commercial flights

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

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

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

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

School year ended

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

of the 2020/2021 school year at foreign private schools. Earlier, the Ministry of Education had suspended classes at all public and private schools (for both students and teaching staffs): first from March 1 to March 12, and later extended it until March 29, before eventually suspending schools until August for grade 12 and October for other stages.

Hotlines

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

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

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

Medicine delivery

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

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

- Kuwait Cancer Control Center: 96735242
- Psychiatric Hospital: 97350113
- Physiotherapy Hospital: 99824037
- Maternity Hospital: 98559531
- As'ad Al-Hamad Dermatology Center: 98514508

- Zain Hospital: 97552031
 - NBK Hospital: 96931761
 - Al-Rashed Allergy Hospital: 94162470
 - Infectious Diseases Hospital: 96989164
 - Palliative Care Hospital: 94024786
 - Sabah Al-Ahmad Urology Center: 90952469
 - KFH Addiction Treatment Center: 94169363
- Meanwhile, all licensed pharmacies in Kuwait delivering medicine are allowed to continue their services 24 hours a day. The Ministry of Health is also asking doctors and nurses affiliated with the private medical sector to volunteer in order to contribute to the fight against the virus. Volunteering is available through the link: <http://volunteering.q8-ehealth.com>. The ministry had closed all private clinics and medical centers effective March 22, 2020 until further notice.

Mental health assistance

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

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

Furious Lebanese vow new protests...

Continued from Page 1

"After the enormous Beirut catastrophe, I announce my resignation from government," she said, apologizing to citizens for having failed them.

The revelation that Lebanese state officials had long tolerated a ticking time-bomb in the heart of the capital has served as shocking proof to many Lebanese of the rot at the core of the state apparatus. The death toll from the explosion of a long-neglected pile of ammonium nitrate stood at 158 people, with 60 still reported missing, and a stag-

gering 6,000 wounded, many by flying glass as the shockwave tore through the city.

The blast, whose mushroom cloud reminded many of an atomic bomb, left a 43-m deep crater at Beirut's port, said a security official citing French experts working in the disaster area. The mood was one of grief and fury in Beirut, a day after many of the dead were laid to rest and when thousands demonstrated in the biggest anti-government rally the country has seen in months.

The country's worst peace-time disaster has reignited a protest movement against the reviled ruling elite that first flared last October but had then faded amid economic hardship and the coronavirus pandemic. As tensions have again escalated, the army Saturday used teargas and rubber bullets to clear hundreds of protesters from the central Martyr's Square, once more the epicenter of Lebanon's protest movement. — AFP

Egypt highway uproots homes...

Continued from Page 1

He is intent on transferring the center of political power to a new capital, about 45 km east of Cairo - a mega-project in the desert overseen by the military's engineering arm. Sisi led the army's overthrow of elected president Mohamed Morsi in 2013 following mass protests against the Islamist leader's rule. He won his first term as president in 2014 and was re-elected four years later with more than 97 percent of the vote.

It is not just residents of the City of the Dead who are upset by the demolition work undertaken

there. Galila El-Kadi, a Marseille-based veteran architect and urban researcher, said the site is "an important component" of the capital's urban history. A final resting place for illustrious figures including singer Farid Al-Atrash and writer Ihsan Abdel Kouddous as well as ordinary Egyptians, the Islamic necropolis founded in the seventh century stretches over 6.5 km.

It is full of ornately designed domes with chiseled Quranic verses that have been the object of fascination for orientalist painters and historians. Kadi, who authored a book on the City of the Dead (Al-Qarafa in Arabic), said the demolition had reached a historic perimeter where luminaries are buried, including Sultan Abu Said Qansuh of the Mamluk dynasty in the 15th century. She said the demolitions would result in a loss of Cairo's "visual identity and its memory". — AFP

Local

Minister supervises first day back to school for 12th graders



KUWAIT: Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education Dr Saud Al-Harbi is seen during his tour yesterday. — Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh



KUWAIT: Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education Dr Saud Al-Harbi visited a number of schools yesterday to inspect the process of work on the first

day back to school for 12th grade students through e-learning. Twelfth grade students in public and Arabic private schools resumed the 2019-2020 academic year

after a five-month break due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as they will be taking classes online before taking their finals which end on September 17th. The 2020-

2021 academic year in public and Arabic private schools starts on October 4th for all stages, and teaching will be done through e-learning as well.

Kuwaiti aid pours into disaster-hit Lebanon

BEIRUT: Planeloads of Kuwaiti aid flowed into Lebanon on Saturday just days after Beirut's deadliest peace-time explosion sparked unspeakable devastation across the Mediterranean city. A pair of planes laden with medical supplies and food arrived in Beirut's international airport as part of ongoing aid delivery to a country still reeling from the tragedy, the Kuwaiti embassy in Lebanon said in a statement. "We have just received two Kuwaiti planes carrying emergency aid as per instructions given by His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah," embassy advisor Abdullah Al-Shaheen said, pointing out that such support will continue "in this time of adversity." Thanking Kuwait for the prompt aid, the Lebanese military said the two countries have stood together "through thick and thin," while Kuwait Red Crescent Society said it would ensure that families who had borne the brunt of the disaster will be the ultimate aid recipients, according to Msaad Al-Enezi, the chief of the charity's delegation to Lebanon. A powerful blast in port warehouses near central Beirut on Tuesday killed more than a hundred people and left thousands without inhabitable homes, sending shockwaves that destroyed large swathes of the Lebanese capital. — KUNA



BEIRUT: Aid relief arrives to Lebanon from Kuwait on Saturday. — KUNA photos



A Kuwait Red Crescent and a Lebanese Red Cross workers deliver aid to people affected by the explosion in Beirut.

News in brief

Weekly flights to Frankfurt, Kabul

KUWAIT: The Directorate General of Civil Aviation said on Saturday that weekly flights to Frankfurt and Kabul will be operating to gradually activate departures to and from the countries. Head of the Flight Administration Abdullah Al-Rajhy said in a press statement that the German aviation company Lufthansa will be managing flights from Frankfurt airport to Kuwait International Airport with one flight every week based on guidelines of the German authorities. Rajhy added, the Afghan aviation company will begin operations with weekly flights from Kabul airport to Kuwait, centered on the Afghani people's needs to travel based on health parameters.

Fugitives escape

KUWAIT: Police arrested an officer at Saad Al-Abdullah Airport's passport counter on accusations that he helped two fugitives bypass their travel bans and escape out of the country. The suspect smuggled the two expatriates out without registering their exit on the system, the Interior Ministry explained in a statement.

Shops rent waiver

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Social Affairs instructed the union of consumer cooperative societies to waive the rent for investors and shop owners at co-op societies, after their businesses were hit hard by the COVID-19 crisis. This decision came in coordination with the Finance Ministry, and according to which the business owners can have the monthly rent waived starting from April until COVID-19 restrictions are lifted.

Employee tests positive

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Commerce and Industry announced that one of its employees tested positive for COVID-19. The employee works at Kuwait Business Center in Ishbiliya, the ministry said in a statement, adding that the building was closed yesterday.

Stay safe. Stay home. Stay informed.



Local

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Man accused of holding daughter against her will

KUWAIT: Sulaibiya detectives arrested a stateless person who allegedly detained his daughter at home against her will, said security sources, noting that the girl had called requesting police intervention to free her. Upon responding to the report and rushing to the man's house, the father opened the door, then his daughter appeared behind him asking policemen to free her. Both father and daughter were taken to the police station for further legal action.

Sexual harassment

A security officer at a co-op in Mubarak Al-Kabeer was arrested on accusations of sexual harassment, said security sources. Case papers indicate that a 20-year-old woman was shopping when the security officer started chasing her around the supermarket asking for her phone number, which made her leave and report the matter to her father, who took her to the police station to file a complaint. The girl's claims were verified by checking CCTV videos. The harasser was arrested and a case was filed.

Drunkards arrested

Jahra detectives put an end to disturbance caused by the landlord and neighbors by a drunkard, said security sources. Case papers indicate that the owner of a Jahra building reported that one of his tenants has been repeatedly disturbing his neighbors. Rushing to the scene, detectives arrested the man, who was drunk, and confiscated nine liquor bottles he had in his possession. The suspect was referred to relevant authorities pending further legal actions. Another drunkard was arrested after he stopped a police patrol asking for a lift to a gas station and back to refuel his vehicle, said security sources. Case papers indicate that a police patrol stopped to offer help to a man waving to them. "I want you to drive me to a gas station and bring me back. My car ran out of fuel," he told them. However, the policemen suspected the way he talked and he reeked of liquor, so they arrested him. A case was filed.

—Translated by Kuwait Times from Al-Rai

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: The sun sets over an open square in Kuwait. —Photo by Fouad Al-Shalkh

Around 100,000 set to leave by year's end

KUWAIT: Informed security sources told Kuwaiti daily Al-Qabas that around 100,000 residents are expected to leave the country for good before the end of the current year after the companies sponsoring them were referred to investigation over charges of visa trafficking, as they are actually jobless in Kuwait. The companies' files with the Public Authority for Manpower were also blocked.

"Ever since the unprecedented security crackdown on visa traffickers, around 450 companies were referred to investigation in 300 cases," the sources explained, noting that investigations

showed that around 100,000 workers are registered with and sponsored by these companies without having real jobs in Kuwait.

The sources added the workers used to get residency visas from such fake companies in return for money, and then found jobs on their own elsewhere. The sources said the Interior Ministry's residency investigations directorate had referred 535 people, including 55 Kuwaitis, to investigative authorities for involvement in these cases. "Inspection and search are still in progress for other fake companies," the sources highlighted, noting some of the concerned workers left as soon as they learned their companies were being investigated and that they would not be able to return to Kuwait, while others are still waiting for the resumption of flights to their home countries.

Teachers' shortage

Meanwhile, a well-informed educational official

told Al-Rai that the Ministry of Education (MoE) needs to hire 670 teachers and 260 social and psychological workers, noting that only 40 social and psychological workers have so far applied. Meanwhile, sources said MoE's public education sector is currently listing its needs of various specialties for the coming school year prior to approving the final job vacancy announcement, and warned of shortages of teachers in certain subjects.

The sources also stressed there are no jobs for expats in MoE except as teachers and in 'rare specialties,' adding that MoE is one of the leading ministries in terms of commitment to the annual replacement policy set by the Civil Service Commission, as 95 percent of jobs have been Kuwaitized at the ministry, leaving only porters and cleaners and a limited number of legal, accounting and engineering staff members, who are being annually and gradually laid off.

Two workers perish at gas project site

KUWAIT: Two workers died "in a painful accident" at dawn on Saturday at a project site for imported natural gas in Al-Zour, approximately 95 kilometers south of Kuwait City, Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Company (KIPIC) announced. Mahmoud Abul, KIPIC's deputy chief executive officer and official spokesperson, said in a statement that the two workers died at the site of constructing facilities for importing liquefied natural gas in Al-Zour. Investigations have already kicked off to determine circumstances of the accident, Abul said. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Drug Control Department officers arrested two people in Salmiya for drug trafficking, the Ministry of Interior announced. Legal measures were taken against the suspects.

In my view

Human? Are we?

By Abdellatif Sharaa

local@kuwaittimes.com

Is it really true that all those who walk on two legs are human? I honestly have doubts about that! How sorry a "human being" can be? The atrocities that were committed by those who are considered members of the human race suggest that there is a beast living somewhere in the body of what looks like a human and gains full control then the most heinous acts are committed.

Reports about killings are heard everywhere and this became something normal, as it happens every single day. We started to see brother killing brother, and let's take Lebanon as an example. In 2005, there were four assassinations that started with the massive explosion that took the life of Prime Minister Rafiq Al-Hariri and many of his aides and passersby.

Four months later, prominent journalist Samir Kassir was killed, followed 19 days later by the assassination of George Hawi. Then the year ended with the killing of influential journalist Gebran Tuani. In 2006, an explosion caused the death of Mahmoud Al-Majdoub. In 2007, there were three assassinations including one against Army Operations Director Franco Al-Haj.

In 2008, there were four explosions killing at least 12 soldiers in addition to politicians. In 2012, the intelligence chief of domestic security was killed. In 2013, 27 people were killed and more than 300 injured in an explosion. There were four explosions in 2013 that killed more than 64 persons. In 2014, five blasts claimed the lives of 29 people, while 98 were killed in two other explosions. In 2016, five people were killed in an incident. Then came the horrible incident at Beirut port early last week that claimed the lives of over 154 innocent people.

I honestly feel bad and sad at what is being done to humanity by so-called humans. What took place in Lebanon pained our hearts and we shed tears. What makes it worse is that it could have been avoided - at least from what we know from reports so far.

Being an optimist to the full extent of what this word carries in its meaning, I still have hope that the human being will realize his true nature and stop acting as the beast incarnate and stop rivers of blood flowing all over the globe. I pray to Almighty God that this day be with us soon - very soon.

"Hope is seeing light in spite of being surrounded by darkness."

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International

MONDAY, AUGUST 10, 2020



Head of US Christian college steps aside in flap over photo

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Lebanese protesters demand revenge after deadly blast

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RIO DE JANEIRO: A demonstrator with a Brazilian flag is seen besides crosses during a tribute to COVID-19 victims organized by the Rio de Paz NGO at Copacabana beach on Saturday. — AFP

Brazil tops 100,000 virus deaths

New Zealand reaches 100-day milestone without virus transmission

RIO DE JANEIRO: Brazil became the second country to pass the grim milestone of 100,000 coronavirus deaths Saturday as US President Donald Trump signed executive actions extending economic help in the world's worst-hit nation. The US leader's orders followed failure by his Republican party and opposition Democrats to agree on a new stimulus package despite the country's double digit unemployment, business downturn and stubbornly high coronavirus infection rates.

Meanwhile just a day after Latin America and the Caribbean became the hardest-hit region in the global pandemic, Brazil reported a total of 100,477 fatalities, joining the United States as the only two countries to surpass the six-digit death mark. Tolls continue to rise across the world, with global fatalities having now soared past 722,000. More than 162,000 of those were in the United States, which was on the verge of recording 5 million cases.

India has more than two million infections - its caseload having doubled in three weeks-and has recorded 42,518 deaths. And more than 10,000 people have died from coronavirus in South Africa, the health ministry said Saturday, as football resumed following a 145-day coronavirus-induced shutdown.

Paris makes masks mandatory

Growing infections in and around Paris have prompted officials to make face masks compulsory outdoors in crowded areas and tourist hotspots in the city and surrounding areas from today. The mask will be obligatory for all those aged 11 and over "in certain very crowded zones," said a police statement, including the banks of the Seine River and more than 100 streets in the French capital.

As temperatures soared across western Europe, holidaymakers crowded beaches despite warnings about the risk of infection. On Saturday, a day after Britain recorded its hottest August day in 17 years at 36.4 degrees Celsius, much of its southern coastline was packed with tourists. Local authorities in Germany warned that some beaches and lakes would be closed if there were too many people.

Belgian police meanwhile arrested several people Saturday at the resort of Blankenberge after a brawl broke out on a beach between officers and youths they had told to leave for refusing to respect virus safety measures. And around 5,000 people demonstrated in Vienna for increased financial support for nightlife and relaxing coronavirus regulations. Some workplaces remain hotspots of infection. Meat giant Danish Crown announced Saturday it had shut down a major slaughterhouse in Denmark after nearly 150 employees came down with the virus.

New Zealand marked 100 days yesterday with no recorded cases of the coronavirus in the community but health officials warned there was no room for complacency. There are still 23 active cases but all were detected at the border when entering the country and are being held in managed isolation facilities.

New Zealand, with a population of five million, has won widespread praise for its effective handling of the coronavirus since closing its borders on March 19. The World Health Organization has hailed the country as an example to others for having "successfully eliminated community transmission". Since the first patient was diagnosed in February, there have been 1,219 confirmed cases of the virus in New Zealand with the last case of community transmission recorded on May 1.

As a result, New Zealanders are enjoying a near-normal, pre-coronavirus lifestyle with no social distancing and spectators allowed at sports and cultural events, but with the border strictly controlled and all arrivals required to spend 14 days in quarantine. The government has maintained the prospect of a second wave remains a possibility and is pushing for all households to keep emergency supply kits including masks. India now has the world's third-highest pandemic caseload after the United States and Brazil. Women health workers in several Indian states staged a two-day strike from Friday and plan a mass protest in New Delhi on Sunday for better pay, a higher pension and anti-virus protection equipment and testing. Shiksha Rana, a social health activist in New Delhi, told AFP at least 200 health workers - and their families - had been infected in the Delhi region alone. — Agencies



GAZA CITY: A staff member of the Rosary Sisters School checks the temperature of returning students on the first day of school on Saturday. — AFP

Nagasaki marks 75 years since atomic bombing

NAGASAKI, Japan: The Japanese city of Nagasaki yesterday commemorated the 75th anniversary of its destruction by a US atomic bomb, with its mayor and the head of the United Nations warning against a nuclear arms race. Nagasaki was flattened in an atomic inferno three days after Hiroshima - twin nuclear attacks that rang in the nuclear age and gave Japan the bleak distinction of being the only country to be struck by atomic weapons. Survivors, their relatives and a handful of foreign dignitaries attended a remembrance ceremony in Nagasaki where they called for world peace. Participants offered a silent prayer at 11:02 am (0202 GMT), the time the second and last nuclear weapon used in wartime was dropped over the city. "The true horror of nuclear weapons has not yet been adequately conveyed to the world at large" despite decades of effort by survivors telling of their "hellish experience", Nagasaki mayor Tomihisa Taue said in a speech afterwards.

"If, as with the novel coronavirus - which we did not fear until it began to spread among our immediate surroundings - humanity does not become aware of the threat of nuclear weapons until they are used again, we will find ourselves in an irrevocable predicament." UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, in a message read by his undersecretary Izumi Nakamitsu, warned that "the prospect of nuclear weapons being used intentionally, by accident or miscalculation, is dangerously high". "The historic progress in nuclear disarmament is in jeopardy... This alarming trend must be reversed," he said.

'Nuclear-free world'

The number of participants in this year's ceremony was reduced to roughly one tenth the figure in previous years due to coronavirus fears, with proceedings broadcast live online in Japanese and English. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe refreshed his pledge that Japan would lead



NAGASAKI: Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe lays a wreath during a ceremony marking the 75th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Nagasaki, at the Nagasaki Peace Park yesterday. — AFP

"the international community's efforts towards the realization of a nuclear-free world". Terumi Tanaka, 88, who was 13 and at his hillside home when the bomb hit Nagasaki, remembers the moment everything went white with a flash of light, and the aftermath.

"I saw many people with terrible burns and wounds evacuating ... people who were already dead in a primary school-turned shelter," Tanaka told AFP in a recent interview, saying his two aunts died. Atomic bomb survivors "believe that the world must abandon nuclear arms because we never want younger generations to experience the same thing", he said. The remembrance comes as worries linger over the nuclear threat from North Korea and growing tensions between the US and China over issues including security and trade.

"I'm determined to keep appealing (to the world) that Nagasaki must be the last atomic bomb-hit city," survivor Shigemi Fukahori, 89, said at the ceremony. "I hope young people will receive this baton of peace and keep running."

The US dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima on Aug 6, 1945, killing around 140,000 people. The toll includes those who survived the explosion itself but died soon after from radiation exposure. —AFP

Talks near after Taliban prisoner release approved

KABUL: The Afghan government and the Taliban are "on the verge of peace talks" after thousands of prominent Afghans approved the release of about 400 contentious militant prisoners, the head of Kabul's peace council said yesterday. The prisoners' fate has been a crucial hurdle in launching peace talks between the two warring sides, which had committed to completing a prisoner exchange before negotiations can start.

The resolution was passed at the end of a three-day "loya jirga" - a traditional Afghan meeting of tribal elders and other stakeholders sometimes held to decide on controversial issues. "In order to remove the hurdles for the start of peace talks, stopping bloodshed, and for the good of the public, the jirga approves the release of 400 prisoners as demanded by the Taliban," jirga member Atefa Tayeb announced.

According to an official list seen by AFP, many of the inmates are accused of serious offences, including many involved in attacks that killed scores of Afghans and foreigners, with more than 150 of them on death row. The jirga urged the government to give assurances to the population that the released prisoners would be monitored and would not be allowed to return to the battlefield, adding that foreign fighters should be sent back to their respective countries.

It also demanded a "serious, immediate and lasting ceasefire" in the country. "The decision of the loya jirga has removed the last excuse and obstacles on the way to peace talks. We are on the verge of peace talks," said Abdullah Abdullah, who is leading the government's peace process and was appointed head of the loya jirga. Afghan President Ashraf Ghani said he would sign a decree to release the prisoners. "The Taliban should now demonstrate that they are not afraid of a nationwide ceasefire," he said.

The Afghan government has released almost 5,000 Taliban inmates, but authorities had balked at freeing the final prisoners demanded by the Taliban. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo pushed for the release of the detainees, while recognizing the decision would be "unpopular". The prisoners include 44 insurgents of particular concern to the United States and other countries for their role in "high-profile" attacks.

Five are linked to the 2018 attack on the Intercontinental Hotel in Kabul that killed 40 people, including 14 foreigners. A Taliban militant involved in the massive May 2017 truck bombing near the German embassy in Kabul is also on the list, which includes a former Afghan army officer who killed five French troops in an insider attack. The family of French aid worker Bettina Goisard who was murdered in Afghanistan in 2003 said they would not accept the release of her killers, who are on the list.

"Such a decision to free (them) made on the basis of horse-trading would be, to us, her family, inconceivable," Bettina's family said in a statement to AFP before the decision was announced. On the first day of the gathering, lawmaker Belquis Roshan, a prominent women's rights activist, protested against the release of the prisoners, unfurling a banner that read: "Redeeming Taliban is national treason."

The decision has raised hopes for peace talks, however. "Based on the information I have, the intra-Afghan talks would begin within two to three days after the release of the 400 Taliban prisoners," former president Hamid Karzai told the loya jirga. The intra-Afghan talks were slated under a US-Taliban deal agreed in February, in which Washington said it would withdraw its troops from Afghanistan by mid-2021 in return for security guarantees.

Defense Secretary Mark Esper told Fox News on Saturday said the US would reduce the number of American troops in the country to less than 5,000 by the end of November, but added that it was "conditions-based". President Donald Trump, up for re-election in November, has said repeatedly that he wants to end America's longest war, which began nearly 20 years ago when Washington ousted the Taliban following the Sept 11 attacks. — AFP

International

Amid Germany troop pullout, US seeks friendly faces to east

Pompeo to begin a five-day trip - to east Europe

WASHINGTON: As President Donald Trump orders US troops out of Germany and faces a tough re-election battle, his top diplomat, Mike Pompeo, is heading to friendly climes in Central and Eastern Europe. Pompeo tomorrow opens a five-day trip that will terminate in close ally Poland, which is eager to welcome some of the US troops leaving Germany to guard against historic adversary Russia. He will also travel to the Czech Republic, Slovenia and Austria where he is expected to press his campaign for nations to shun Huawei, the Chinese telecom giant considered a threat by Washington as it takes a lead in fifth-generation internet.

In Slovenia, where he will be the first US secretary of state to visit since 2001, Pompeo will on Thursday sign an agreement on 5G, officials said without previewing details. Pompeo's trip comes weeks after the Pentagon said the United States would bring home some 6,400 military personnel from Germany and shift nearly 5,600 more to other NATO allies including Italy and Belgium.

Trump has a tense relationship with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who declined his invitation for a Group of Seven summit in Washington in the middle of the coronavirus pandemic, and accuses Europe's largest economy of unfair trading practices. "What is most significant about this trip is the places the secretary is not going to," said Ian Lesser, the Brussels-based vice president of the German Marshall Fund of the United States. "If the secretary was going to address the core

issues in transatlantic relations at the moment, he would be making stops in Brussels, Paris and Berlin." Lesser said that the troop repositioning out of Germany was unlikely to be a major issue for US voters. "What does have some political resonance is how a senior American official is received when he or she goes to Europe," he said. "This is a low-risk visit from the point of view of the administration," he said. "They want to give an impression of foreign policy success."

'One of our closest allies'

Pompeo last month visited Britain and Denmark and also traveled last year to Poland, where President Andrzej Duda has formed close relations with Trump. Trump invited Duda to the White House days before Poland's election in June, in which Duda won a narrow victory after a polarizing campaign in which he

Washington sees Huawei as threat



attacked LGBT rights. Polish Defense Minister Mariusz Blaszczak has said that the United States will deploy at least 1,000 additional troops to Poland. "I think it's fair to say Poland is one of our closest and strongest allies. We enjoy unprecedented levels of bilateral relations," Phil Reeker, the top State Department official for Europe, told reporters. He pointed out that Poland is one of the few NATO nations to meet a goal of spending two percent of GDP on defense - unlike Germany, in a running sore point for the Trump administration. Reeker said that Pompeo will also raise energy independence from Russia. Pompeo last month

their midrifts. A terse statement Friday from the Christian university said the trustees' executive committee had asked Falwell to "take an indefinite leave of absence from his roles as President and Chancellor of Liberty University, to which he has agreed, effective immediately."

It offered no explanation. Falwell previously told radio station WLN1 that he and the woman were at a costume party and "it was just in good fun." He said he should never have posted the photo, adding, "I've apologized to everybody and I promised my kids I'm going to try to be a good boy from here on out." The university has a strict code of conduct for students, who are told they must "dress modestly and appropriately at all times" while on campus and "avoid the appearance of impropriety."

One Republican member of Congress who is on a Liberty advisory board, Mark Walker of North Carolina, has called on Falwell to resign. "I just think there's a code that leaders have to live by, especially when you're leading the largest Christian evangelical university in the country," he told CNN. Falwell has been a vocal supporter of President

the 48-year-old reporter, who had survived a 2016 attack. "It was a brutal assassination. I saw how Pablo looked. I had to dress him for those who wanted to come and see him off, but fewer than four colleagues came. Everyone is afraid. We live in terror," he told AFP.

The following day Zubillaga received threats on social media, and on Tuesday gunmen opened fire on the offices of the Diario de Iguuala, where his newspaper is printed. "At least 10 journalists from Iguuala have received death threats" from criminal groups, said Zubillaga, who has pleaded with the leftist government of Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador to provide protection. Three other journalists have been murdered in Mexico this year: Jorge Armenta, Victor Alvarez and Maria Elena Ferral. Since 2000, more than 100 Mexican journalists have been killed, and 92 percent of the cases remain unsolved, according to press groups.

Killed for doing their jobs

Early this year, videos circulated on social media in which armed groups threatened their rivals and several journalists. Intimidation is nothing new for Mexican reporters, "but we're now seeing those threats being

19," a health and human services department official told reporters ahead of the visit. But Beijing balks at any recognition of self-ruled Taiwan, which it claims as its own territory and vows to one day seize, by force if necessary. It has described Azar's visit as a threat to "peace and stability", while China's defense minister warned against Washington making any "dangerous moves". As well as meeting Tsai, Azar will hold talks with his counterpart Chen Shih-chung and Foreign Minister Joseph Wu.

He will also meet coronavirus experts and give a speech to public health students as well as alumni of a training program with the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Taiwan has become a poster child for defeating the coronavirus thanks to a well-honed track and tracing program as well as firm border controls. Despite its proximity and economic links to China it has recorded fewer than 500 infections and seven deaths. In contrast the US has recorded the most deaths in the world with more than 160,000 fatalities.

A cautious testing of China

The rapidly deteriorating relationship between Beijing and Washington comes as Trump seeks re-election in November. He is trailing in the polls to rival Joe Biden and has begun campaigning hard on an increasingly strident anti-Beijing message. As public disapproval has grown for his handling of the epidemic, Trump has pivoted from his previous focus on striking a trade deal with China to blaming



WASHINGTON: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo speaks during a news conference at the State Department in Washington, DC. —AFP

opened the way for sanctions over the Nord Stream 2 pipeline being built from Russia to Germany.

Poland adamantly opposes the project, fearing it strengthens Russia's influence over Europe, while an Austrian company is among the participants. The tour will be heavy on historical symbolism. In the Czech Republic, Pompeo will head

to Pilsen to mark western Bohemia's 1945 liberation by US troops under George Patton. But at least one of Pompeo's meetings may be tense. Czech President Milos Zeman is known for his outspoken remarks including support of Russia and China. Reeker said Pompeo would have a "short discussion" with Zeman during what he called a courtesy call. —AFP

Head of US Christian college steps aside in flap over photo

WASHINGTON: Jerry Falwell Jr. has taken an indefinite leave of absence as president of a prominent US evangelical university amid a furor over an Instagram picture of him and a young woman, both with pants partly unzipped. The 58-year-old Falwell, whose father was one of the country's best-known televangelists and who founded Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia, is stepping aside at the request of the school's trustees.

He himself had posted the controversial picture showing him standing on a private yacht with one hand around the waist of a young woman-later said to be his wife's assistant-and the other holding an unidentified dark beverage. Both sport broad smiles and have their zippers a few inches down, baring

Journalists in southern Mexico 'live in terror' of gangs' violence

MEXICO CITY: Mexican journalist Julio Cesar Zubillaga shudders when his young daughter asks him why "they" want to kill him. He spoke up after a fellow reporter's murder and quickly felt the consequences: death threats and a gun attack on the office where his paper is printed. His experience highlights southern Mexico's status as among the most dangerous regions in a country that is one of the most dangerous in the world for journalists.

Zubillaga helped prepare the corpse of Pablo Morrugares, a journalist with digital newspaper PM Noticias, after gunmen killed both him and the policeman guarding him in a restaurant in Iguuala in southern Guerrero state. Zubillaga, the editor of Iguuala's La Tarde newspaper, issued a public plea for justice for

US begins highest level Taiwan visit in decades

TAIPEI: A senior member of US President Donald Trump's administration landed in Taiwan yesterday for Washington's highest level visit since switching diplomatic recognition to China in 1979, a trip Beijing has condemned. During the three-day visit Health Secretary Alex Azar will meet President Tsai Ing-wen, who advocates Taiwan being recognized as a sovereign nation and is loathed by China's leaders.

Azar is the most senior US cabinet member to visit Taiwan in decades and his visit comes as relations between the world's two biggest economic powers plunge to historic lows. In recent days, Trump has ordered sweeping restrictions on popular Chinese apps TikTok and WeChat and the US Treasury Department slapped sanctions on Hong Kong's leader over a tough law that curbs dissent. Washington has billed the Taiwan trip as an opportunity to learn from the island's fight against the coronavirus and to celebrate its progressive values.

"This trip is a recognition of Taiwan's success in combating COVID-19 and a testament to the shared beliefs that open and democratic societies are best equipped to combating disease threats like COVID-



LYNCHBURG: In this file photo, President of Liberty University, Jerry Falwell Jr, speaks during Liberty University's commencement ceremony in Lynchburg, Virginia. —AFP

Donald Trump, who appeared on the campus twice before his 2016 election. In one appearance, Falwell introduced him as "one of the greatest visionaries of our time." —AFP

carried out," Zubillaga said. To protect himself, the 51-year-old editor rarely stays long at the same address, regularly changes his route to work and long ago stopped taking walks with his family.

"The most painful part for me is to get home and have my youngest daughter ask me: 'Papa, why do they want to kill you? How long are you going to live?'" Zubillaga says, his voice breaking during a phone interview. Given the threats, most reporters in Iguuala have opted for self-censure. "Many don't want to speak, let alone publish," said another journalist, speaking anonymously after having had to leave the city because his life was at risk. "You're in the crossfire."

"One group threatens you for publishing this or that information, and another (its rival) for not publishing it." The Los Tlacos criminal group threatened Iguuala journalists with death after accusing them of siding with rival gang Guerreros Unidos, the investigative journal Proceso reported Wednesday. In response, the city's reporters opted for a policy of self-censure, Proceso said. Shortly before his killing, Pablo Morrugares had reported on a crime in an area he said was controlled by Los Tlacos. —AFP



TAIPEI: The US plane carrying US Health Secretary Alex Azar on board, lands at Sungshan Airport in Taipei yesterday. Azar, a senior member of US President Donald Trump's administration, landed in Taiwan for Washington's highest level visit since switching diplomatic recognition to China in 1979, a trip Beijing has condemned. —AFP

the country for the coronavirus crisis.

The two countries have clashed on a range of issues, from trade to espionage allegations and Beijing's human rights record such as the mass incarceration of Uighur Muslims and the political crackdown in Hong Kong. Washington remains the leading arms supplier to Taiwan but has historically been cautious in holding official contacts with it. Under Trump, relations with Taiwan have warmed dramatically and he has approved a number of major military sales, including F-16 fighter jets. —AFP

Belarus strongman faces female rival in tense election

MINSK: Polls opened yesterday in Belarus as the ex-Soviet state holds a high-stakes presidential election with a female opposition candidate posing the greatest challenge yet to long-ruling strongman Alexander Lukashenko. Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, a 37-year-old stay-at-home mother became an unlikely election candidate after authorities barred from running and jailed her husband, popular blogger Sergei Tikhanovsky. She swiftly emerged as Lukashenko's strongest rival and her rallies drew tens of thousands of supporters across the country. Her presidential bid gave rise to an informal new protest movement, with many dreaming of change in the country of 9.5 million people led for the last 26 years by 65-year-old Lukashenko.

Political observers said there is little doubt that Lukashenko, who is seeking a sixth term, would rig the vote in the absence of international observers. More than 41 percent of votes had already been cast in several days of early voting, the central electoral commission reported, with observers saying this facilitated falsifications. Voters wearing facemasks began casting ballots at a Minsk polling station early yesterday, an AFP reporter saw. Some wore white bracelets after Tikhanovskaya urged her supporters to wear them.

There was a heavy police presence after detentions of protesters on Saturday evening and Prosecutor-General Alexander Konyuk urged voters to be "reasonable" and not take part in unsanctioned protests. Belta state news agency reported. Tikhanovskaya, who joined forces for her campaign with the wife of one barred opposition chief and the campaign manager of another, said she would not call on her supporters to protest after the vote. At the same time she called on law enforcement to refrain from fulfilling "criminal orders" and has urged election officials to count honestly.

'New country'

Speaking to supporters on the eve of the vote, she asked them to do all they could so that Belarusians "wake up in a new country." "When you see that we have won, celebrate our victory!" she said in a video address. Tikhanovskaya, who is by far the strongest of Lukashenko's four rivals in voter surveys, has also urged Belarusians to help ward off election fraud by voting late on the main polling day. Ahead of the vote Lukashenko warned that dissent would not be tolerated and that he would not give up his "beloved" Belarus. "We will not give the country to you," he warned his opponents as he addressed the nation this week. Lukashenko has sought to galvanise support by warning of outside threats and raising the spectre of violent mobs.

Belarus has detained over 30 Russian mercenaries allegedly planning to destabilize the vote. The detentions sparked a political crisis with ally Russia, with Moscow urging the men's release and Putin telling Lukashenko that he wants Belarus to stay "stable." Lukashenko has retained close ties to Moscow, though he often plays Russia and the West against each other. France, Germany and Poland have urged Lukashenko to ensure a "free and fair" election and allow "independent surveillance of the vote by local observers". Belarus has not held polls judged free and fair since 1995 and this time Minsk has not invited observers from the European OSCE observer group for the first time since 2001. In the past Lukashenko has crushed protests with riot police and hefty jail terms, prompting Western sanctions. Two of his would-be election rivals including Tikhanovskaya's husband were jailed during the current campaign.

Tikhanovskaya says she is not a politician and if she wins she will call fresh elections that will include the entire opposition. On Saturday, authorities arrested her campaign manager and briefly detained one of her two top allies. —AFP

International

‘Execute them’: Lebanese protesters demand revenge after deadly blast

Monster explosion leaves 300,000 homeless

BEIRUT: Mock gallows nooses tied to brooms: Lebanese protesters on Saturday clamored for bloody revenge against a leadership they blame for the massive blast that engulfed their capital. “There is hatred and there is blood between us and our authorities,” said Najib Farah, a 35-year-old protester in central Beirut. “The people want revenge.” On a street leading to parliament, young men lobbed stones at security forces who replied with tear gas, a familiar sight in Lebanon since last October. Thousands of young men and women earlier revived the main camp of a months-long protest movement, some of them carrying portraits of blast victims and a banner bearing the names of the dead.

They pinned the blame for Tuesday’s mega-blast at Beirut port on leaders they say deserve nothing less than the fate of the 158 people who died as a result. “My government murdered my people,” read one sign. “You were corrupt, now you are criminals,” read another. The explosion that disfigured the city and shocked the world is widely perceived as a direct consequence of the incompetence and corruption that have come to define Lebanon’s ruling class.

After a morning of funerals, protesters marched through the wreckage caused by the monster explosion that killed over 150 people, wounded 6,000 and left an estimated 300,000 temporarily homeless. The crowds that converged on Martyrs Square breathed new life into a protest movement that started in October but was snuffed out a few months later by the coronavirus pandemic and a crippling economic crisis. “There is now an opportunity for real change, it’s not like the other demon-

strations since October,” Farah told AFP.

‘Them or us’

Demonstrators walked over shards of glass from gutted windows, chanting: “Revenge, revenge, until this regime reaches an end.” Carrying a broom with a noose attached to it, Jad, a 25 year-old advertising professional, complained that the state was nowhere to be seen in the huge and ongoing cleanup effort across the city. “Everything is trashed, we have had to repair the streets for three days, while there is no

“ My government murdered my people ”

government presence at all,” he said. “We are walking on the rubble of our city.” This compounded the boiling anger many ordinary Lebanese have felt towards authorities since the blast.

“We are still under shock, but we know one thing for sure: we are going to wipe the floor with them,” he told AFP. For a Lebanese public already crumbling under financial woes and beset by economic disillusionment, Tuesday’s blast was the straw that broke the camel’s back. Lebanon’s worse political crisis in decades has plunged nearly half of the



BEIRUT: A picture shows graffiti on the wall of a bridge overlooking the port of Beirut - the site of the explosion which killed at least 154 people and devastated swathes of the capital. —AFP

country’s population into poverty, up from a third before the crisis. A coronavirus outbreak further shuttered an economy that must now contend with more than \$3 billion in damages from the blast.

One protester raised a poster bearing portraits of top politicians and the phrase “Execute them”. “The people want to topple the regime,” protesters confronting security forces yelled, eyes reddened by the tear gas. Medea Azoury, a 46-year-old

demonstrator, said the fault lines have been drawn. “We can’t take it anymore: we’re being held hostage, we can’t leave the country, we can’t withdraw money from the banks, and people are dying of hunger,” she said. On top of all that, “there are now 300,000 people who are homeless and Beirut has been completely destroyed,” she added. “This is the great return of the revolution and it’s either them or us.” —AFP

India women on the frontline strike for pay and protection

NEW DELHI: Tens of thousands of female health workers on the frontline of India’s battle against the coronavirus have gone on strike to demand better pay and protection. With India now registering the world’s third highest pandemic caseload at more than two million infections, the women in several states have gone on a two-day strike and plan a mass protest in Delhi on Sunday. About one million of the Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs) across India have been given the responsibility of hunting for suspected coronavirus cases, especially in villages and slums.

Officially they are referred to as volunteers and the government gives them an allowance of 1,000 rupees (\$13) a month. The health workers went on strike Friday and Saturday, and are demanding a 21,000 rupee monthly salary as well as a pension and anti-virus protection equipment and testing. The women, whose protests have been building over the past month, say they have faced attacks and harassment in some villages. Shiksha Rana, an ASHA in Delhi, told AFP at least 200 have been infected with the coronavirus in



NEW DELHI: Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) shout slogans during a protest to draw attention to their plight of underpayment and lack of protection from the COVID-19 coronavirus infection yesterday. —AFP

the Delhi region alone.

“Their families were also infected. We had to crowdfund money for their treatment and food for their families,” said Rana. The ASHAs were set up in 2005 and since then have played a key role helping to eradicate polio in India as well as helping with

home births. Rahul Gandhi, a senior leader in the opposition Congress party, said the government had been “blind and deaf” to the work and demands of the women. Leading public health specialist Anant Bhan said the women play a “critical” role in India’s under-funded health service. —AFP

Mauritius struggles to contain oil spill polluting its seas

PORT LOUIS, Mauritius: Police in Mauritius yesterday prepared to board a grounded ship leaking tonnes of oil into its crystal-clear waters, as clean-up crews confronted a growing ecological disaster on the archipelago’s pristine shores. The bulk carrier MV Wakashio has been seeping fuel into a protected marine park boasting unspoiled coral reefs, mangrove forests and endangered species, prompting Prime Minister Pravin Jugnauth to declare an environmental emergency and appeal for international help.

Attempts to stabilize the stricken vessel, which ran aground on July 25 but only started leaking oil this week, and pump 4,000 tons of fuel from its hold have failed, and local authorities fear rough seas could further rupture the tanker. Hundreds of volunteers, many smeared head-to-toe in black sludge, are marshaling along the coastline, stringing together miles of makeshift cordons in a desperate attempt to hold back the oily tide.

But already, thick muck has inundated the island nation’s unspoiled lagoons, marine habitats and white-sand beaches, causing unprecedented damage to the fragile coastal ecosystem upon which Mauritius and its economy relies. “People have realized that they need to take things into their hands. We are here to protect our fauna and flora,” said Ashok Subron, an environmental activist at Mahebourg, one of the worst-hit areas.

Police said yesterday they would execute a search warrant granted by a Mauritius court to board the Wakashio and seize items of interest, including the ship’s log book and communication exchanges, as part of its investigation into the accident. The ship’s captain, a 58-year-old Indian national, will accompany officers on the search, police officials said. Twenty crew members evacuated safely from the Japanese-owned but Panamanian-flagged ship when it ran aground are under surveillance.

Prime Minister Jugnauth thanked France for dispatching a naval vessel, military aircraft and technical experts from nearby Reunion, a French Indian Ocean island, to assist with the disaster. He has convened an



MAHEBOURG, Mauritius: A man scoops leaked oil from the vessel MV Wakashio that ran aground near Blue Bay Marine Park off the coast of southeast Mauritius on Saturday. —AFP

crisis committee yesterday, and has expressed concern that forecast bad weather could further complicate efforts to stymie the spill, and cause more structural damage to the vessel.

The opposition has called for the resignation of the country’s environment and fisheries ministers, as pressure mounts on the government to explain why more wasn’t done to prepare in the two weeks since the ship ran aground. Mitsui OSK Lines, which operates the vessel owned by another Japanese company, said efforts to place containment booms near the ship had been unsuccessful due to high waves. Helicopters had been shifting some of the 3,800 tons of fuel and 2,000 tons of diesel to land.

Aerial images show the enormous scale of the damage, with huge stretches of azure seas around the marooned cargo ship stained a deep inky black, and the region’s fabled lagoons and inlets clouded over. The Wakashio struck a reef at Pointe d’Esny, an ecological jewel fringed by idyllic beaches, colourful reefs, sanctuaries for rare and endemic wildlife, and unique RAMSAR-listed wetlands. Mauritius and its 1.3 million inhabitants depend crucially on its seas for food and for ecotourism, and has fostered a reputation as a conservation success story and a world-class destination for nature lovers. Ecologists fear if the ship further breaks it could inflict potentially catastrophic damage on the island nation’s coastline, which forms the backbone of the economy. —AFP

ASEAN - translating its vision into action: Vietnam Deputy PM

KUWAIT: When ASEAN was established 53 years ago, few could have imagined the success of ASEAN today. Over the past half century, ASEAN has time and again shown the strength of unity and resilience. An ASEAN embracing 10 brotherly nations has turned Southeast Asia from a land of discord to a land of concord, from confrontation to cooperation, and from poverty to dynamic development.

Today, the ASEAN Community is a big Family of six hundred and fifty million people with a combined GDP of three trillion US dollars. Translating its vision into actions, ASEAN has been promoting both the interest of our peoples and peace and prosperity in the Asia - Pacific. ASEAN is now at a critical juncture. The new dynamism in our geo-strategic landscape, emerging regional and global issues require ASEAN to be ever more cohesive and responsive.

Shoulder to shoulder, we can rise above any challenge and move ASEAN forward. Therefore, we should redouble our efforts to strengthen our Community, while proactively and effectively promote our ties with the dialogue partners. We should also ensure an ASEAN-centered regional architecture that is open, transparent, inclusive and rules-based. This year marks the 25th Anniversary of Viet Nam’s participation in ASEAN. Our commitment and experience in the past 25 years enable us to make more proactive contributions to ASEAN.

Under Vietnam’s Chairmanship this year, a cohesive and responsive ASEAN has taken well-coordinated measures to protect the health of our peoples and revive our economies. ASEAN has led regional efforts in fighting the Covid-19 pandemic, innovated our operations, and further deepened our external relations, thus elevated ASEAN international standing. With the “Think Community, Act Community” approach, let us continue to work closely with each other and with our partners and friends across the world to build a strong and united ASEAN that is indispensable for peace and prosperity in our region and beyond.

News in brief

Floods kill 30 in South Korea

SEOUL: Landslides and flooding triggered by days of heavy rain in South Korea have left at least 30 people dead and 12 missing, officials said yesterday, warning of more downpours. Torrential rain has wreaked havoc across the country since the beginning of the month, but nearly half of the deaths occurred in the past three days, according to the Ministry of the Interior and Safety. Since Friday more than 3,700 people have been displaced from their homes after flooding in the country’s hardest-hit southern region. In all, nearly 6,000 people have been evacuated from their homes across the country this month, with about 4,600 of them staying at temporary shelters. —AFP

India examines black box

NEW DELHI: Indian investigators yesterday began examining the black box of a Boeing-737 that overshot a runway on its second attempt, killing 18 people in the country’s worst aviation accident in a decade. The Air India Express plane, which was repatriating Indians stranded in Dubai due to the coronavirus pandemic, overshot the runway of the Calicut International Airport in heavy rain near the southern city of Kozhikode on Friday. The aircraft fell into a valley and broke in half. In an interview with Reuters partner ANI on Sunday, Anil Kumar, head of India’s Directorate General of Civil Aviation, said the country would open the recovered transcripts to international investigators, as well as manufacturer Boeing. “Only after conducting a thorough and unbiased probe, can we tell what exactly happened,” Kumar said. — Reuters

11 killed in Czech apartment fire

PRAGUE: A fire at a high-rise apartment block in the Czech Republic killed 11 people, including three children and five other people who jumped to their deaths, firefighters said. The fire occurred in the eastern Czech Republic near the Polish border. “The fire broke out in a flat on the 11th floor,” Lukas Popp, a spokesman for local firefighters said. “Six people died on this floor, including three children and three adults — and a dog,” he added. “Our firefighters were on the site really fast but during the action, five people jumped out of the 12th-storey window and died,” said Popp. Police originally reported ten dead in the fire in a 13-storey concrete block of flats in the city of Bohumin on the Czech-Polish border some 300 kilometers east of the capital Prague. — AFP

Kim sends aid to locked down city

SEOUL: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has ordered the distribution of aid to the border city of Kaesong after the area was locked down last month to fight the coronavirus, state media said yesterday. Authorities raised the state of emergency to the maximum level for the city in July, saying they had discovered the country’s first suspected virus case. A train carrying goods arrived in the “totally blocked” city of Kaesong on Friday, the official KCNA news agency reported. “The Supreme Leader has made sure that emergency measures were taken for supplying food and medicines right after the city was totally blocked and this time he saw to it that lots of rice and subsidy were sent to the city,” it said. — AFP

MONDAY, AUGUST 10, 2020

Business

Saudi Aramco profits slump 73%

Lower oil prices, reduced demand reflect in Q2 results

RIYADH: Energy giant Saudi Aramco said yesterday its net profit for the second quarter plunged a massive 73 percent due to sharply lower oil prices as the coronavirus crisis undercuts global demand. The company posted a net profit of \$6.6 billion for the three months to June 30, compared to \$24.7 billion in the same period of 2019. "Strong headwinds from reduced demand and lower oil prices are reflected in our second quarter results," CEO Amin Nasser said in a statement.

Aramco's net profit for the first half of the year also dived, by 50 percent to \$23.2 billion, compared to \$46.9 billion over the same period last year. Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest crude oil exporter, has been hit hard by the double whammy of low prices and sharp cuts in production that combined to severely impact oil income.

Oil prices dropped to a two-decade low below \$20 a barrel in April and May as the novel coronavirus pandemic dampened demand, before recovering to around \$44 a barrel after OPEC+ producers agreed to record output cuts. Following the

move, Saudi oil production dropped to 7.5 million barrels per day in June, compared to last year's average of 10 million bpd.

Aramco's profits were also impacted by losses posted by Saudi Basic Industries Co. (SABIC), the petrochemicals giant that it acquired for \$69 billion in a deal agreed in 2019 and completed in June this year. Saudi Aramco was listed on the Saudi bourse in December following the world's biggest initial public offering, generating \$29.4 billion in the sale of 1.7 percent of its shares.

Nasser said Aramco would distribute \$18.75 billion in dividends for the second quarter to keep its listing promise of distributing at least \$75 billion in dividends a year for five years.

"Despite COVID-19 bringing the world to a standstill, Aramco kept going," he said.

US technology firm Apple last week replaced Aramco as the world's most valuable company after its capitalization grew to \$1.9 trillion, compared to \$1.76 trillion for Aramco. — AFP



Net profit for H1 dives to \$23.2bn

Trump signs orders extending economic relief for Americans

BEDMINSTER, United States: President Donald Trump on Saturday signed executive actions extending financial relief to Americans hit by the coronavirus pandemic as polls showed a large majority of voters unhappy with his handling of the crisis. The four measures marked a presidential show of strength after Trump's Republican party and White House team failed to agree with opposition Democrats in Congress on a new stimulus package aimed at stopping vulnerable Americans from falling through the cracks.

"We've had it and we're going to save American jobs and provide relief to the American workers," Trump said at a press conference at his golf club in Bedminster, New Jersey, where he was spending the weekend.

With double digit unemployment, disruption to businesses from social distancing rules, and persistent coronavirus spread, many Americans had been relying on relief measures approved earlier by Congress, but which mostly expired in July.

Trump said his decision to circumvent Congress with executive actions would mean relief money getting "rapidly distributed." In reality, his measures are likely to face court challenges because Congress controls federal spending, and in any case they may add up to less money than initially appears.

For Trump, lagging badly in the polls against his Democratic rival Joe Biden ahead of the November 3 presidential election, the orders were partly about showing he is in charge. He turned the signing ceremony in the ballroom of the golf club into an assault on his opponents and threw in several false claims about his accomplishments in office. To cheers from club members invited to watch the event, Trump insulted the Democratic "crazy" leader of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi, denounced Biden as "far left," and claimed that Democrats want to "steal the election."

Biden called Trump's orders Saturday "a series of half-baked measures."

"They are just another cynical ploy designed to deflect responsibility," Biden said, adding that Americans need a "real leader" who would work to hammer out a deal with lawmakers.

One key Trump order promises to get \$400 a week added to Americans' unemployment benefits, while two others offer some protection from evictions and relief for student loans. The \$400 assistance is below the \$600 offered in the expired stimulus package. It may also end up a mounting only to \$300 extra a week, because Trump said \$100 would be provided from state, not federal, budgets—and only if states were willing or able to do so. — AFP



BEDMINSTER: US President Donald Trump signs executive orders extending coronavirus economic relief, during a news conference in Bedminster, New Jersey, on Saturday. — AFP

Staff still shun London's 'ghost town' finance hubs

LONDON: Deserted streets, empty restaurants, shuttered stores: London's financial districts remain largely abandoned by workers still worried about the pandemic and reluctant to return to office life.

The City, a square mile in the heart of the British capital traditionally home to the finance industry, was eerily quiet over the past week, with just a smattering of tourists strolling the streets around St. Paul's Cathedral. In Canary Wharf in east London's Docklands, known for its skyscrapers housing the headquarters of major banks and related firms, it is a similar story.

The picture has not changed much despite the government encouraging employees to begin returning to workplaces since August 1 in a bid to boost the struggling British economy.

It is up to individual companies to decide how forcefully to urge their staff back and many are opting for a more relaxed approach. "Many of our clients, particularly in finance and insurance, are not coming back to work until next year," said Pablo Shah of the CEBR economic consultancy.

Although London's business districts are typically more empty at the peak of summer, the city has looked like "a ghost town" recently, he added. Part of the reason is companies have adopted remote working successfully. Many employees have become comfortable holding meetings via video-

'Robotaxis' in China take riders for a spin

SHANGHAI: Chinese entrants in the race to put autonomous vehicles on the road are bringing "robotaxis" online in hopes that a hire-car format can be the key to unlocking wide acceptance of the futuristic technology. It is expected to be years before cars that operate completely without human intervention are unleashed owing to lingering technological, regulatory, and safety hurdles.

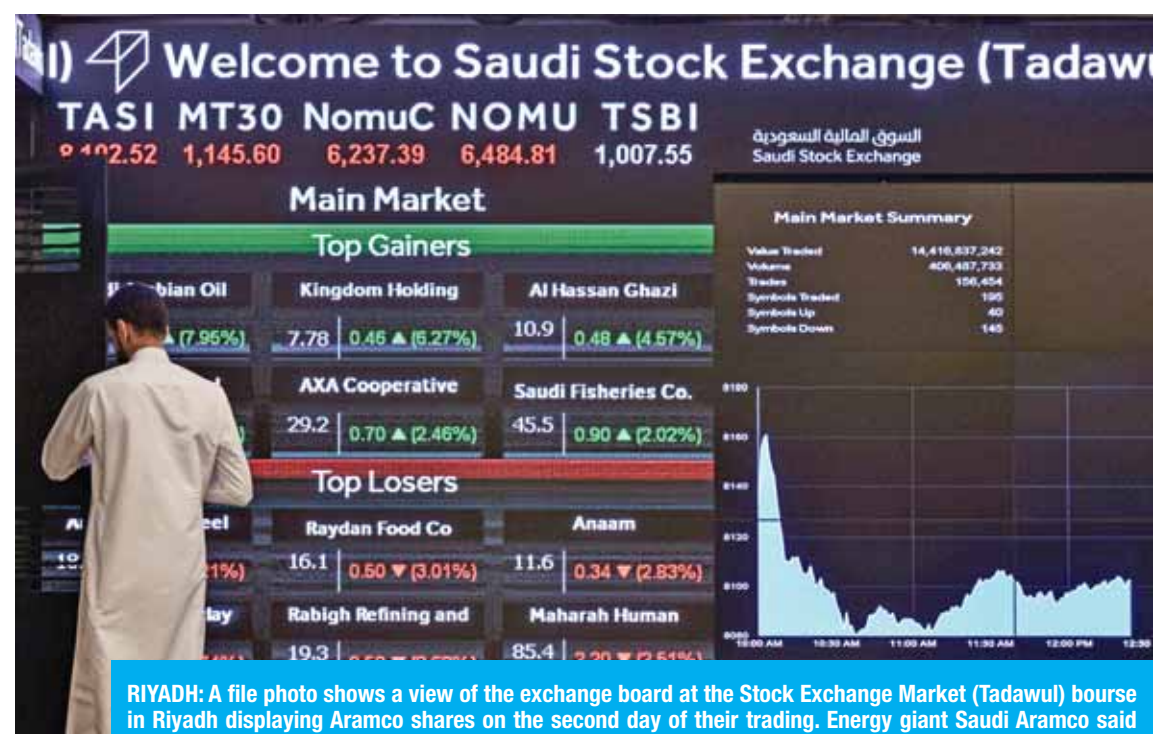
But as China challenges US tech dominance, Chinese players such as Baidu, Alibaba-backed AutoX and ride-sharing king DiDi Chuxing recently launched autonomous taxi pilot projects in cities around the country. Similar efforts are under way in the US, and AutoX's chief executive Xiao Jianxiang said the first fully-autonomous vehicles could be on the roads by the end of the year.

Robotaxis or delivery services are considered ideal for accumulating the driving time and huge data cache needed for cars to "learn" and become safe enough. Chinese consumers—known for eagerly embracing e-commerce, online payments and other digital solutions—are lining up for a spin in DiDi Chuxing's self-developed autonomous taxis at a Shanghai pilot project launched in June.

Underlining the work-in-progress nature of the concept, a DiDi staffer occupies the driver's seat, ready to take the wheel if needed. But Da Xuan, a 24-year-old social-media worker, leapt at a taste of the future.

'Smooth' running

"I heard companies like Uber or Tesla were doing autonomous driving, so I was curious what Chinese companies were doing, whether they can go into production, and if so, what will the (riding) experience be like," she said. "It was very smooth," Da said, adding that she would feel safe in such a car. Test subjects use DiDi's mobile app to plot a ride through suburban roads in a Volvo fitted with a



RIYADH: A file photo shows a view of the exchange board at the Stock Exchange Market (Tadawul) bourse in Riyadh displaying Aramco shares on the second day of their trading. Energy giant Saudi Aramco said yesterday its net profit for the second quarter plunged a massive 73 percent year-on-year due to sharply lower oil prices. — AFP

conferencing and appear more than happy to do without the long and costly daily commutes to offices. Fears over using public transport and childcare issues remain the prime obstacles to office returns, according to business lobby London First. But it expects things to change more significantly in September, when children are set to return to school.

'Get back to work!'

Only 34 percent of executives in Britain — 31 percent in London—are back in the office, a study by US bank Morgan Stanley reported this week. The country, which has the highest death toll in Europe from the coronavirus, lags behind its continental neighbors, which have seen a majority of white-collar employees return to workplaces. The divide between those working from home and others who have returned to offices is showing signs of causing friction within some companies, according to human resources analysts.

Katie Jacobs, from the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, wrote in the Daily Telegraph that it had "fractured" some work environments and anecdotally even sparked "resentment" towards those staying away. Some tabloids have chosen their side, with the Daily Mail—whose parent company owns two free commuter newspapers hard-hit by the new work-from-home culture—running several front page and opinion articles demanding a return to offices.

"We've had our lunch, now let's get back to work!" screamed the paper's front page Tuesday, the day after the government launched a restaurant support scheme paying a chunk of diners' bills.

However, it may be disappointed with the response. Large companies like NatWest Bank

have recommended that the majority of their employees continue to work remotely until next year. Google, which has restarted building its huge headquarters next to King's Cross station, is even encouraging working-from-home until next July.

'Back together'

A change in tone is noticeable among some firms, with Barclays bank boss James Staley leading the shift. He noted 60,000 staff are working "from their kitchen tables" and said the company wants "our people back together".

"We also have a responsibility to places like Canary Wharf, (cities) like Manchester, like Glasgow," he added. Kevin Ellis, chairman of finance giant PwC, expects half of his staff will be back by next month.

But he told the Sunday Times that the shift to working from home had "bashed away presentism forever", adding that three or four days a week in the office may become the new normal. Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government has been pushing the return to work, despite the number of virus cases starting to slowly increase, to help drive an economic recovery. "Unquestionably it will require people to have the confidence to go back to work in a COVID-secure way," Johnson said on Thursday. The damage is already enormous for many businesses. Cafe chain Pret A Manger, which has a strong presence in the City, has already announced the closure of many sites, with 1,000 jobs threatened. The CEBR estimated the pandemic resulted in £2.3 billion (\$3.0 billion, 2.5 billion euros) of lost spending in shops, pubs and eateries near London employment hubs between March and June, while the capital is losing around £178 million per month compared to pre-pandemic levels. — AFP



Tech giant Baidu has a 45-strong robotaxi fleet already on trial in central China's Changsha city. — AFP

crown of tech hardware topped by a spinning radar device. The vehicle confidently sets out, accelerating, braking, signalling and turning on its own in real traffic as a female voice calmly narrates: "Yielding for crosswalk"; "Your car has been disinfected".

When a large truck abruptly swerved in front, DiDi's AI driver smoothly applied the brake.

Like any student driver, however, it still needs practice. At one stop sign, it braked so abruptly that passengers lurched forward. And any impromptu deviation from the plotted route requires human intervention. But Meng Xing, chief operating officer of DiDi's autonomous driving company, told AFP its AI system "is already smart enough to handle most of the situations", and safety drivers almost never need to touch the steering wheel or brakes.

Tesla chief executive Elon Musk, known for his

overly rosy predictions, raised eyebrows in July by saying the US electric carmaker could have a completely autonomous car ready this year, which analysts have dismissed.

Paul Lewis, who heads policy research at the Washington-based non-profit Eno Center for Transportation, told AFP that hopes are being "reset" as the pace of the technology's development disappoints. "Technology developers are starting to realize the limits of artificial intelligence and the benefits of the human brain in handling some of these tasks," he said, adding we remain "a long way" from driverless cars.

But Xiao of AutoX expects a "sizeable" deployment of the vehicles—without safety drivers—could take place in two to three years, with regulations and technology being the main obstacles. — AFP

Business

Despite an agreement, China's purchase of US agriculture lags

Countries reach only 39% of their semi-annual target

NEW YORK: Seven months after the United States and China signed a preliminary agreement to temper their trade war, Beijing's purchases of US agricultural goods have yet to reach the deal's target.

As President Donald Trump readies for a tough reelection battle in November, US media reported the two sides are set to meet beginning August 15 to discuss the deal, which calls for China to sharply increase buying American goods and services this year and next. But according to data compiled by the Peterson Institute for International Economics (PIIE), Chinese agricultural purchases at the end of June were far from where they should be at this point in the year.

They had reached only 39 percent of their semi-annual target, according to US figures, or 48 percent, based on Chinese figures. "If we get back to what the level of trade was in 2017, we'll be lucky," said Chad Bown, a PIIE senior fellow who authored the study, referring to the year before the trade war began.



Two sides to meet from August 15

Purchases pick up

Under the deal's terms, China agreed to increase agricultural imports \$32 billion over the next two years from 2017 levels. Chinese orders for corn and soybeans have increased since mid-July, with Beijing buying just over three million tons of American oilseeds between July 14 and August 7, according to US Department of Agriculture data.

At the end of July, the United States reported the largest-ever daily order by China for its corn, of 1.9 million tons. The announcements were a relief to US farmers, who are expecting a bumper crop this

year and need to find buyers to take it. They also came at a time of high political tension between the two countries, after the Trump administration authorized sanctions against several Hong Kong leaders over the rights crackdown in the city, and restrictions on Chinese apps WeChat and TikTok. The Chinese "realize we're not being the best of buddies right now, but they need the products and they're gonna take as much as they need," said Jack Scoville, agricultural market analyst for Price Futures Group.

It's possible that Beijing will change its orders from buying this year's harvest to next year's.

But analysts warn that any orders could be called off before the ships carrying them leave port. Brazil and Argentina, two of the world's largest soybean and corn producers, are starting their harvests next spring, said Brian Hoops, president of the brokerage firm Midwest Market Solutions. China "could cancel all these purchases they made in July and buy at much cheaper prices if that's available to them," Hoops said.

'Infeasible'

The trade deal dubbed "phase one" and signed in January has managed to survive both the tensions and the sharp global economic downturn caused by the coronavirus pandemic, which has badly hit international trade. US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer in June said China would follow through on its commitments, while Washington would also pursue a "phase two"



Seven months after the United States and China signed a preliminary agreement to temper their trade war, Beijing's purchases of US agricultural goods have yet to reach the deal's target. —AFP

trade deal that "will focus on issues of overcapacity, subsidization, disciplines on China's state-owned enterprises, and cyber theft."

Bown said any success in getting China to buy not just farm but also energy and manufactured goods, would aid Trump in his reelection campaign. "\$200 billion is a big round number that he can go out and talk about," Bown said, referring to the

amount China had committed to buy by the end of 2021. But China has lifted very few of the tariffs it applied to American products during the trade war, making achieving that objective "infeasible."

"There's no economic incentives for the Chinese private sector to buy American. So if China is actually going to buy this stuff, it has to be through state direction," Bown said. —AFP

US hemp farmers battle tough market, thieves

STANLEY, United States: When she planted hemp to make extra money for her family farm, Susan Corbett did not imagine thieves would find their way to her rural plot in Virginia to steal the plants.

And yet they did—one of many bends in the wild and sometimes bumpy ride hemp farmers have had since the crop was legalized in the United States in 2018. Two security cameras now watch over a portion of Corbett's crop, which looks and smells like marijuana but contains very little tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), which is what gets users high.

Also warning would-be pilferers is a sign whose bold black letters read: "This is not marijuana."

"I don't know what they were doing with it," Corbett said of her looted plants. "There's no THC in it."

Hemp is in demand for its seeds, fiber and oil containing the relaxing cannabinoid CBD—but it's also the same plant as marijuana, which remains illegal federally and under varying restrictions in most American states. Besides an oversaturated market and laborious cultivation process, hemp

farmers hoping to profit from the newly legitimized plant say they have had to navigate suspicious police, a legal mandate to burn crops that exceed THC limits and the problem of theft.

"Everybody plants it and goes 'This is wonderful,'" said Corbett. "I said 'Just wait.'"

It's not easy

One of the world's oldest cultivated plants, the US banned hemp during the 20th century before allowing its growing for research starting in 2014, then legalizing it nationwide four years later. Forty-six states have since passed laws regulating its cultivation, with hemp licenses in 34 states growing 455 percent last year over 2018, according to Vote Hemp, an advocacy group.

CBD, whether sold as a supplement or mixed into food or drinks, has also grown popular, and financial services firm Canaccord Genuity predicts CBD sales will jump 45 percent to \$18 billion by 2024. Those who grow hemp describe a demanding crop that must be harvested by hand, maintained with a rigorous spraying schedule to keep away pests then dried out before it can be sold. With so much of the plant hitting the market, and a shortage of processors, many farmers are seeing buyers back out of agreements. "When we go to the CBD market, it's 'We'll pay you when we get paid,' which puts us in a problem with our creditors," said David Turner of DC Hemp, who farms in rural Dinwiddie



STANLEY: Hemp plants grow on the farm of Susan Corbett in Stanley, Virginia. When she planted hemp to make extra money for her family farm, Susan Corbett did not imagine thieves would find their way to her rural plot in Virginia to steal the plants. —AFP

county, Virginia. Another peculiarity is the presence of THC in the plant. Farmers must constantly test hemp to ensure the level doesn't get too high, otherwise they have to burn it. "If I get the wrong situation where I have a crop out there, I'm a drug lord," Turner said.

Local media has reported cases of police around the United States seizing hemp shipments on suspicion of being marijuana, so growers have started carrying around a pile of documentation when transporting their harvest. —AFP

Bargain-hunters look to US real estate stocks

NEW YORK: As the S&P 500 approaches fresh highs, some investors hope to pick up bargains in the battered US real estate sector, where values of some major stocks have been cut in half this year.

Coronavirus-fueled lockdowns and a major shift toward working from home have weighed on residential and retail US real estate investment trusts. The sector has slid 7 percent this year compared with a 3 percent gain on the S&P 500.

Yet investors say stocks in the sector could jump if a coronavirus vaccine loosens the pandemic's hold on the US economy. "You're going to find more attractive spots in the REIT space than you will in some areas of the market like technology, that have the growth but are getting expensive," said Mark Freeman, chief investment officer at Socorro Asset Management.

Among his largest positions is Alexandria Real Estate Equities Inc, which rents space for medical research, and Prologis Inc, which owns warehouses used for e-commerce fulfillment by companies such as Amazon.com Inc. Drugmakers will likely have tens of millions of doses of

coronavirus vaccines in the early part of next year, Anthony Fauci, the top US infectious diseases official, told Reuters in an interview on Wednesday. Such a breakthrough would be a boon for companies like mall landlord Simon Property Group Inc, said John Creswell, executive managing director at Duff & Phelps Investment Management Co.

Shares of the company are down 58.2 percent for the year to date and trade at a trailing price to earnings ratio of 9.6, less than half of their 52-week high of 22.9. The company, which is expected to report earnings on Aug. 10, is managing the effects of the pandemic by capping its spending until consumers once again feel comfortable congregating in large groups, Creswell said. "They're showing that they can live with COVID, not just get through COVID," Creswell said. An extension of unemployment benefits and another stimulus bill would likely provide an outsized lift to retail and residential REITs that have lagged hot sectors such as data centers, said Michael Knott, Green Street's head of US REIT Research.

"Given that consumption is such a critical aspect of GDP, bridging toward an environment that starts to look more normal will be pretty important to the retail and residential space," he said. There are plenty of reasons to be skeptical of a quick rebound. Enhanced unemployment benefits lapsed last week, and Congress has, as of Friday, had failed to pass another stimulus bill that would provide relief. Those enhanced benefits had funded continued spending



In this file photo, a TV screen shows the numbers after the closing bell at the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) in New York City. —AFP

for many of the more than 20 million Americans who have lost their jobs since February. More than 30 percent of mall-based businesses and office tenants are expected to withhold at least part of their rent payments this year, according to estimates from Green Street Advisors. Valuations in the sector also tend to vary widely, thanks to rallies in warehouse and data-center stocks that have skewed averages higher. Data center operator Digital Realty Trust, for example, is up 31 percent for the year to date and trades at a P/E of 55.2. —Reuters

German industrial output, trade surge as virus curbs lift

FRANKFURT: German industrial output and exports surged in June, driven by the country's all-important car industry, as the economy continued to recover after the shock of the coronavirus pandemic. Industrial output rose by 8.9 percent month-on-month, compared with 7.4 percent in May, but remains around 11.7 percent lower compared with the same month the year before, according to

provisional data issued by German statistics agency Destatis.

Exports rebounded by 14.9 percent month-on-month in June, extending a steady increase of 9.0 percent in May, to 96.1 billion euros, Destatis said. Germany is recovering faster than initially expected, according to Holger Schmieding, chief economist at Berenberg. "In the absence of a major accident, Germany can recoup at least half the Q2 drop in GDP in Q3 already."

"Of course, it all depends on the virus and the response to it," he added.

Although welcome, June's export figures are still 9.4 percent down on the same month in 2019, and down 16 percent compared with

February this year. With imports of 80.5 billion euros, a rise of 7.0 percent month-on-month, Germany's foreign-trade surplus rose to 15.6 billion euros, around the same level as a year ago, when it was 16.5 billion euros. Meanwhile production in the country's key car industry—which counts giants such as Volkswagen, BMW and Mercedes—jumped 54.7 percent in June compared with the previous month.

Consumer-goods production rose 7.3 percent, while construction output was up 1.4 percent.

"With these strong numbers, some upward revision of the Q2 GDP data should not be excluded," Carsten Brzeski, economist at ING said. "All in all, today's data confirm that at

least the rebound after the lifting of the lockdown measures is V-shaped."

However, the specter of further COVID-19 restrictions haunts any recovery. On Thursday, Germany reported more than 1,000 new virus cases for the first time since May. "The recovery should continue in the coming months but will probably lose momentum and we think output will remain well below normal for a long time yet," Capital Economics said.

"With all the risks of a second lockdown wave, an increase of permanent unemployment and structural changes to the economy stemming from COVID-19... it is... very unlikely that this 'V' (upturn) will last for long," Brzeski added. —AFP

Tax cuts, reduced job benefits: Trump's orders

WASHINGTON: After failing to reach a deal with the US Congress for a fresh round of coronavirus pandemic relief, President Donald Trump signed a series of executive orders aimed at pumping up America's pandemic-hit economy. The orders are likely to face some legal challenges.

Unemployment relief

Trump's order cuts enhanced federal unemployment benefits — a lifeline for the tens of millions of Americans thrown out of work during the pandemic — from \$600 to \$400 per week. Democrats had been lobbying to extend the original \$600 a week enhanced benefits, which expired on July 31. Trump proposes taking most of the money from the coffers of the Federal Emergency Management Agency — \$44 billion, according to the order — with 25 percent of the money coming from states.

It's not clear how Trump will convince state governments, whose revenues have been hard hit by the crisis, to pony up their proposed share. Trump called the reduced payments "generous."

A payroll tax cut

Trump's first order waives the payroll tax that funds Social Security in a bid to inject extra money directly into salaried employees' pockets. Trump has been pushing the idea for a while but it has found little support in Congress from Democrats or his fellow Republicans.

The executive order says the cut comes into effect on Sept. 1, but Trump said it "most likely" would be retroactive to Aug. 1 and translate into "bigger paychecks for working families."

Evictions

Trump's order protecting homeowners and renters from evictions is unlikely to face a challenge from Democrats: indeed, House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi this week encouraged the move. But it isn't clear how it will be executed. The order directs authorities to provide "temporary financial assistance" to renters and homeowners "struggling to meet their monthly rental or mortgage obligations."

Even Trump seemed a little hazy on the order's ultimate effects, saying "we don't want people being evicted and the act that I am signing will solve that problem — largely, hopefully, completely."

Student loans

Trump said that interest on student loan payments — frozen since March — would be suspended until the end of the year. —Reuters

Business

NBK stands on solid grounds and pandemic demonstrated our digital strength: Al-Sager

NBK Group CEO speaks on sidelines of analysts' conference for results of 1H 2020

KUWAIT: CEO of National Bank of Kuwait Group Isam Al-Sager stated that: "The past few months witnessed challenges on all levels as a result of COVID-19 outbreak and the subsequent extreme measures taken by governments around the world in an effort to control the outbreak. However, these measures reflected very negatively on the economic activity and business sentiment globally."

On the sidelines of the Analysts' Conference Call/Webcast for the results of 1Q and 1H 2020, Al-Sager added that the Group's business was impacted in most of our locations leading to more challenging operating environment across our network. Net profit for 1Q2020 recorded KD 77.7 million and KD 33.4 million for 2Q2020. This led to 1H2020 profits of KD 111.1 million, down 47 percent year-on-year compared to last year.

Al-Sager noted that the domestic economy was pressured and the impact of the long period of lockdown has had its toll on our operations as well. We are expecting this year's GDP to contract by 6 percent because of the expected non-oil GDP contraction by around 4 percent.

Al-Sager pointed out that: "From business shut-downs to curfews and border closures, all these actions along with the change in sentiment created a severe shock to world economies. The impact of the pandemic in the GCC region was even more severe because of the large drop in oil prices and its impact on economic activity and budget deficits. In the first half of 2020, most GCC countries have seen their fiscal positions weakening with exceptionally large budget deficits projected for 2020."

"The full closure and slower economic activity, especially during Q2 of the year, had significant impact on our operations. The drop in transaction volumes has resulted in lower fees and commissions income, whereas the low interest rate resulted in more pressure on our interest margin. Additionally, the impact of non-oil GDP contraction, the lower oil prices and the lock down period, had all increased the level of uncertainty around the cash flows outlook for many of our customers, which led to higher provision charges," added Al-Sager.

Proactive measures

NBK Group CEO affirmed that: "From day one of COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, the bank took proactive measures and activated emergency plans at the very early stages of the crisis, in order to protect our employees and ensure business continuity."

Al-Sager added that NBK business model showed great flexibility during the crisis, which enabled it to provide support and advice to our customers facing financial difficulties and relying heavily on our digital capabilities to maintain the level of service quality and accessibility that our customers would expect in normal times.

Al-Sager indicated that since the early days of the crisis, we realized that the virus spread and the control measures implemented by governments around the world would have a negative impact on the bank's profitability. Therefore, we immediately introduced some cost-savings initiatives to be implemented across the Group in an effort to ease the pressure on the bottom

line, without affecting our future business plans. Al-Sager stressed that NBK, in coordination with the Central Bank of Kuwait and Kuwait Banking Association, participated in all initiatives aimed at relieving our customers and lifting some of the pressures they were facing. We extended support to our customers by suspension of fees on POS terminals, ATMs and digital channels for 3 months, in addition to increasing the limit for contactless payments. Moreover, we provided support to individuals by the deferment of consumer/installment loans and credit card installments for a period of 6 months for all our customers. We have also provided support financing to individuals, SMEs, and economic entities impacted by COVID-19 crisis.

Strong capital base

Al-Sager emphasized that despite all the challenges that faced the bank in 1H, the Bank's balance sheet strength remains intact and still stands on firm grounds; noting that the bank's strong capital base, comfortable liquidity levels and the quality of its profits will give it great capacity to absorb the impact of COVID-19.

Al-Sager pointed out that the impact of COVID-19 reaffirmed some of NBK's key strengths, thanks to its strategic investments over recent years to accelerate the development of digital banking services, which provided the bank with high operational flexibility during this period.

He also mentioned that digital channels delivered

by 20 percent and how that will affect capital expenditure and if there are any delays on expected mega projects. Al-Sager said that Kuwait as well as other GCC countries, will feel the pressures, not only from the spread of COVID-19, but also because of the drop in oil price as Oil GDP and oil receipts remain a significant contributor to the country's GDP and to budget revenues. The immediate response to that would be budget cuts and rationalization of spending. Capital expenditure will be among those planned cuts, and accordingly, we do expect some project delays and/or cancellations and have witnessed already.

Al-Sager added that despite that negative trend, we still see some activity with the value of projects awarded in 1H2020 totaling some KD 900mn, noting that he is also hopeful to see some rebound in activity on both the execution side as well as the awards with the planned gradual opening of the economy.

On his part, Head of Group Management Accounting at National Bank of Kuwait, Shyam Kalyanaraman affirmed that the Group's balance sheet



Isam Al-Sager



- The bank's digital channels delivered virtual alternatives to branches during the crisis
- Our disaster recovery and crisis management plans proved very successful when tested during the early days of the outbreak
- Our priority is to maintain solid capital position, with the proper buffers
- Our strategic investments in development of digital capabilities provided us with high operational flexibility during the crisis
- 2Q Profits were significantly impacted by the full closure and slower economic activity
- We provided support and advice to our customers to overcome their financial difficulties

virtual alternatives to branches allowing the bank to serve its customers in the best way possible, noting that the bank's disaster recovery and crisis management plans all proved very successful when tested during the early days of the outbreak, the fact that gives the bank more comfort as we move ahead towards a recovery phase.

Al-Sager stated that it is too early to have a well-informed discussion on dividend distribution for 2020 as we are still in the half year. In addition, dividend is a function of earnings and capital and normally this happens at year-end after the Bank assesses the closing capital position and future capital needs; noting that the priority will be to maintain the bank's solid capital position, with the proper buffers similar to what we have maintained over the years.

Regarding the intended government cut in its budget

remains strong with high credit quality and stable capital levels. NBK's capital base along with its ability to generate healthy operating profits provides a strong credit loss absorption capacity.

Kalyanaraman added that the bank's operating income is from a well-diversified asset mix, which is unique to NBK amongst Kuwaiti banks in terms of its geographical spread of operations, and due to its ability to conduct business in both conventional and Islamic banking. This diversification gives a significant degree of resilience to Group's earnings and provides it with a strong competitive edge.

He also added the bank has resilient operating income from Domestic and International Operations, upbeat lending in 1Q2020, although impacted in 2Q2020 due to the slower pace of economic activity, good growth in core franchise deposits, reasonable

cost growth, comfortable liquidity levels and solid capital base.

With regard to the deferral of consumer loans installments for a period of 6 months, Kalyanaraman explained that, as instructed by the Central Bank of Kuwait, the modification loss has been charged to equity not to the P&L. Our equity has been charge, after adjusting for our holding in Boubyan Bank, with KD 130mn, which will be phased-out in capital adequacy ratio calculation over 4 years starting from 2021.

Regarding the increase of provisions and impairments, he mentioned that it was notably due to the charge in respect of investment book to cater for the effects of volatility that may arise in anticipation of worsening macroeconomic factors due to the impact of COVID-19, and in respect of the bank's operations in Lebanon while NMC exposure is covered fully as part of the credit provision.

He also affirmed that the cost of risk in the previous years normalized at around 82bps, and given the impact of COVID-19, we do see some provisions with respect to some of our Kuwaiti corporate and retail portfolios, in addition to some precautionary charges as well in anticipation of future circumstances.

"There has been no big issue with respect to credit quality. What we have seen today is only with respect to liquidity issues with our corporate customers, but we have not seen any deterioration in credit quality," Kalyanaraman said.

He also pointed out that despite the relaxation offered by the Central Bank of Kuwait regarding some regulatory requirements; the Group was able to maintain the original mandated liquidity levels.

NBK Money Markets Report

Uncertainties ignite dollar selloff

KUWAIT: The United States economy is facing multiple major uncertainties. The Presidential elections due in November, mounting US Covid-19 cases, falling yields, domestic political turbulence and the expiration of additional unemployment benefits offered investors sufficient reasons to abandon the dollar. Additionally, the labor market surprised economists as the private sector added 167K jobs in July when the expectations were for 1.2 million. While non-farm payroll was expected to add 1.48 million jobs, the data released on Friday by the Labor Department were higher than expectations at 1.763 million jobs and sent the unemployment rate to 10.2 percent from June's 11.1 percent reading.

US manufacturing

The US ISM Manufacturing PMI rose from 52.6 to 54.2 last month, the highest reading in nearly 1.5 years. The forward-looking indicator on the manufacturing sector portray an improving image after the frail April-May figures, elevating hopes that the global manufacturing sector is emerging from the hit of the coronavirus pandemic. However, the risk of additional restrictions and lockdowns will remain a massive cloud of uncertainty for many industries and will depend on COVID-19 containment efforts.

The services sector PMI rose to a 17-month high in July. The Institute for Supply Management revealed that its services sector index increased to 58.1 from June's 57.1. June had been the largest gain in the history for the services index, which dates to 1997, following the biggest drop on

record in April. However, the PMI report showed that the employment index edged down to 42.1, indicating employers are not hiring even as new orders soared to 67.7.

Equities, forex

Equities continued their momentum in the states led by technology companies in the Nasdaq index which has a year-to-date performance of +20 percent. The S&P have left the red zone and ended the week in the green with 3.73 percent gain since the beginning of the year.

In the fixed income complex, the US bond yields have fallen across the board lately, particularly at the front end of the curve where the 5-year hit an all-time low of 0.1870. That in turn fed through the FX market, enhancing the US dollar sell-off for second consecutive week.

In the FX sphere, the US dollar dropped by 3.18 percent since the beginning of the year against a basket of currencies and lost more than 10 percent from the highs of March this year. Lower interest rate differentials between the US and major economies and the uncertainties revolving around the world's largest economy had investors fleeing to rival currencies.

BoE meeting

The Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) has voted unanimously to keep Bank Rate on hold at 0.10 percent and the asset purchase target at GBP 745 billion. The minutes of the meeting include the new forward guidance that "the Committee does not intend to tighten monetary policy until there is clear evidence that significant progress is being made in eliminating spare capacity and achieving the 2 percent inflation target sus-

tainably". No surprises from the BOE's side which affirmed the Sterling's rally at the 1.31 level and near the highs of March this year. Indeed, the Brexit situation is yet to be clear and that is what could be holding the Sterling from reaching the 1.40 levels.

EU PMI flourishes

For the first time since January 2019, the EU's manufacturing activity broke the 50 mark, which separates growth from contraction. The index increased from 47.4 to 51.8 in July as major EU economies opened businesses and have better control over the COVID-19 pandemic situation.

The single currency had a strong rally in the past two weeks and accelerated to reach the highs of May 2018 of 1.1916 fueled by a weaker dollar and decreasing interest rate differentials between the greenback and the single currency.

Commodities

Oil prices were supported this week as positive economic news earlier in the week offset concerns that a fresh wave of COVID-19 infections will hamper global demand recovery just as major producers ramp up output. Both Brent and WTI futures climbed almost 3 percent on weekly basis on better than expected data on manufacturing activity in Asia, Europe, and the United States. As for the yellow metal, gold soared to a new record high of \$2,030.72 an ounce. A weaker greenback and falling bond yields contributed to a stronger gold as the opportunity cost of holding the safe-haven metal has diminished considerably.

Kuwait

Kuwaiti dinar at 0.30545
The USDKWD closed last week at 0.30545.

AUB continues Al-Hassad promo, reveals 3rd winner

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank (AUB) "Al-Hassad Characters" competition, which is the first of its kind in Kuwait, continues its success. Last Wednesday, AUB held the third draw in "Al-Hassad Characters" campaign. The prize of this draw totaling KD 4,200 went to the winner Dana Najeeb Al-Mahmoud who correctly calculated the balance in the account of "Rami".



Faten Al-Tameemi

During the same day, AUB launched the fourth & last character "Dalal" competition that will continue for a week throughout AUB social media platforms and website. Everyone can take part in the competition by accessing a microsite through a link available on AUB website (<https://www.ahliunited.com.kw/>).

On this occasion, Faten Al-Tameemi, Head of Marketing & Product Development at AUB expressed congratulations to the winner in the third draw. She affirmed that every participant will see himself/herself in one of these four characters, and by solving the exciting puzzle, they will learn more about the features of Al-Hassad Islamic Account, which continues to achieve success as the first Islamic prize account known as the Best Prize Draws Account in Kuwait.

All individuals in Kuwait can take part in "Al-Hassad Characters" competition and receive a chance to win, as the competition is not limited to only the customers of Al-Hassad Account or AUB Clients.

The idea of the campaign is to present four puzzles, each of which is about a different character that has Al-Hassad Islamic Account with AUB. The answer to the puzzle is to figure out the balance in the account of each character that will be presented successively. Each character will be presented for a week or more. A demo video will also be posted about the story of each character, their aspiration and ambitions. Each video contains hints that help the participants solve the puzzle, in addition to several clues through social media platforms that will help the participants solve the puzzle. The correct answers will be collected and a draw will be made to select the winner who will win the amount in character's account. Each participant is qualified to submit only one answer for each character.

Microsoft's delicate castle in China

BEIJING: Microsoft, which is in talks to buy part of Chinese video app Tik Tok, is one of the few US tech titans that have managed to succeed in China. The software giant has kept its business alive in the country by complying with strict local laws, despite the communist nation's wide-reaching censorship.

Here are some key points about the technology and gaming group's opera-

tions in the world's second biggest economy.

A pioneer

Microsoft arrived in China in 1992 and opened its largest research and development center outside the United States. It now employs around 6,200 people in China. The ubiquitous Windows operating system is used in the vast majority of computers in China — despite Beijing promising in recent years to develop its own operating system. The company's success has a downside, however, as its software is widely pirated.

The important Chinese market, which is very restrictive for foreign firms, rep-

resents a drop in the ocean of Microsoft's business, accounting for barely 1.8 percent of its turnover, president Brad Smith said at the beginning of the year. Microsoft's Bing is one of the few foreign search engines operating in China — although it is far behind its local competitors Baidu and Sogou, which dominate the market.

Bill Gates

Microsoft founder Bill Gates has long embodied a model of success in the eyes of many Chinese people and his books are bestsellers in the country. President Xi Jinping visited the company's headquarters on a state visit to the US in 2015, where he met with Gates and his wife.

Today, as the head of his humanitarian Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the 64-year-old has the prestige of a head of state in Beijing. In February Xi wrote Gates a letter thanking him for his support during the coronavirus epidemic.

Censorship and control

China censors all subjects considered politically sensitive in the name of stability, and internet giants are urged to block unwanted content online. Refusing to comply with Beijing's strict demands, American giants Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube, as well as Wikipedia and several other foreign media, are blocked by China's "great firewall". —AFP

Classifieds

Monday, August 10, 2020

Kuwait Times
 THE FIRST COPY OF THE ARABIAN GULF

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www.kuwaittimes.net
 e-mail: info@kuwaittimes.net

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 State of Kuwait - دولة الكويت



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 Fax: (+965) 24348714
www.met.gov.kw

Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

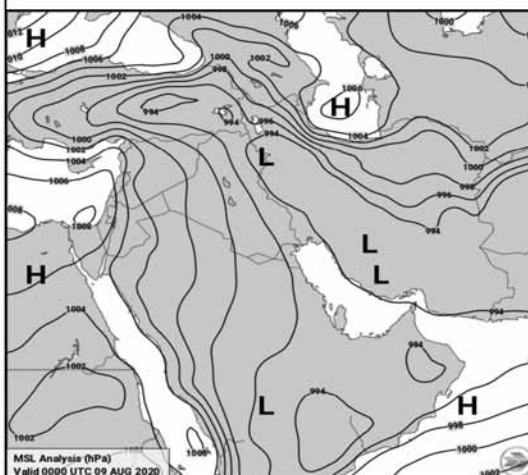
BY DAY: Very hot with light to moderate north westerly wind with speed of 08 - 35 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

BY NIGHT: Hot to rather hot with light to moderate freshening at times north westerly wind with speed of 15 - 40 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

WEATHER WARNING: No Current Warnings

STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	48 °C	36 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	48 °C	35 °C
ABDALY	47 °C	32 °C
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C
JAHRA	48 °C	34 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	48 °C	33 °C
SALMIYAH	45 °C	36 °C
AHMADI	- °C	33 °C
NUWAISIB	46 °C	35 °C
WAFRA	47 °C	34 °C
SALMY	45 °C	29 °C

SFC. CHART 09/08/2020 0000 UTC



DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Monday	08/10	Very hot and some high clouds will appear	47 °C	32 °C	NW	15 - 40 km/h
Tuesday	08/11	Very hot	48 °C	33 °C	NW	15 - 40 km/h
Wednesday	08/12	Very hot	47 °C	33 °C	NW	15 - 40 km/h
Thursday	08/13	Hot and some high clouds will appear	46 °C	33 °C	NW	15 - 38 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	03:46
Sunrise	05:13
Zuhr	11:54
Asr	15:29
Sunset	18:34
Isha	19:58

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	48 °C
MIN. Temp.	35 °C
MAX. RH	29 %
MIN. RH	05 %
MAX. Wind	NW 50 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

All times are local time unless otherwise stated. UP:0 2020/08/09 02:41 UTC V1.00 T2.4 2-1-خ.ع.ق

Hospitals

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

Clinics

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

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Virginia Gloria Romila D'Souza, r/o House No. 235, Raint, Moira, Bardez, Goa, was previously known as Virginia Gloria Romila D'Souza. Henceforth I will be known as Virginia Gloria Romila D'Souza in all my documents and dealings. (C 5754) 10-8-2020

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

Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is 1889988

EMERGENCY ☎ 112

Airlines

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

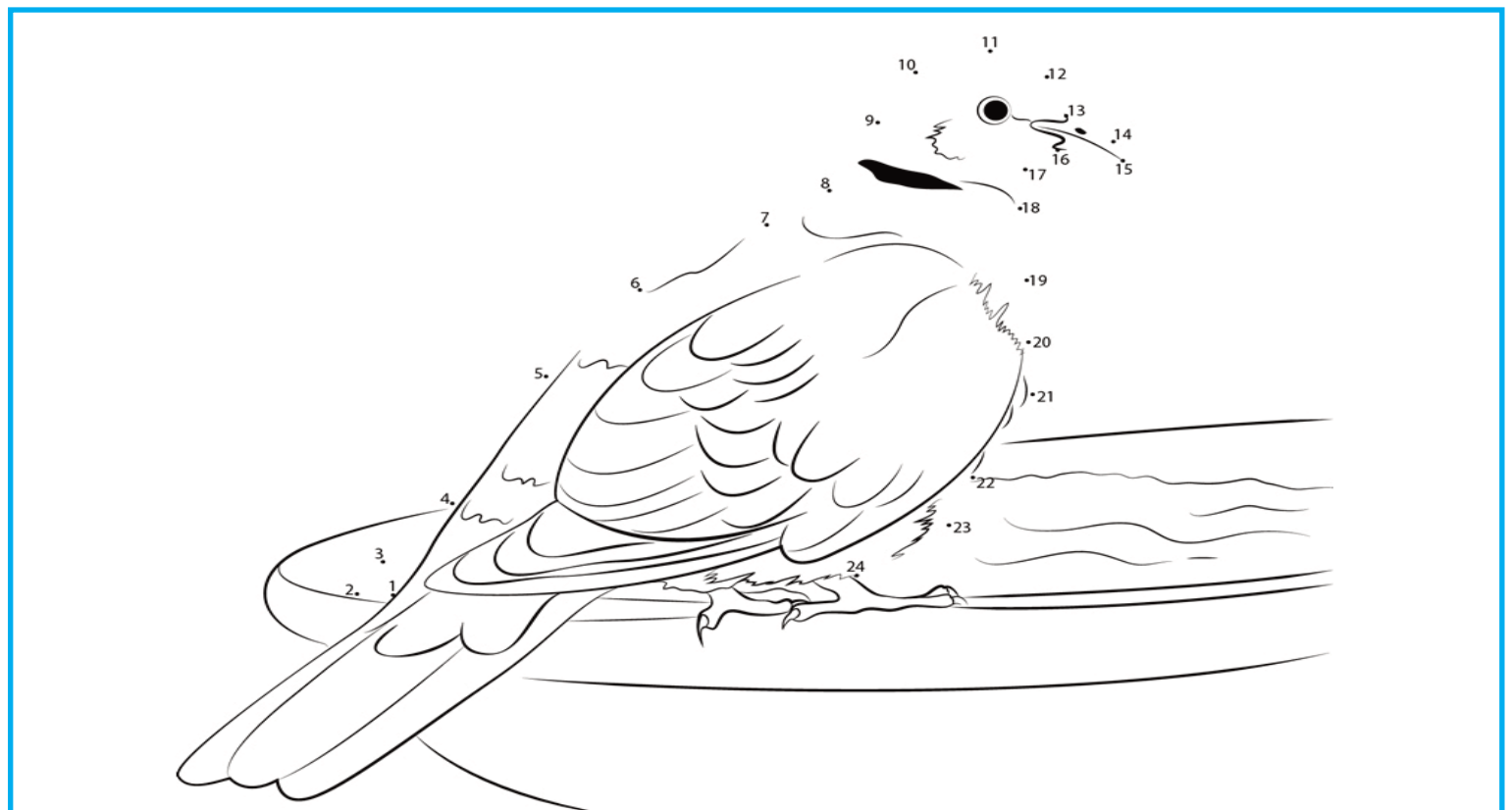
Word Search

ANCIENT EGYPT



- AFTERLIFE
- BURIAL
- CLEOPATRA
- DESERT
- DYNASTY
- EDICT
- EGYPT
- FERTILE
- FLOOD
- GIZA
- GOD
- GOLD
- HEROGLYPHICS
- HISTORY
- INK
- IRRIGATION
- ISIS
- JEWELRY
- KINGDOM
- MUMMY
- NILE
- PAPYRUS
- PHARAOH
- PYRAMID
- RAMESSES
- REED
- RULER
- SAND
- SARCOPHAGUS
- SCRIBE
- SCROLL
- SPHINX
- SYMBOL
- TEMPLE
- TOMB
- TRADE
- TUTANKHAMUN
- VIZIER

Join the Dot



STAR TRACK

Aries (March 21-April 19)
 Today a deep concern for others' feelings could have you lending a sympathetic ear to those in need of some understanding. It's more important to listen than talk now, Aries, even though your practicality might want to express itself. Your affairs should go smoothly, bringing you a lot of satisfaction. Don't be surprised if you shed a few tears of joy at some point.

Cancer (June 21-July 22)
 An intense, emotional dream could move you so powerfully that you awaken with the odd sense that the dream was real. Write it down, Cancer. Maybe it is. Efforts to overcome obstacles and advance in business could finally pay off. You could walk around in a daze asking yourself if it really has happened. It has. Make the most of it, and don't be afraid to show your feelings.

Libra (September 23-October 22)
 Some intense communications with a close friend or lover could reveal wonderful things about your relationship. Perhaps you have more in common than you thought. Maybe your fears and insecurities prove groundless. As a result, you two could grow closer and discover a new mutual sense of purpose. Enjoy the positive feelings that come your way and have a great day.

Capricorn (December 22-January 19)
 Expect some great news regarding money, possibly professional advancement. You may have to control the urge to break into tears of joy, Capricorn. A female friend could be going through some heavy changes and might want your support. Your best course of action would be to listen rather than offer advice. You may have to try hard to control yourself, however. The situation could defy all reason.

Taurus (April 20-May 20)
 Today you might complete a difficult project that's important to your career. Acknowledgement of your dedication and hard work could find you more emotionally overwhelmed than makes you comfortable. You may have to make a special effort to control your feelings. You've moved mountains to get where you are, Taurus, so it's nice to be recognized. You deserve to celebrate tonight.

Leo (July 23-August 22)
 Emotional discussions with your partner could move you to tears, Leo. You've overcome any difficulties and probably reached a new understanding. Any relationship or friendship started or advanced now shows promise of being strong and lasting. Your basic inclination will be to control your feelings, but don't be afraid to show them. It's OK at times like this.

Scorpio (October 23-November 21)
 Ancient social traditions could be a powerful part of today, Scorpio. An emotional event concerning your family, perhaps planning a wedding or other milestone, could have you feeling especially moved. In the rush of events, you'll probably keep a tight rein on any expression of emotion. Keeping up appearances could be more important to you than usual today. Do it, but also be yourself.

Aquarius (January 20-February 18)
 Happy events involving a close female relative might have you feeling emotional, Aquarius. A marriage or birth could be involved. Your projects, particularly those with other people, could proceed well despite difficulties you've had to overcome. The results could move you to tears. You may feel the need to control yourself, but don't be afraid to show how you feel.

Gemini (May 21-June 20)
 A long-awaited event, perhaps a wedding or christening, could have you moved to tears, Gemini. As you're naturally a person who doesn't like to show your feelings, you might need to be by yourself until the urge to cry has passed. This should be a very happy day for you as well, and your contentment could seem almost too good to be true. Even if you weren't able to attend in person, it's real. Relax and enjoy it.

Virgo (August 23-September 22)
 Today you may feel the need to do a lot of work around your home, Virgo. Perhaps you expect future visitors or simply want to spruce up the place for yourself. You may need to pace yourself and not try to do everything at once. You could run into difficulties that require help from others who may be unavailable. Control the urge to steamroll through your chores.

Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)
 You usually place a lot of importance on self-control. Today this skill will come in handy when you receive some wonderful news that might otherwise move you to tears. Don't carry it too far. Under these circumstances, it's OK to let it out a bit. Your hard work and dedication to your career are paying off. News about possible advancement could arrive. It's a very eventful day.

Pisces (February 19-March 20)
 Your telepathy and intuition are at an all-time high today, Pisces. You should find it easier than usual to tune in to others' thoughts and feelings. It might be a good idea to control your reactions. Don't tell others what you're picking up unless you're sure they want to know. Your imagination and creative abilities are also operating at a very high level. Make the most of them.



This photo shows a convoy of Lamborghinis on the road after leaving a showroom during a Lamborghini Club Thailand event on the way to a Pattaya luxury retreat weekend, in Bangkok. — AFP photos



Thai business owner Thanakorn Mahanontharit, also known as Yod, getting into a Lamborghini car during a testing session for clients in Bangkok.



New models of Lamborghini cars, available for purchase, during a testing session for clients in Bangkok.

Supercars and champagne: Bangkok's rich purr through pandemic



Employees helping Lamborghini car owners park during a Lamborghini Club Thailand event at a showroom in Bangkok.



People looking at BMW cars at a luxury car show at the Paragon shopping mall in Bangkok.

As the coronavirus brought the global economy to its knees, Thai businessman Yod decided to buy himself an \$872,000 treat—a lime-green Lamborghini. Yod picked up the customized Huracan EVO supercar in Bangkok, a city of billionaires with a luxury economy unbroken by the crisis ripping through Thailand's wider economy. With tourism and exports in freefall, Thailand's growth could shrivel by as much as 10 percent this year, dumping millions into unemployment. But in a split-screen economy, there are plenty with immunity to the economic scourge caused by COVID-19.

Thailand is home to the ninth most billionaires anywhere, according to the China-based Hurun Report's Global Rich List 2020. Among those with deep pockets is Yod-full name Thanakorn Mahanontharit—who was undeterred by Thailand's "crazy" supercar import taxes of up to 80 percent when he made his March purchase. "This car makes me feel like David Beckham," the genial Bangkok-based petro-chemicals businessman told AFP. "When you open your door everyone looks at you like you're a superstar." Ferrari, Rolls-Royce and Lamborghini have all launched top-end models in Bangkok over the pandemic period, cars with price tags of between \$750,000 and \$1.2 million.

It is a bet on the wealth sloshing around Bangkok. Millions of dollars of that cash were on proud display in the capital last week as an eye-catching 40-car convoy from the Thailand Lamborghini Club cut through the city's knotted traffic for a day trip to a nearby resort. Lamborghinis "appeal to a very niche audience of high net-worth individuals", said Matteo Ortenzi, chief executive for Automobili Lamborghini in the Asia-Pacific region.

There has been "continued interest and demand (from Thailand), one of our most important markets in Southeast Asia," he added. Yod said his supercar purchase was the completion of a lifelong dream. "It is a reflection of your success, it doesn't mean I am better than you," he told AFP. "It's just that I work hard and play harder."

Economy in reverse gear - But most Thais are in a different game. The kingdom is one of Asia's least equal countries. Thailand is headed by a super-rich monarchy and buttressed by a handful of family dynasties with monopolies covering everything from beer and duty-free to convenience stores. Their fortunes have surged under six years of military-aligned government which has parceled out major contracts to



Technicians inspecting a row of Lamborghini cars during a Lamborghini Club Thailand event at a showroom in Bangkok.

them, while the wider economy has backslid.

"One percent of the population owns pretty much two-thirds of the country," said Thitinan Pongsudhirak, a political analyst from Bangkok's Chulalongkorn University, warning that inequality is kindling a political crisis. Meanwhile many more are sinking. Farmers are reeling as demand struggles to return to pre-virus levels and remittances from migrants to the cities are drying up, while the urban middle class are facing a cash crunch playing out in unpaid loans and school fees.

As a result, household debt is forecast to surge to 88-90 percent of GDP by the end of this year, according to a Kasikornbank research note. Government figures predict the pandemic could leave 8.4 million jobless, over a quarter of them employed in the cash-cow tourism sector.

That would eviscerate the gains of the last two decades, which saw millions lifted from poverty by Thailand's export, manufacturing and tourism boom. Even before the pandemic hit, the number of people living in poverty had risen by nearly two million to 6.7 million, according to a March report by the World Bank. Now, as the pandemic strips back the economy, the middle and working classes "are not well-cushioned," said Pavidha Pananond, an academic at the Thammasat Business School. Yet the rich enjoy a level of "financial immunity" from the crisis. — AFP

Local tours bring some relief to S Africa safari industry

Tourists gasp as two lionesses elegantly pad across the track, barely glancing at the jeep-load of city dwellers escaping lockdown at a game reserve in Gauteng, South Africa's coronavirus epicentre. Visitors have flocked from the capital Pretoria and financial hub Johannesburg since the government allowed South Africans to travel for leisure within their provinces last week. The announcement brought a small sliver of relief to the country's tourist industry, which has missed out on more than \$3.9 billion in revenue since South Africa went into lockdown on March 27. As the only park in Gauteng offering sightings of the popular "Big Five"—buffalo, elephant, leopard, lion and rhino—Dinokeng Game Reserve has attracted nature lovers who would normally drive to remote larger parks elsewhere in the country. "It's actually amazing, we have had a lot of support from locals," said Gavin Sterley, manager of the four-star Mongena Game Lodge in Dinokeng, which reopened a week ago. "They are

all booking and coming for game drives, dinner and that type of stuff."

Mongena closed its doors two weeks before the start of lockdown, when President Cyril Ramaphosa banned travellers from badly infected countries in an early bid to stem the spread of COVID-19. Before the pandemic, around 80 percent of Mongena's guests came from abroad, while locals mainly visited for business events. Sterley believes the easing of intra-provincial travel restrictions could add to the business. The lodge is fully booked through August by South Africans eager to holiday after months of confinement. "It is a big marketing opportunity for us," Sterley told AFP.

'Breath of fresh air'

Lindy Jansen Van Vuuren, 42, beamed up at her husband as a pair of nyala antelope sidled past the jeep and trotted lightly towards the sunrise. The Johannesburg-based couple had spent two nights in Mongena and were next headed to the neighboring Magaliesberg



A lioness yawns during a guided safari tour.

Tourists wearing face masks as a preventive measure against the spread of COVID-19 coronavirus look at a lioness during a guided safari tour at the Dinokeng Game Reserve outside Pretoria. — AFP photos

mountain range. "It is the first time we are holidaying in Gauteng and it is actually really nice so close to home," Van Vuuren exclaimed. "A breath of fresh air." "You go on a two-day break and it feels as if you have gone a week," she said. Graphic design student Natasha Zachariades, 20, shared the enthusiasm. "We usually go down to the coast or overseas for our holiday but obviously we can't do that," said Zachariades, who came from Pretoria after finishing her

exams. "It has been the most relaxing couple of days that I have had in a long time," she noted, thrilled after spotting a giraffe. Apparently grinning from behind his face mask, ranger Stian Loubser pointed out rhino tracks and elephant droppings along the way. "We are trying to be as virus-safe as possible while also trying to create a nice guest experience," he explained, excited to be "back in the bush". —AFP



A nyala walks during a guided safari tour.



Tourists wearing face masks as a preventive measure against the spread of COVID-19 coronavirus get off from an open vehicle during a guided safari tour at the Dinokeng Game Reserve outside Pretoria.



Crocodiles lay on the ground during a guided safari tour.



A zebra stands during a guided safari tour.

Lifestyle | Features



Alpaca owner Silke Lederbogen, leader of a program for delinquents who are psychologically ill, takes care of some of her animals during an animal therapy session for mentally ill criminals in Mainkofen, southern Germany. — AFP photos



Alpaca owner Silke Lederbogen, put a halter on an alpaca during an animal therapy session for mentally ill criminals.



Alpaca owner Silke Lederbogen, stands next to some of her animals.



Patient Erwin Meier (not his real name), participant of a program for delinquents who are psychologically ill, works with an alpaca during an animal therapy session for mentally ill criminals in Mainkofen.

Alpaca therapy helps convicts with mental illness



A patient puts a halter on an alpaca during an animal therapy session.

Offenders with mental health conditions at a southern German hospital can pitch in with looking after a small herd of alpacas as part of their therapy. Staff at the Mainkofen psychiatric hospital in Bavaria say the aim is for the generally calm animals to help patients develop skills towards social reintegration. Those on the program have daily tasks, such as to feed the around 10 alpacas, walk them, brush their coats, dress their wounds and clean out their stables. Erwin Meier, whose name has been changed for this report, has helped care for the alpacas since October and believes it has

helped him. "I like it very much," he said. "It's fun to work with animals. There is something to do every day."

The animals, which can be known to spit, have helped him to control his anger, said Meier, who did not want to give details about his conviction. "I used to get angry quite quickly, I was impulsive, but it's improved thanks to the animals, because if I get angry, they get angry too, and the calmer I am, the calmer they are too," he added.

Hats and blankets

The program is open to all patients at the hospital but intended primarily for offenders. If they stay out for too long or outside the authorized hours, permission to spend time with the alpacas is revoked. Silke Lederbogen, the program leader and owner of the alpacas, runs a nearby farm with her husband with about 50 of the animals, using their wool to make hats and blankets. "Usually, patients in the hospital do not have contact with 'normal' people," she said. But, in walking with the alpacas on the hospital grounds, they are given the chance to chat and answer questions about the animals from interested visitors, patients and staff, she added. "And they can do so competently," she said. — AFP



Alpaca owner Silke Lederbogen, walks with some of her animals.

LA parties head for the Hollywood Hills as mayor vows crackdown

With Los Angeles nightclubs closed, party promoters have turned to mansions in the Hollywood Hills to throw lavish, raucous and sometimes deadly gatherings that have enraged neighbors and local officials. Starting this weekend, Mayor Eric Garcetti has granted emergency powers to utility workers to cut electricity and water at sprawling homes dotted around the famous Hollywood sign that have "essentially become nightclubs" during the coronavirus pandemic. "The consequences of these large parties ripple far beyond just those parties—they repeat throughout our entire community, because the virus can quickly and easily spread," he warned.

But infection is not the only fatal risk. Last Monday, beneath roaring TV news helicopters, police arrived at a mansion off the famous Mulholland Drive packed with young partygoers. In the ensuing chaos, gunshots rang out and one person was killed. "When I say party houses, I'm not talking about your neighborhood barbecue or your family gatherings," said Councilmember David Ryu, who is working on legislation to target offenders. "I'm talking... literally parties that cost a million dollars to host, with caged lions and tigers and baby giraffes on red carpet," he told AFP. "It's an extravaganza."

'The Hills'

Under strict Los Angeles licensing laws that see nightlife close at 2 am, revelers have long headed for parties in "the Hills" after last call. While the pandemic lockdown initially caused a lull in the house party scene, the past few weeks have seen gatherings soar. Most are run not by the homeowners but by nightclub promoters who now rent mansions for the night, said LAPD Hollywood Captain Steve Lurie. "The same promoters have figured out 'Well wait a second, I can jump on Airbnb, spend \$10,000 a night for a Hollywood Hills mansion, and sell tickets and promote the party just like if it was a nightclub,'" he told AFP. "It's exactly the same thing. Except now my nightclub has an unobstructed view of Los Angeles, a beautiful swimming pool."

Organizers often charge entrance fees and run cash bars for the events organized by secret mailing lists and word-of-mouth. One invitation sent for an "underground" Prohibition era-themed party last weekend promised a "private, multi-level, 100% outdoor venue." According to Hollywood United Neighborhood Council president and resident George Skarpelos, pre-pandemic there were 10 to 15 parties each weekend night but "now there's like 50." "You think to yourself, 'Look, I understand that you guys feel cooped up and you want to hang out

and have a good time.' We all do, right?" said Skarpelos. "But I feel that there's a lot of people who kind of throw caution to the wind."

'\$50,000 cash'

The lawlessness of an underground house party scene increases the danger of things going wrong. "Noise is my last concern, believe it or not," said Ryu. "We've had major fires three years in a row... you have people on the balconies smoking. Where do you think those cigarette butts go?" With cars illegally parked several vehicles deep on winding roads, emergency officials are often unable to reach the homes. In some cases the homeowners may not even be aware of the parties, and most include clauses in rental contracts forbidding events.

But Skarpelos believes there is often "a wink and a nod" to such rental agreements. "They're like, 'Ok, maybe I'll rent it out to this shady guy who says he'll give me \$50,000 cash,'" he said. While the house involved in the deadly shooting is advertised as a retreat for feng shui and environmentalism, its social media accounts carry videos of Brazilian dancers and scantily clad waitresses serving champagne. The property managers told AFP they had "absolutely no prior knowledge of this large mansion party." — AFP



Cypriot singer Alexia Vassiliou plays music during an interview with AFP in Nicosia. — AFP photos



Cypriot singer Alexia Vassiliou speaks during an interview with AFP in Nicosia.

Cyprus singer shines spotlight on refugees

Cypriot singer Alexia Vassiliou still remembers the sound of the sirens wailing eerily over her house when she was just a child to warn of the Turkish invasion. She and her family fled the north-eastern town of Famagusta in 1974, and decades later she has never returned to live in the place she once called home. But Alexia's experiences shaped her future, and today she uses her international acclaim as an artist to help shine a spotlight on the plight of the displaced and refugees around the world. "I am a refugee... This is why I am here today," she says, in an online concert which is being re-streamed on Wednesday to global audiences. "There was a moment when I did not have a home. I was 10."

The novel coronavirus pandemic opened ideas for a live concert in Nicosia as part of events to mark World Refugee Day on June 20. But Alexia, whose career spans four decades and who has recorded with jazz great Chick Corea, was determined to move the show online, incorporating performances and messages of solidarity from artists around the world. They include American jazz singer Madeleine Peyroux and British rock star Peter Gabriel, but also local asylum seekers and refugees. A revamped version of the concert is being streamed on Alexia's Facebook page on Wednesday at 9:00 pm (1800 GMT).

'We have to leave'

A former British colony, Cyprus marks its 60th anniversary of independence on Sunday, August 16. The island has been divided since 1974, when Turkey occupied its northern third in response to a coup engineered by the military junta then ruling in Athens that sought to unite the Mediterranean island with Greece. Ankara

launched another phase of the invasion on August 14, 1974, during which it seized Famagusta, Alexia's home town. UN-backed talks on reunifying Cyprus collapsed in July 2017. "Before the coup d'état, we'd hear the grown-ups speak secretly and we knew something ominous... was about to happen," Alexia told AFP from her home studio outside the divided capital.

She recalled hearing a radio news flash about the coup, warning civilians to go home because if anyone was on the street "they will be shot". "My father was not home yet," she said. One morning, she woke up to the sound of air raid sirens. "Our mother ran to our room and told me and my sister, 'Girls, you have to wake up, there's been a war, we have to (leave).'" "Things like this never go away."

Lullaby and lament

Alexia was part of Cyprus's first-ever Eurovision song contest participation in 1981, when she was still a teenager. She returned for a solo performance in 1987. She has recorded numerous albums crossing genres from pop to world music and jazz, including a 1996 album featuring Chick Corea. The shows have been organized by Alexia under the auspices of UN refugee agency UNHCR's office in Cyprus, in collaboration with the interior ministry. On a dark stage, she opens with "Agia Marina", a traditional Cypriot song, accompanied by the soft notes of a kalimba, an African thumb piano. She then moves into George Gershwin's "Summertime" and African-American spiritual "Motherless Child", a trio of songs blending lullaby and lament. The re-streamed event however includes performances not seen in the previous show. "It's not the same concert... it's better," Alexia said. — AFP



The mansion Palazzo Beverly Hills, where a large party was held in defiance of coronavirus-related health order and ended in a fatal shooting, is seen on Mulholland drive in Los Angeles, California. — AFP

Sports

Photo of the Day



Cyril Despres of France performs during the fifth stage of Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge in 2019. —Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

Ko surges clear at Marathon Classic

WASHINGTON: A late flurry of birdies left Lydia Ko in pole position at the PGA Marathon Classic on Saturday as the former world number one surged into a four-shot lead heading into the final round. The 23-year-old New Zealand star rattled off two birdies in her final three holes to card a three-under-par 68 and move to 16-under at Highland Meadows in Sylvania, Ohio.

It was the second straight day that Ko finished strongly. On Friday, Ko had birdied the 17th and 18th holes to move into a one-stroke second round lead with a six-under-par 65. Ko later revealed that she had been bothered by a sore back during her round. "It started hurting a little bit," Ko said. "I think the key for me tomorrow is even if it doesn't feel 100%, just to go out there and hit it confidently and aggressively. Even though the pain is there I feel like when I hit it hard, my body is not flinching over that area. I just have to not worry about it."

After a day of low scoring in the second round, the field found the going tougher on Saturday with pin positions making for a more challenging set-up. After two birdies and a bogey in her first six holes, Ko went on a run of nine consecutive pars before she began to pull away down the stretch with her late birdies. That left her four clear of Danielle Kang, who battled to a one-under-par 70 after a round that included three birdies and two bogeys.

Kang was unhappy with her failure to make the most of several birdie chances that presented themselves during her round. "Frustrating, annoying and irritating," Kang said when asked to summarize her display. "It's only Saturday and we have a lot of golf left out there. But I was getting frustrated today. I couldn't get the ball in the hole. I missed three putts from five feet. It's very frustrating when you miss those and other birdie opportunities, it doesn't give you a good momentum for the following holes."

Kang is 12 under after 54 holes, two shots ahead of Australia's Minjee Lee and England's Jodi Ewart Shadoff, who are 10 under. —AFP

Tigers hit 4 HRs before an out, crush Pittsburgh Pirates 11-5

Giants overpower Dodgers; Athletics beat Astros

PITTSBURGH: The Detroit Tigers blasted five homers, including four in their first five at-bats, as they powered past the host Pittsburgh Pirates 11-5 on Saturday. Niko Goodrum, Miguel Cabrera, C.J. Cron and Jeimer Candelario homered off Pittsburgh left-hander Derek Holland during the Tigers' five-run first inning. JaCoby Jones also homered for Detroit, which has scored 28 runs during the first two games of the series. Cabrera finished with three hits and three RBIs. Jonathan Schoop supplied three hits, three runs scored and an RBI, while Cron added two hits, two runs scored and two RBIs. Candelario had his second straight three-hit game. The Tigers hit four home runs in an inning for the first time since the fourth inning on June 1, 2013 at Baltimore. It was the first time in franchise history they blasted four homers before making an out.

Athletics 3, Astros 1

Frankie Montas allowed just two hits over seven shutout innings, and Marcus Semien recorded a piece of Oakland history with a leadoff home run in a win over slumping Houston. Semien ended Friday's 3-2 win with a two-out RBI single in the bottom of the 13th inning. With Saturday's leadoff homer, he became the first player in franchise history to deliver the back-to-back big hits. Montas (2-1) didn't walk a batter and struck out five for Oakland, which has won eight straight. Yuli Gurriel had two hits for Houston, which has dropped four in a row.

Yankees 8, Rays 4 (Game 1)

Gerrit Cole took a shutout into the fifth inning to run his unbeaten streak to 26 games. Aaron Judge hit his major league-leading eighth homer and New York posted a victory over Tampa Bay in the first game of a seven-inning doubleheader in St. Petersburg, Fla. It was another three-IP game for the Yankees, who also received a two-run shot from Mike Ford and Giancarlo Stanton's solo home run. It marked the 86th time the Yankees hit at least three homers in a game since the start of the 2018 season. Ji-Man Choi hit an RBI double, and Jose Martinez hit a two-run homer for Tampa Bay, which lost for only the fifth time in 26 regular-season home games since Aug. 21, 2019.

Rays 5, Yankees 3 (Game 2)

Nick Anderson retired Aaron Judge—representing the tying run with two outs in the seventh inning—and Tampa Bay held on for a victory over visiting New York in the second game of a seven-inning doubleheader. Anderson recorded his second save by winning an eight-pitch encounter with Judge with DJ LeMahieu on second. He secured Tampa Bay's split when Judge flew out to center fielder Kevin Kiermaier, who made the catch in front of the warning track in left-center. Jalen Beeks preceded Anderson and was lifted after allowing LeMahieu's two-run single, cutting a 5-1 deficit to 5-3. Tampa Bay beat New York for the sixth time in its last seven home games.

Giants 5, Dodgers 4

San Francisco bombed Clayton Kershaw for three home runs, two by Austin Slater, and three relievers combined to hold a one-run lead over the final 3 1/3 innings in a victory at Los Angeles. Johnny Cueto combined with Tony Watson, Tyler Rogers and Trevor Gott on a two-hitter, helping the Giants end a two-game skid with a third win in six tries at Dodger Stadium already this season. Kershaw (1-1), who was scratched from his Opening Day start against the Giants and was making just his second start of the season, served up solo home runs to Slater and Mike Yastrzemski to break a scoreless tie in the third inning, then another solo shot to Slater in the fifth.

Mets 8, Marlins 4

JD Davis homered and collected a career-high four RBIs to lead a potent performance by the middle of New York's order in a win over visiting Miami. The Mets won for just the third time in 10 games. The Marlins, who were trying to

match the best nine-game start in franchise history, had their six-game winning streak snapped. The 3-4-5 trio of Davis, Pete Alonso and Michael Conforto combined for all eight of the Mets' RBIs. Conforto gave the Mets the lead for good with a two-run homer in the second. Davis singled in the third to extend his hitting streak to a career-high 12 games before Alonso snapped a career-long 10-game homer drought with his first round-tripper since July 31.

Rockies 5, Mariners 0

Ryan Castellani pitched four-plus hitless innings in his major league debut, and three relievers—Jeff Hoffman, Yency Almonte and Phillip Diehl—completed a one-hitter as Colorado won at Seattle. Charlie Blackmon went 3-for-4 with two doubles and three RBIs to increase his batting average to .446. He also lifted his majors-leading hit total to 25. Castellani, a right-hander who was a second-round pick out of high school in 2014 and is considered one of the Rockies' top pitching prospects, retired the side in order in each of the first four innings. He wasn't able to make it through five innings to qualify for the victory after opening the fourth with a hit batsman and a walk.

Royals 9, Twins 6

Jorge Soler hit two home runs—including a three-run shot in a six-run fourth inning—to lead Kansas City over visiting Minnesota. The Royals hit three home runs in the fourth, the first time they had three in an inning since August of 2018 against the Chicago White Sox. Kansas City clinched its first series victory of the season. Nicky Lopez hit his first home run of the season off Thorpe. Cody Stashak relieved Thorpe and gave up Soler's second home run. Salvador Perez followed with his own monster shot, his third, which went 438 feet to left-center.

Reds 4, Brewers 1

Anthony DeSclafani allowed two hits over six scoreless innings, and Eugenio Suarez belted a three-run homer in the first, as Cincinnati posted a second straight win at Milwaukee. In his second start of 2020, DeSclafani (1-0) faced hardly any trouble while also striking out six with a walk. This gem followed his 2020 debut, in which he gave up three hits in five scoreless innings at Detroit last weekend. After rolling to an 8-3 win in Friday's series opener, the Reds wasted no time in putting runs on the board Saturday against Milwaukee starter Brett Anderson. After Phillip Ervin reached on an infield single and Joey Votto made it aboard via a one-out error by second baseman Keston Hiura, Suarez clubbed a towering homer to left to make it 3-0.

Blue Jays 2, Red Sox 1

Left-hander Anthony Kay pitched 3 1/3 innings of scoreless relief, Rowdy Tellez drove in the go-ahead run with a groundout in the eighth inning and Toronto won at Boston. Kay (1-0) held Boston to two hits and no walks while striking out three to earn his second career victory. Toronto's winning run came against Red Sox right-hander Marcus Walden (0-1). Chase Anderson made the start in his Blue Jays debut after opening the season on the injured list with an oblique strain. He allowed one run, one hit and two walks in three innings. Boston starter Zack Godley threw four scoreless innings, allowing three hits and two walks while striking out three.

Diamondbacks 3, Padres 2

Starling Marte and Stephen Vogt hit sixth-inning homers off Chris Paddack, and Merrill Kelly allowed one run on six hits in six-plus innings as Arizona won at San Diego. Marte homered to left on a 3-1 fastball leading off the sixth to snap a 1-1 tie. Vogt lined his first homer of the season into the short-porch of right-field seats with two out—a 363-foot drive to make it 3-1. Both Padres runs came on solo homers by 21-year-old shortstop Fernando Tatis Jr. For the second straight night, Tatis opened the game with a leadoff homer, giving the Padres a quick 1-0 lead after driving a 1-0 fastball from Kelly into the left field stands.



PITTSBURGH: Jeimer Candelario #46 of the Detroit Tigers attempts to turn a double play against Jacob Stallings #58 of the Pittsburgh Pirates in the ninth inning during the game at PNC Park Saturday. — AFP

Indians 7, White Sox 1

Franmil Reyes, Jordan Luplow and Domingo Santana each homered to back six shutout innings from Zach Plesac and lift Cleveland to a victory at Chicago. Cleveland broke the game open with a six-run fourth inning. The rally proved to be plenty for Plesac, who improved to 1-1 after scattering five hits while recording one walk and seven strikeouts. Yoan Moncada helped the White Sox avoid their second shutout in four games with a solo shot in the bottom of the inning. Moncada has reached base in 19 consecutive games dating to last season, matching his career high.

Rangers 2, Angels 0

Joey Gallo's two-run home run in the sixth inning was all Texas offense could muster, but it was enough in a victory over Los Angeles in Arlington, Texas. It was enough because the Rangers got a combined shutout from starter Kolby Allard and five relievers, who limited the Angels to four hits, two from Albert Pujols. The Angels were 0-for-4 with runners in scoring position and left six men on base. The Rangers didn't exactly hit the cover off the ball either, finishing with just four hits, including two from Todd Frazier. Allard and Angels starter Patrick Sandoval matched each other inning for inning from the outset.

Phillies 5, Braves 0

Jay Bruce homered, doubled and drove in three runs to lead host Philadelphia past Atlanta. JT Realmuto added a home run while Bryce Harper and Didi Gregorius had two hits each for the Phillies, who won their second in a row. Adeiny Hechavarria had two hits for the Braves, who managed only four hits overall. Phillies starter Jake Arrieta (1-1) tossed six scoreless innings and allowed three hits while striking out six and walking one. It was Arrieta's first scoreless start since Aug. 6, 2018.

Orioles 5, Nationals 3

Anthony Santander belted a three-run homer in the eighth, and Pat Valaika and Pedro Severino hit back-to-back pinch-hit solo shots earlier in the inning as Baltimore rallied to win at Washington. The Orioles had just two hits through seven innings as the Nationals carried a 3-0 lead into the eighth. But Valaika led off the top half with his pinch-hit homer off Washington reliever Sean Doolittle. Severino then made it two pinch-hit homers in a row when he followed with a blast to left. It was the second straight win for Baltimore, as the O's have outscored Washington 16-3 in the first two games of the series. —Reuters

Complete game gives Johnson round lead

SAN FRANCISCO: Dustin Johnson's hot putter and improved accuracy off the tee gave him a one-stroke lead after the third round of the PGA Championship on Saturday, with the American looking set to secure his second major title. Johnson's eight birdies were the most by him in a single round at a major and helped offset a bogey and double bogey on the front nine as he carded a five-under 65 and sit nine-under par 201 through 56 holes at TPC Harding Park. Johnson is one clear of Scottie Scheffler and Cameron Champ with Collin Morikawa, Paul Casey and two-time defending champion Brooks Koepka all lurking a shot further adrift.

"I putted really well. That was key," said Johnson, who leads the field in strokes gained with the short stick this week. The former world number one and 2016 U.S. Open champion is looking to avenge his loss at the 2010 PGA Championship, where he was leading entering the final hole but was hit with a controversial two-stroke penalty for grounding his club in a bunker and finished tied for fifth. Johnson said landing the ball safely on the course's narrow fairways will be key to hoisting the Wanamaker Trophy on Sunday.

"Tomorrow I definitely need to hit some more fairways, because it's really tough playing this golf course from the rough," said Johnson, who hit seven of 14 fairways on Saturday. Johnson will be paired with Scheffler, who signed a busy scorecard that included eight birdies and three bogeys including one on the difficult par-four 18th, a hole that could prove critical on Sunday given the bunched leaderboard. The 24-year-old Scheffler said he was trying to keep his wits about him as he looks to secure his first major title. "There's definitely some nerves but just got to try and handle them as best I can and go out and play, and I did a good job of that today. —Reuters

Sports

Crusaders win Super Rugby NZ title with trademark late surge

Canterbury Crusaders beat Highlanders 32-22

CHRISTCHURCH: The Canterbury Crusaders needed their legendary storming finish to beat the Otago Highlanders 32-22 and claim New Zealand's Super Rugby title with a game to spare in Christchurch on yesterday. Three tries in the final quarter, two to George Bridge, secured their fourth successive Super title, but coach Scott Robertson immediately shut down talk of extravagant celebrations, citing the Liverpool experience of winning a championship before the end of the season. "It's a celebration with curfews tonight," he said, as he also refused to perform the trademark breakdance he has produced after previous title wins.

"It doesn't feel quite right. We haven't finished the job yet. There'll be another time for that. "We're very mindful that's the awkwardness of winning it as we've done. We understand what Liverpool went

through when they took the trophy early," he said. Liverpool were whipped 4-0 by Manchester City in their first game after securing the English Premier League with seven matches remaining, and Robertson warned the Crusaders would not ease up when the face the Auckland Blues in the final round next weekend.

"It doesn't mean anything if we don't do the job next week," added veteran lock Sam Whitlock. The little-fancied Highlanders led for the first 60 minutes against the Crusaders but could not hold back the red wave as the Crusaders took control in the final quarter — a period which has produced 40 percent of their points in the competition. Bridge scored two tries in two minutes for the Crusaders to be ahead for the first time in the 62nd minute and Brayden Ennor cemented the win with a try five minutes from time.

'We were on the ropes'

"It was a true final. It had everything in it. We were on the ropes for a lot of the game," Robertson said. "And bang, bang, you score two good tries and that was it." Crusaders won three Super Rugby titles in a row before the coronavirus crushed this year's competition, replaced by New Zealand's hastily-arranged domestic Aotearoa tournament between the country's five Super Rugby sides.

The gutsy Highlanders had the better of the first half and were ahead 22-13 before the Crusaders put the hammer down. The four-tries-to-three victory snuffed out the faint title hopes held by the Wellington Hurricanes and Auckland Blues and effectively ended the competition a week early. It was the Highlanders who looked most like a cham-

pion side in the opening stanza. Jack Whetton won turnover ball which paved the way for the opening try to Shannon Frizell in the second minute.

After a series of fumbles and costly turnovers, the Crusaders clicked in the 12th minute with a long cut-out pass from Bryn Hall to spark a long-range attack involving Sevu Reece, Hall and Bridge before Richie Mo'unga touched down. But the Highlanders refused to lie down. They came back with a Josh Ioane penalty and an 80-metre intercept try to Jona Nareki to open up a 10-point margin. Two penalties to Mo'unga reduced the Highlanders lead to 17-13 at half-time. A Michael Collins try pushed the Highlanders lead out to nine points before the Crusaders wrested control with their three late tries. — AFP

Vegas, Philadelphia capture top seeds in NHL playoffs

MONTREAL: Alex Tuch's overtime goal gave the Vegas Golden Knights a 4-3 victory over Colorado on Saturday and a Western Conference top seed in the National Hockey League playoffs. Joining Vegas with the preferred paths in the Stanley Cup chase were the Philadelphia Flyers, who got two first-period goals from Nicolas Aube-Kubel in beating Tampa Bay 4-1 to capture the top seed in the Eastern Conference playoffs.

Both winners completed an unbeaten run through seeding round play in the NHL COVID-19 quarantine bubbles, at Edmonton in the West and Toronto in the East, and became the teams to beat when the playoffs begin Tuesday. Tuch beat Avalanche goaltender Philipp Grubauer high to the far right corner for his third goal in as many games with 16 seconds remaining in overtime to give Vegas the victory. "I was shooting short side all game so I thought I would change it up a little bit," Tuch said.

Colorado's J.T. Compher equalized with 62 seconds remaining in regulation time to force the extra period, only to watch as Vegas advanced. The Golden Knights booked a best-of-seven opening series against the 12th-seeded Blackhawks, who have won the Cup in three of the past 10 seasons. They upset Edmonton in qualifying. "The Blackhawks have a lot of Stanley Cup experience, a lot of top players and a world-class goalkeeper in (Corey) Crawford," Tuch said. "So we've got to put a lot of pucks on the net."

Colorado will face 11th seed Arizona, which ousted Nashville in qualifying. Philadelphia 21-year-old



EDMONTON: Alex Tuch #89 of the Vegas Golden Knights scores the game-winning goal past Philipp Grubauer #31 of the Colorado Avalanche during overtime in a Western Conference Round Robin game during the 2020 NHL Stanley Cup Playoff at Rogers Place. — AFP

goaltender Carter Hart made 23 saves to send the Lightning to their first bubble loss. "We played really hard," Hart said. "All the lines are rolling. All the D are rolling. We did a great job in there. We got in a lot of work. It's showing right now." The Flyers, who were fourth in the East when the season was shut down, will open the playoffs against 12th seed Montreal, a shock qualifying winner over Pittsburgh after the Canadiens had the worst record of the 24 bubble teams. Tampa Bay's first-round opponent

will be the winner of the qualifying finale between Columbus and Toronto. Other games will decide the third and fourth seeds, with Boston playing Washington in the East and Dallas facing defending champion St. Louis in the West. The Washington-Boston winner will meet the New York Islanders in the first round of the East playoffs while the loser gets Carolina in the opening round. In the West, the Dallas-St. Louis winner will open against Calgary while the loser meets Vancouver. — AFP



MANCHESTER: England's Chris Woakes (left) celebrates after hitting the winning runs during play on the fourth day of the first Test cricket match between England and Pakistan at Old Trafford in Manchester. — AFP

Woakes leads England to a stunning win over Pakistan in first Test

MANCHESTER: Chris Woakes hit an unbeaten 84 as England came from behind to beat Pakistan by three wickets in the first Test at Old Trafford on Saturday. England were struggling in pursuit of a victory target of 277 after collapsing to 117-5 on the fourth day. But man-of-the-match Woakes, who had helped drag England back into this contest with 2-11 in just five overs late Friday, and fellow World Cup winner Jos Buttler turned the tide with a stand of 139.

"It was a brilliant chase," said England captain Joe Root at the presentation ceremony. "I couldn't be more proud of the lads. "That partnership with Woakes and Jos was magnificent. "One thing you can never doubt in our dressing room is the character. I am really proud and pleased that has shone through today." Nevertheless, with just 21 more runs needed, Buttler was lbw for 75 after trying to reverse-sweep leg-spinner Yasir Shah. By the time Pakistan left-arm fast bowler Shaheen Afridi took the new ball, England needed just 13 more runs to win at a sun-drenched Old Trafford.

But there was still time for England to lose their seventh wicket when, with four more needed, Stuart Broad was plumb lbw on the sweep to Yasir. Woakes, however, finished the match with an edged boundary off Afridi as England went 1-0 up in a three-match campaign. Victory meant England had won an opening Test for the first time in six series. Defeat was tough on Yasir, who took eight wickets in the match. Wicketkeeper Buttler had a poor game

in the field, twice missing Shan Masood on 45 during the Pakistan opener's 156 that was instrumental in leaving England with a first-innings deficit of over a hundred runs.

'Not good enough'

"If I take those chances, we're not chasing 270-odd," Buttler told BBC Radio's Test Match Special. "I know it's not good enough as an international wicketkeeper...If I am going to continue to be a wicketkeeper in this team, I'm going to have to be better," he admitted. But Buttler, who led England to a stunning one-wicket win over Australia with an unbeaten century in a one-day international on this ground two years ago, put the pressure back on Pakistan with the bat. Buttler, whose father was admitted to hospital Friday but has since been released, told Sky Sports: "We (England) turned up today still with a lot of belief." Pakistan captain Azhar Ali praised Buttler and Woakes by saying: "They changed the momentum of the game and unfortunately we couldn't reply to whatever they threw at us."

Buttler's fifty came off just 55 balls, with seven fours, with Woakes no slouch in a 59-ball fifty he completed by cover-driving Naseem Shah for the eighth boundary of his innings. It was Woakes's highest Test score since his hundred against India two years ago. Although Woakes is known to be vulnerable to the short ball, Pakistan did not pitch short to the all-rounder until he was well set. Only twice has a team chased more than 200 to win in the fourth innings of a Test at Old Trafford, with England making 294-4 against New Zealand in 2008 and 231-3 against the West Indies in 2004.

Earlier, England lost four wickets for 31 runs in slipping to 117-5, with Root and Ben Stokes both falling in the collapse. — AFP

'Maestro to Mister': Pirlo replaces Sarri as Juventus coach

MILAN: Former Italy and Juventus star Andrea Pirlo was appointed the Italian champions' new coach, just hours after Maurizio Sarri's sacking with the club promising a "new chapter in world football". Sarri, 61, leaves Juventus after just one season, a day after the Italian giants crashed out of the Champions League in the last 16 to French club Lyon. The 41-year-old Pirlo, with no previous top-level coaching experience, recently took over the Juventus U23 side and arrives on a two-year contract.

"The choice is based on the belief that Pirlo has what it takes to lead from his debut on the bench, an expert and talented squad to pursue new successes," Juventus said. "Today, begins a new chapter of his career in the world of football: from Maestro to Mister." Sarri took over on a three-year contract last summer, after leading Chelsea to a Europa League triumph, but failed to deliver on the promised revolution in style on the pitch. Pirlo's swift appointment, a day after their Champions League exit, is again a bold choice for club president Andrea Agnelli.

Other former players have turned to coaching such as Zinedine Zidane, Frank Lampard and Gennaro Gattuso, but Pirlo does so without experience. The former midfielder does, however, know Juventus and its players well after an impressive four-year spell from 2011 to 2015. "Pirlo has had a legendary career as a player. In his four years at the centre of the Juventus midfield, he won as many league titles, a Coppa Italia and two Italian Super Cups," Juventus said. He also won two Champions Leagues and two league titles with AC Milan. Former Napoli boss Sarri paid for Juventus's failure to advance in a tournament they have won twice, but not since 1996. Juventus also lost the Italian Cup and Italian SuperCup finals this season, and finished just one point ahead of Inter Milan to win a ninth 'Scudetto' in a row. "The Champions League, it was a dream before, now it's a goal and going out like this is disappointing for us, for the players and for the fans," said Agnelli. "We need a cold and lucid analysis, knowing that in a few weeks we will start from scratch and we will have to do it with the same enthusiasm and desire to win." Pirlo began his playing career at his hometown team Brescia in 1995 and went on to play for Inter, AC Milan and Juve before moving in 2015 for two seasons with New York City FC in the MLS. Capped 116 times for Italy, he was a key figure in the team that won the 2006 World Cup. Since the end of his playing career in 2017 Pirlo has been discreet in the world of football, mainly working as a television pundit. — AFP

Doncic dominates as Mavericks beat Bucks

DALLAS: Luka Doncic had 36 points, a career-high 19 assists and 14 rebounds for his 17th triple-double this season and 25th of his career while leading the Dallas Mavericks to a 136-132 overtime victory over the Milwaukee Bucks on Saturday night near Orlando. Dorian Finney-Smith added 27 points and 11 rebounds, and Kristaps Porzingis contributed 26 points and 11 rebounds as the Mavericks (42-30) rallied from a late seven-point deficit in regulation. Maxi Kleber scored 15 points, and Trey Burke had 10.

Brook Lopez recorded season highs of 34 points and six 3-pointers, and Giannis Antetokounmpo added 34 points, 13 rebounds and five blocked shots for the NBA-best Bucks (55-15). Chris Middleton registered 21 points and 11 assists, and Eric Bledsoe had 15 points. Dallas scored 16 straight points—the final seven of regulation and the first nine of overtime—to open up a 128-119 lead. The Bucks closed within two points before Doncic's highlight-reel, lefty bounce pass between his own legs set up Kleber's three-point play to seal it.

Phoenix Suns 119 - Miami Heat 112

Devin Booker scored a game-high 35 points as Phoenix remained unbeaten during the NBA's restart with a victory over Miami. Phoenix also got 18 points and 12 rebounds from Deandre Ayton, and a surprising 20 points in 26 minutes off the bench from Jevon Carter, who entered the game with a 4.6 scoring average. Booker, who entered the night ranked 10th in the NBA with a 26.2 scoring average, made 15 of 26 shots from the floor, although he was 0 of 7 on 3-point attempts.

The Suns (31-39) are the only unbeaten team in the NBA restart as they try to avoid missing the playoffs for the 10th consecutive season. Phoenix was without two of its top six scorers as Kelly Oubre and Aron Baynes missed the game due to knee injuries. Miami (43-27) played without three of its top four scorers: Jimmy Butler (sore right foot), Goran Dragic (sprained left ankle) and Kendrick Nunn (unspecified reason). Heat coach Erik Spoelstra shuffled his lineup, giving rookie guard Tyler Herro his seventh start of the season. Herro responded with 25 points, a career-high 10 assists and eight rebounds.

Pacers 116 - Los Angeles Lakers 111

TJ Warren continued his stellar offensive play since the restart, scoring 39 points to lead Indiana over Los Angeles. Warren, who came in averaging 33.8 points since the league reconvened on July 30, scored seven straight points in the final 1:25 to turn a one-point deficit into a six-point lead with 10.6 seconds left. Malcolm Brogdon scored 24 points, and Victor Oladipo had 22 for the Pacers (43-27). LeBron James sat out the loss against the Houston Rockets on Thursday because of a sore groin, but returned Saturday to finish with 31 points, eight rebounds and seven assists for the Lakers (51-18). James was the only starter in double figures for Los Angeles, as Anthony Davis was held to eight points on 3-for-14 shooting.

Denver Nuggets 134 - Utah Jazz 132 (2OT)

Nikola Jokic had 30 points and 11 rebounds, Jamal Murray had 23 points, 12 rebounds and eight assists in his return to the lineup, and Denver outlasted Utah in double overtime. Michael Porter Jr. had 23 points and 11 rebounds. Jerami Grant scored 21 points and Monte Morris had 15 for Denver. Torrey Craig added 11 points before fouling out. Donovan Mitchell had 35 points — 28 in the fourth quarter and overtimes—while Rudy Gobert had 22 points and 13 rebounds before fouling out. Mike Conley scored 20, Jordan Clarkson added 19 and Joe Ingles had 11 for the Jazz (43-27).

Clippers 122 - Trail Blazers 117

Paul George scored 21 points, and Los Angeles rallied late to beat Portland. Landry Shamet added 19 points and hit two crucial free throws for the Clippers, who played without All-Star forward Kawhi Leonard. Leonard didn't play because the club holds him out of back-to-back contests due to a lingering knee issue. CJ McCollum had 29 points and eight assists for the Blazers, while Damian Lillard and Gary Trent Jr. had 22 points apiece. Carmelo Anthony finished with 21 points, and Jusuf Nurkic had 10 points, 13 boards and nine assists. — Reuters

14 Tigers hit 4 HRs before an out, crush Pittsburgh Pirates 11-5



15 Doncic dominates, Mavs rally past Bucks 136-132



15 Vegas, Philadelphia capture top seeds in the NHL playoffs



MUNICH: Chelsea's English striker Tammy Abraham (left) fights for the ball with Bayern Munich's German midfielder Leon Goretzka during the UEFA Champions League, second-leg round of 16, football match FC Bayern Munich v FC Chelsea in Munich Saturday. —AFP

Bayern crush Chelsea, book last 8

'Enormous anticipation' as Bayern plot Barcelona defeat in Champions League

MUNICH: Treble-chasing Bayern Munich are relishing their Champions League quarter-final against Barcelona in Lisbon after Robert Lewandowski netted twice to seal a 4-1 home win over Chelsea on Saturday in the last 16, return-leg tie. "The anticipation is enormous. Barcelona has a good team with very good players, but if you look at the last few weeks, we can fly to Portugal with a lot of confidence," said Bayern defender David Alaba.

Lewandowski, the Champions League's top-scorer, bagged his 12th and 13th goals in Europe this season and played a part in all four Bayern goals in Munich on Saturday. Leading 3-0 from the first leg at Stamford Bridge in February, before the coronavirus pandemic halted the competition, Bayern progressed 7-1 on aggregate. "We can be pleased, it was our first game for a month and it's not easy to keep the rhythm," added Alaba. "We have prepared for this for the last two weeks and you could see the result." The Bundesliga and German Cup champions will

meet Barcelona next Friday in Lisbon for a place in the semi-finals.

Lewandowski netted a penalty with just 10 minutes gone at the Allianz Arena. Winger Ivan Perisic then doubled Bayern's lead before England striker Tammy Abraham tapped home a loose ball to give Chelsea brief hope. However, replacement midfielder Corentin Tolisso put the result beyond doubt when he fired home a Lewandowski pass with 14 minutes to go. "I am really happy with how we played over the 90 minutes, the first 30 minutes we shut Chelsea out," said Bayern head coach Hansi Flick. This was a world-class display from Lewandowski who added a late header to his pair of assists.

He is now four goals short of Cristiano Ronaldo's record of 17 Champions League goals in 2013/14. "It's not a goal of mine," said Lewandowski when asked about Ronaldo's record. "We have a few more games in the knock-out round and I am just as happy creating goals as scoring them." The Poland star was also

coy when asked about a rivalry with Barcelona star Lionel Messi. "We have to perform well and show our quality as a team against a good Barcelona side, it's a big game for everybody."

Early penalty

After a ruthless display in the first leg, Bayern picked up where they left off six months ago. They took the lead when Serge Gnabry, who scored twice in London, spotted the run into the box of Lewandowski, who was tripped by Chelsea goalkeeper Willy Caballero. The Poland striker was initially flagged offside, but VAR ruled otherwise. Caballero was booked and Lewandowski converted the resulting penalty for his 12th goal in seven Champions League games. He turned provider on 24 minutes as Bayern kept up the pressure. After Mateo Kovacic lost possession near the halfway line, the ball was worked to Lewandowski who squared for Perisic to fire home.

Callum Hudson-Odoi, who was linked with a move to Munich at the start of the season, beat Manuel Neuer on 28 minutes only for the goal to be ruled out by VAR for an offside. However, Chelsea pulled a goal back just before half-time. Bayern goalkeeper Neuer could only parry a shot by Hudson-Odoi and Abraham tapped home the loose ball on 44 minutes to make it 2-1 at the break. Mason Mount forced Neuer into a low save early in the second half, while Bayern lost defender Jerome Boateng to a leg injury with an hour gone.

He was replaced by Niklas Sule as Perisic made way for Brazil playmaker Philippe Coutinho. Flick also changed both defensive midfielders, Thiago Alcantara and Joshua Kimmich, for the final 20 minutes. It paid off two-fold as moments later Tolisso, on for Alcantara, made it 3-1 when he turned home Lewandowski's pass on 76 minutes. Alvaro Odriozola, on for Kimmich, then supplied the silky cross on 84 minutes which Lewandowski headed home for his 53rd goal in 44 games this season.—AFP

Messi helps Barca sink Napoli to reach last 8

BARCELONA: A fired-up Lionel Messi led Barcelona to a 3-1 win at home to Napoli on Saturday for a 4-2 aggregate victory which took the club into the Champions League quarter-finals for the 13th consecutive season where they face Bayern Munich. The Catalans had a shaky start but took the lead in the 10th minute with a powerful header from a corner by Clement Lenglet before Messi scored a superb second in the 23rd, seeing off four defenders to curl the ball into the far bottom corner. Messi had the ball in the net again soon after following a superb team move but the goal was harshly ruled out for handball by the Argentine following a VAR review, although Messi later won a penalty which Luis Suarez converted for Barca's third. Napoli got one back when Lorenzo Insigne converted a spot kick at the end of the first half and were the better side after the interval but Barca survived to set up a

mouth-watering clash with Bayern in the Final Eight tournament in Lisbon next Friday.

"We got the result we wanted. We've spent two weeks preparing for the game, knowing how difficult it would be and so it proved as they made it tough for us in certain moments," said Suarez. "We were taken by surprise at the start but we scored first. If they had scored it would have caused uncertainty but we managed the game well."

Messi had sounded the alarm after Barcelona's rusty performance in the 1-1 draw in the last-16 first leg back in February, saying they stood no chance of winning Europe's top prize, which has eluded them since 2015, unless they improved. He would have been worried by Barca's stuttering start which saw Napoli swarm all over the home side's area and Dries Mertens clip the crossbar in the second minute with a scuffed shot.—Reuters



BARCELONA: Napoli's Spanish defender Fabian Ruiz (left) fights for the ball with Barcelona's Dutch midfielder Frenkie De Jong (right) during the UEFA Champions League round of 16 second leg football match between FC Barcelona and Napoli at the Camp Nou stadium. — AFP

I have 'nothing to hide', FIFA's Infantino claims

LAUSANNE: Gianni Infantino has insisted that he had "nothing to hide" in a letter to member federations of football's global governing body FIFA despite Swiss prosecutors launching a criminal probe against him. In the letter, sent on Thursday and seen by AFP, FIFA chief Infantino tells the body's 211 members that there were no "factual grounds for the opening of a criminal investigation" which was announced last week. The special prosecutor has been investigating suspected collusion between Infantino and Swiss Attorney General Michael Lauber, who resigned last month over his handling of a corruption investigation targeting FIFA.

Infantino and Lauber are said to have held a series of secret meetings in 2016 and 2017, but the FIFA head said the

meetings was about restoring "public trust in our institution" after a series of scandals. He claims that those meetings "were in no way secret and most certainly not illegal". "I went to these meetings with the most senior law officer in the country in order to offer our full support and assistance in connection with the ongoing investigations, because FIFA has an interest and is a damaged party in these investigations," Infantino wrote.

Speaking to AFP, Infantino's lawyer David Zollinger said that since the announcement of the investigation his client has not received "any information" from the prosecutor and "has not been summoned" to any hearings. A former prosecutor himself, Zollinger was a member of the supervisory authority of the Swiss public prosecutor's office - which oversaw Lauber - between 2011 and 2016. Zollinger denies any conflict of interest, saying that his last meetings at the supervisory authority "took place in June and July of 2016 and at that time no one was aware of the meetings between Lauber and Infantino".—AFP