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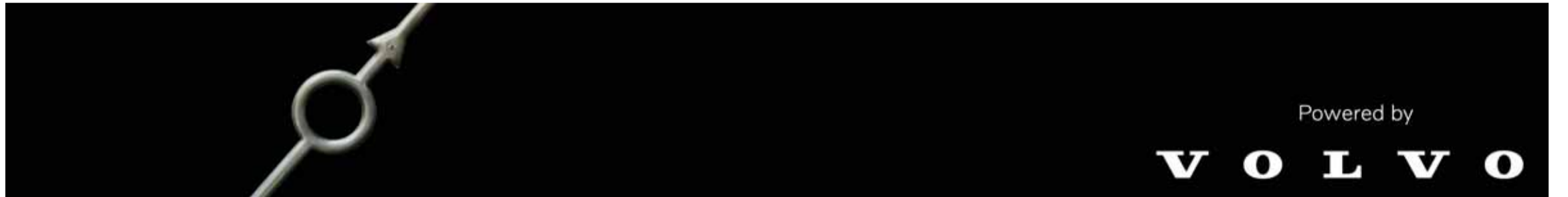
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Cabinet approves draft law regulating expat residency

Another draft law proposes cap on expats, payments for 'solidarity fund'

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The Cabinet has approved a new foreign residency draft law to regulate the stay of millions of expats in the country, which proposes sweeping penalties against visa traders and failure to pay salaries. The new government-proposed residency law will be sent to the National Assembly for debate and approval with the aim to modernize the current law issued 51 years ago.

The main focus of the new residency law is its focus on fighting visa trading and expats working illegally with employers who are not their sponsors, in addition to raising penalties for those who violate the law by overstaying or illegally entering the

country. The draft law stipulates a jail term of three years and a fine between KD 5,000 and KD 10,000 for visa traders who facilitate the entry, renew residencies and employ expats illegally for fees. It states that the fine will be charged for every illegal expat, while the punishment will be doubled in case the violator is a civil servant or if it is repeated within five years.

Expat workers who pay money to get a work permit or renew their residencies will receive a one-year jail term and a fine of KD 1,000. The law states that only the public prosecution will investigate such cases. The bill punishes employers who fail to pay wages to expat employees with a two-year jail term and a fine between KD 5,000 and KD 10,000.

The same penalty applies for working illegally with other employers.

The bill requires employers to inform authorities if their expat employees leave them or if their residency is cancelled and they do not leave the country. Violators will be fined between KD 600 and KD 2,000. The new bill stipulates to grant 10-year residency to foreign investors, foreigners who own real estate, foreign women divorced from their Kuwaiti husbands and have children, in addition to the husbands and children of Kuwaiti women.

National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem and four MPs - Rakan Al-Nisf, Ahmad Al-Fadhil, Khaled Al-Shatti and Nasser Al-Dousari - meanwhile submitted a draft law calling on the government to

set a cap for expats needed by the country within six months and asking surplus workers to leave within five years. The draft law, which comes amid a flurry of proposed bills and measures aimed at significantly reducing the number of foreigners in Kuwait, also calls to set up a solidarity fund for expats to be financed by special fees on a variety of transactions, paid by either the employer or the employee.

The fund will be used to cover airfare for deported expats and their unpaid wages following a final court judgment when the employer refuses or delays payment, and blood money for expat workers who die or sustain any disability during or because of their work duties.

Continued on Page 2

Kuwait army denies attack on border post

KUWAIT: Kuwait's army has denied reports about an attack on a northern border post. The army's General Staff stressed in a statement early yesterday that the northern borders are stable and secure. The Iraqi military also denied the incident took place. The US Embassy in Kuwait said it was looking into the matter. Three Iraqi security forces had told Reuters an explosion near the Jraischan border crossing between Iraq and Kuwaiti on Monday evening targeted a convoy carrying equipment for US forces.



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Russia develops vaccine; global cases top 20m

PARIS/MOSCOW: Russia has developed the first vaccine offering "sustainable immunity" against the coronavirus, President Vladimir Putin announced yesterday. "This morning, for the first time in the world, a vaccine against the new coronavirus was registered" in Russia, he said during a televised video conference call with government ministers. "One of my daughters had this vaccine. I think in this sense she took part in the experiment," Putin said.

Meanwhile, the coronavirus pandemic chalked up another horrific milestone late Monday as the world surpassed 20 million recorded cases of infection from the tiny killer that has upended life just about everywhere. The number as of 2215 GMT was 20,002,577 cases, with 733,842 deaths recorded, according to an AFP tally of official sources. In yet another staggering landmark, the death toll is expected to surpass 750,000 in a matter of days as the global health crisis that began late last year in China rages on.

New Zealand announced its first locally transmitted coronavirus infections more than 100 days yes-

terday and issued a stay-at-home lockdown order for the country's largest city. After receiving global praise for its success containing the virus, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said four cases had been detected in a single family in Auckland from an unknown source. Auckland will be locked down for at least three days from Wednesday and some social distancing restrictions will be reintroduced in the rest of the country.

As more things once unthinkable became harsh reality - having to wear a facemask in touristy spots in Paris, or reserve a spot on Copacabana beach in Rio via an app and then social distance on the sand - the World Health Organization urged people not to despair. "Behind these statistics is a great deal of pain and suffering... But I want to be clear: there are green shoots of hope," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said. "It's never too late to turn the outbreak around," he said.

Infections have been rising ominously in Western Europe, which has also been sweltering through a heatwave, with temperatures soaring above 35 degrees Celsius. The blistering heat sent crowds flocking to beaches at the weekend despite health warnings about the risk of infection. In the Paris region, people aged 11 and over are now required to wear masks in crowded areas and tourists hotspots. These include the banks of the Seine River and more than 100 streets in the French capital.

Several French towns and cities have already



MOSCOW: This handout picture released yesterday shows a vaccine against the coronavirus disease developed by Russia's Gamaleya research institute. — AFP

introduced similar measures, as well as parts of Belgium, the Netherlands, Romania and Spain. In Berlin, thousands of children returned to school on Monday after the summer break, sporting masks, which are compulsory in common areas like school courtyards. Greece meanwhile announced a night curfew for restaurants and bars in some of its top tourist destinations after its number of new cases increased. — AFP

Lebanon govt resigns over blast fallout

BEIRUT: Lebanon's Prime Minister Hassan Diab announced his government's resignation Monday under a barrage of pressure over the catastrophic Beirut port explosion six days earlier that has reignited angry street protests. "I announce the resignation of the government," Diab said at the end of a televised speech in which he tried to portray himself also as a victim of a corrupt political elite. The announcement was met with cars honking in the streets and cele-

bratory fire in the northern city of Tripoli but it was unlikely to meet long-term expectations of Lebanese.

Even as Diab spoke, security forces in central Beirut clashed for a third night with protesters demanding an end to an entrenched political system widely seen as inept, corrupt and dominated by sectarian interests and family dynasties. France, whose President Emmanuel Macron visited Beirut after the blast, called for the "rapid formation" of a new government.

"The aspirations expressed by the Lebanese in terms of reforms and governance must be heard," French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said, adding that a new government would have to "prove itself" to the people. According to the health ministry, at least 160 people were

killed in Lebanon's worst peacetime disaster, 6,000 injured and about 20 remained missing after the Aug 4 disaster blamed on official negligence.

Almost a week after the enormous chemical blast that wreaked destruction across swathes of the capital and was felt as far away as Cyprus, residents and volunteers were still clearing the debris off the streets Monday. International rescue teams with sniffer dogs and specialised equipment remained at work at the disaster's charred "ground zero", where the search has turned to one for bodies rather than survivors.

The Lebanese have been left asking how a massive stockpile of volatile ammonium nitrate, a compound used primarily as a fertilizer, was left unsecured at the port for years.

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BAABDA, Lebanon: Lebanese Prime Minister Hassan Diab (right) submits his resignation to President Michel Aoun at the presidential palace on Monday. — AFP

Medical masks best, cotton OK, bandanas worse

WASHINGTON: Health experts have determined that face coverings are a vital tool in reducing the spread of coronavirus - but little research has been done into how different kinds of masks compare. A new study has ranked 14 types of commonly available mask, finding that medical masks offer significantly more protection against droplet spread than cotton alternatives - while bandanas and balaclavas

don't do much at all.

The findings have public policy implications, particularly in the United States where authorities have encouraged the public to use textile masks and leave the medical products to healthcare workers because they are in short supply. "We need to scale up surgical mask production and distribution," tweeted Tom Frieden, the former director of the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention under President Barack Obama, in response to the study that appeared in Science Advances.

Masks are important because some 30-40 percent of people who are infected may not show symptoms but still unwittingly spread the virus when they cough,

sneeze or just talk. A team of scientists at Duke University created an inexpensive setup: People stood in a dark room and spoke the words "Stay healthy, people" five times into the direction of an expanded laser beam, which was recorded with a cell phone camera.

A computer algorithm was then used to calculate the number of droplets. The laser and lens involved can be bought for \$200 and the experimental design is easy to replicate by non-experts. "This sort of test could easily be conducted by businesses and others that are providing masks to their employees or patrons," said co-author Martin Fischer, a chemist and physicist. Professionally-fitted N95 masks

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AHMEDABAD, India: A customer wearing a handmade facemask made with threads of gold takes a selfie with her friends at a jewelry shop yesterday. — AFP

Local

Deputy Amir receives state officials at Bayan Palace



KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. His Highness Sheikh Nawaf also received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and Capital Governor Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. — KUNA photos

Foreign Minister meets outgoing ambassadors

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Foreign Minister and Acting Defense Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Mohammad Al-Sabah received yesterday Austrian Ambassador to Kuwait Sigurd Pacher on the occasion of ending his tenure, and commended his contributions to boosting bilateral relations. Sheikh Dr Ahmad Al-Sabah also received the outgoing Dutch Ambassador to Kuwait Frans Potuyt, and lauded his contributions to improving the Kuwaiti-Dutch relations. Assistant Foreign Minister for the Foreign Minister's office Saleh Al-Loughani attended the meetings. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Foreign Minister and Acting Defense Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Mohammad Al-Sabah meets with Austrian Ambassador to Kuwait Sigurd Pacher. — KUNA photos



Foreign Minister and Acting Defense Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Mohammad Al-Sabah meets with Dutch Ambassador to Kuwait Frans Potuyt.

Kuwait Fund ready to address Lebanon's urgent needs

KUWAIT: Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) announced its readiness to provide aid to Lebanon in the aftermath of the huge blast at Beirut Port, through \$30 million in previously-reached agreements after coordinating with Lebanese officials.

KFAED Director Abdul Wahab Al-Bader said yesterday that following a donor conference held to support Lebanon, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah contacted him to initiate contacts with Lebanese officials and set a clear plan taking into full consideration the projects most urgently needed to serve the Lebanese people.

"Those projects include the grain silos which were built in 1970 through a loan the fund provided to Lebanon to cover 85 percent of Lebanon's needs of grains and flour," Bader said, noting that some previously-agreed projects will be rescheduled.

Further, Bader stressed that KFAED policies condition supervising any project it funds and that no funds are directly transferred to any funded country's officials. "The fund will also reconsider repairing Beirut's main power plant which was badly damaged

in the blast after negotiations with Lebanese officials," he added.

Bader pointing out that the first development project funded in Lebanon was Jounieh Power plant in 1966, and KFAED has so far funded 27 projects in various sectors in Lebanon. Notably, participants in the Lebanon donor conference pledged Sunday to provide \$252 million (\$297 million) in immediate aid to help the blast victims.

Meanwhile, Kuwait renewed its solidarity and support of Lebanon and its people during the tough circumstances it was facing, as they are struggling to recover from a deadly explosion in Beirut Port, amidst the coronavirus pandemic, as well as social and economic challenges. "Following (last week's) tragic explosions, His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah issued immediate nationwide instructions to provide humanitarian aid and assistance to our brothers and sisters in Lebanon," Kuwait's Representative to the UN Mansour Al-Otaibi said in his speech during UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs' (UN OCHA) virtual meeting, on the situation in Lebanon following the explosion. "During

(Sunday's) international aid conference to support Lebanon organized by France and the United Nations, His Highness the Prime Minister of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah reiterated Kuwait's readiness to support Lebanon through \$30 million of previously committed assistance via the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development to be reallocated for food security, in addition to urgent medical and food aid in the amount of \$11 million, alongside donations from local Kuwaiti charities," he added.

"Also, since the instructions issued by His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince, the Kuwait Red Crescent Society has been dispatching ongoing aid, medical supplies, and food assistance to the Lebanese Red Cross via air bridge in cooperation with government entities, including Kuwait's Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Health, and Commerce, and in coordination with the Kuwaiti Embassy in Beirut, in order to support local Lebanese relief efforts," he affirmed.

Otaibi thanked the UN OCHA for its recent report on the situation in Lebanon, which provides details of the humanitarian response after the latest bombings. "In this vein, we recognize and value the assistance and contributions provided by other countries and organizations and urge the rest of the members of the international community to step up and support the people of



An archive photo released by the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) shows the grain silos at Beirut Port, funded through a KFAED loan in 1970, before they were destroyed by last week's blast at the Lebanese capital.

Lebanon during these challenging times," he said. "We know that the people of Lebanon are strong and resilient, and they will come together to rebuild and overcome this tragedy, as they have done many times before," he said.

"However, bearing in mind the scale of devastation we have witnessed as a result of these explosions and the existing challenges brought on by the current pandemic, they cannot and should not have to do this alone,"

Otaibi added. "With hundreds of people killed, over 5,000 injured, and more than 150 others who remain missing, international solidarity and support is crucial and necessary," he added. "The State of Kuwait has long been home to thousands of Lebanese citizens who have greatly contributed to the growth, culture, and prosperity of Kuwait. We will continue to stand by and support you in any way that we can as you work to rebuild your beautiful city," he said. — KUN

Lebanon govt resigns over...

Continued from Page 1

Top officials have promised a swift and thorough investigation - but they have stopped short of agreeing to an independent probe led by foreign experts as demanded by the protesters.

The outgoing government is now due to stay on in a caretaker capacity, and fresh elections could still be months away. Before Diab's announcement, four ministers had already decided they could no longer serve a government that has shown little willingness to take the blame or to put state resources at the service of the victims. At least nine lawmakers have also announced they would quit in protest, as have two senior members of the Beirut municipality.

The blast, which drew comparisons with an atomic bomb, was so enormous that it altered the shape of not only Beirut's culture, whose masters are widely seen as bent on self-preservation and buck-passing. But it remained to be seen whether the disaster will also have a lasting impact on Lebanon's entrenched post-war

political culture.

Diab on Monday blamed the blast on corruption by former warlords from the 1975-1990 civil war who have exchanged their military fatigues for suits, or were replaced by relatives. "Their corruption created this tragedy," said Diab. "Between us and change stands a thick wall protected by their dirty tactics." During consecutive evenings of protests, the rage sparked by the explosion that disfigured Beirut and scarred so many of its residents had not relented.

"The resignation of ministers is not enough. Those who are responsible for the explosion should be held accountable," Michelle, a demonstrator in her early twenties, said on Sunday night. Demonstrators said security forces had been using tear gas against blast victims instead of helping them clean their wrecked homes and find a roof. "We need an international investigation and trial to tell us who killed our friends and all the other victims," said Michelle.

Macron supported the idea when he visited last Thursday, but his calls for reform and transparency appeared to receive less attention among Lebanese officialdom than his offer to raise aid money. An online emergency support conference Macron chaired Sunday, attended virtually by a slew of world leaders including US President Donald Trump, came up with pledges for more than 250 million euros. — AFP

the droplets by about 50 percent and neck fleeces actually increased the amount of spray, probably by dispersing the largest droplets into many smaller droplets.

Finally, N-95 masks with valves - designed for industrial settings where the user's exhalation was less important than what they inhaled - performed roughly on par with cotton masks in terms of the amount of spray transmitted. Health authorities have discouraged the use of valved N-95s. Co-author Eric Westman said he had already put the information to use, avoiding the bulk purchase of a type of mask he and a local non-profit had planned to distribute for free to the public of Durham, North Carolina where the university is based. "The notion that 'anything is better than nothing' didn't hold true," he said. — AFP

Kuwait army denies attack...

Continued from Page 1

It was not immediately clear if there were any US troops in the convoy or if anyone had been injured in the explosion, which went off just before 9 pm (1800 GMT). Vehicles are regularly loaded with military equipment at the crossing, the sources said, and the cargo is usually loaded or unloaded before entering or

exiting Iraq. Foreign companies are contracted by US forces to provide security in the area, the Iraqi security sources said.

A security source had earlier said that the explosion was caused by an Iraqi Shiite militia targeting a US military base near the crossing by smuggling in an explosive device, and that some staff on the base had been injured. This was later contradicted by other security sources who said a convoy was attacked, not a base. A little known Iraqi Shiite militia group by the name of Ashab al-Kahf claimed responsibility for the attack and published a video showing an explosion at a distance. It said it was able to destroy US military equipment and large parts of the crossing. — Agencies

Cabinet approves draft law ...

Continued from Page 1

The draft law proposes a KD 5 social solidarity fee to be collected from workers on issuing or transferring their residency visas and on obtaining a driving license or car registration, a KD 3 fee for annual renewal of the above and on flight tickets issued in Kuwait, a KD 1 fee for electricity receipts, first-time issuance and renewal of civil IDs, on the state's annual contributions, donations from Zakat House, NGOs and diplomatic missions and revenues made by investing the solidarity fund's money.

Employers in the private and oil sectors will be committed to paying health insurance for each employee on arrival and prior to getting residency visas. The insurance value will be determined by Civil Service Commission studies, workers' qualifications and specialties and Kuwait's need for them. Companies fully or partially owned by the state will be exempt from this condition.

Local courts will be responsible for reviewing and judging disputes between employers and non-Kuwaiti employees departing the country for good, and in case they leave before a judgment is made, the worker's embassy in Kuwait will appoint a solicitor to represent them. If this is not available, the judge will appoint a

lawyer to represent the expat as per article number 26 of law number 42/1964.

The bill excludes some 700,000 domestic helpers, spouses of Kuwaitis and their children, GCC nationals, members of the judiciary and the public prosecution, heads and members of diplomatic missions and their families provided Kuwaiti missions in their countries receive the same treatment, pilots, copilots, flight cabin crews and workers on government contracts from the number of expats to be determined by the government.

The government has already submitted its plan on reducing the number of expats. The plan proposes to deport as many as 360,000 expats in the short term and many more in the mid and long term. Seven other bills have been submitted by MPs calling to regulate and reduce the number of expats in the country.

The Assembly will hold a special session today to vote on a no-confidence motion filed by 10 lawmakers against Finance Minister Barrak Al-Sheetan following a grilling last week. Based on announcements by MPs, the minister is expected to survive the motion, but last-minute surprises cannot be ruled out, especially after the leaking of a document claiming that the finance ministry has asked the Civil Service Commission to adopt an array of austerity measures and cut benefits of Kuwaiti employees.

The griller MP Riyadh Al-Adasani has based his grilling on the claim that the minister is behind the austerity measures that the government is likely to take to boost non-oil revenues in the face of the sharp drop in oil income.

Medical masks best, cotton OK...

Continued from Page 1

-hospital-grade protection worn by frontline workers in hospitals - reduced droplet transmission to less than 0.1 percent.

Surgical or polypropylene masks were not far behind, bringing droplet transmission down by 90 percent or more compared to no face-coverings. Hand-made cotton face coverings provided good coverage, eliminating 70 to 90 percent of the spray from normal speech, depending on the number of layers and the pleating. But bandanas only reduced

Local

Kuwait Cabinet approves digital ID to be used at all state departments

Ministers briefed on Amir's health, aid to Lebanon process, residency law

KUWAIT: Interior Minister Anas Al-Saleh informed the Cabinet of the "Hawiyati" (Kuwait Mobile ID) smartphone application, launched by the Public Authority for Civil Information that enables both residents and nationals to issue a digital ID to be used at all government and non-government bodies. Speaking in a statement to the press following the Cabinet's weekly meeting on Monday, Saleh pointed out that this application is a digital alternative to the civil ID and will facilitate services of both expats and citizens. The Cabinet extolled this application and good efforts made by the authority, and authorized all state departments to adopt the digital ID to be used in all their transactions. Ministers, meanwhile, listened to a presentation by Minister of Health Dr Sheikh Basel Al-Sabah on the developments of the country's health conditions, the details and statistics pertaining to the injuries, recoveries, deaths and those who are receiving treatment.

At the onset of the virtual meeting, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah briefed the ministers on the stable healthy condition of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, saying that it is improving, said Saleh, also Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs. The ministers expressed their deep satisfaction about His Highness the Amir's health, praying to Allah Almighty to bless His Highness the Amir with a speedy recovery and full well-being, and his safe return him to the homeland in the near future.

Aid to Lebanon

The ministers were informed of the directives of His Highness the Deputy Amir and the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on providing aid and relief materials to the brotherly Lebanese people to face the consequences of the huge blast that rocked Beirut port last week. His Highness the Prime Minister informed the Cabinet of the results of the Kuwaiti delegation's participation in the donors conference on Lebanon that was held via videoconference on Sunday.

The videoconference, co-organized by France and the UN, gathered a number of world leaders



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

and pledged to provide urgent assistance worth about \$300 million to help the Lebanese people overcome the repercussions of the Beirut port explosion. During the conference, Kuwait declared the reallocation of the remaining amounts from the prior obligations of the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development worth \$30 million, in agreement with the Lebanese government to cover the costs of rebuilding the damage resulting from the blast, in addition to urgent medical and food aid worth \$11, Saleh, also Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs, said. The Cabinet expresses its sincere condolences to Lebanon and the families of the victims in particular, stressing Kuwait's solidarity with brothers in Lebanon and its backing to every effort that contributes to mitigating the impacts of this humanitarian disaster, he noted. In addition, the Cabinet is following up with deep sorrow the effects resulting from the massive blast in the Beirut port and the consequent of severe damage that claimed the lives of dozens of people, and injured thousands of persons, in addition to several missing and severe material damage.

"The Ministry of Finance had not issued any instructions regarding the estimates of the draft budget for the fiscal year 2021-2022, which will be submitted by various government agencies during the month of September," he added. The minister reiterated the position he made during his recent parliamentary grilling, saying he was committed to "not impacting the pockets of nationals, salaries and rights of employees" while applying the government's plans to stamp out corruption. He also expressed commitment to the protection of public funds and supporting the local workforce in assuming roles in the running of financial and investment institutions.

Economic recovery

Meanwhile, the chief of Kuwait's highest planning agency said that there are four ways of gradual economic recovery amid a looming oil price rebound. Addressing a virtual forum on the financial and economic ramifications and challenges of the

Residence of foreigners

Meanwhile, the Cabinet was informed of the recommendations by the Legal Affairs Committee on a draft law regarding the residence of foreigners that aims to address and settle the deficiencies and gaps shown by the reality of applying foreigners' residency law issued six decades ago. The draft included a set of provisions aimed at boosting coordination of procedures and provisions of supervision on circumventing the law and combating trade in residencies and illegal profiting therein. Furthermore, it was briefed on a draft law on practicing medicine, its auxiliary professions, the rights of patients and health facilities that aim to regulate the practice of these professions and legalize medical transactions at their institutions and their human staff as well as the rights of patients. The Cabinet decided to approve the two draft laws and referred them to His Highness the Deputy Amir in preparation to send them to the parliament.

The Cabinet was told about the committee's recommendation regarding the views of the economic affairs committee to contribute to backing small and medium-sized enterprises, and urged the concerned authorities to expedite approving the government procurement program, the regulations and decisions necessary to implement Law No. 74/2019 on amending the provisions of Law No. 49/ 2016 regarding tenders. It was also informed of the committee's recommendation on the annual report of the body tasked with following the government's general performance of 2019. It commended good efforts made in preparing the report and decided to task the bodies with taking measures required to address observations and implement recommendations in the report.

Money laundering

The Cabinet was briefed on the committee's recommendation on the plan of action of the national commission on combating money laundering and financing terror. The government decided to assign the national committee on combating money laundering and financing terror to

intensify efforts and boost coordination with Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Social Affairs, Capital Markets Authority, Public Authority for Combating Corruption, Kuwait Financial Intelligence Unit, Central Bank of Kuwait, Public Prosecution and General Administration of Customs for achieving international requirements of evaluation.

The ministers considered the recommendation in the report of the Public Services Committee on addressing the existing environmental conditions in Kuwait Bay. They assigned the Environment Public Authority in coordination with the Ministry of Public Works and some other authorities to take all necessary measures to address these conditions, and implementing temporary and permanent solutions to ensure avoiding potential risks to the marine and coastal environment in Kuwait. They mourned former minister of industry and trade Ahmad Rashid Al-Haroun who passed away recently, recalling his national efforts and contributions.

Pilgrims' health

The ministers lauded the precautionary preparations and organized efforts made by Saudi Arabia to ensure means of perfuming easily rituals of pilgrimage, pointing to the wonderful and safe organization amid the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19). They said this organization reflected a civilized image and a good example of brothers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and their keenness on maintaining the safety and health of pilgrims.

The Cabinet discussed the political affairs and the latest developments on both Arab and international arenas. It voiced its great sorrow over the crash of Air India Express plane, south of India, last Friday that led to the killing and wounding of several people. The Cabinet offered its condolences to Indian President and the families of the victims. It extolled efforts made by Bahrain's authorities that foiled attempts of smuggling explosives into Bahrain, expressing Kuwait's support to the Kingdom of Bahrain in all measures taken to preserve its security and stability. — KUNA

No govt decisions to impact Kuwaitis' pockets: Minister

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Finance Minister Barrak Al-Sheetan said on Monday the "government has not taken any decisions that impact the pockets of nationals, their salaries or their rights." Speaking to the press, he said social media reports of a contact made between his ministry and others in June were in relation to suggestions circulated by the Cabinet, which tasked the ministry to coordinate with its counterparts on the matter. Salaries and incentives were not affected by any means whatsoever in the financial year 2020-2021 draft budget presented by the government to the National Assembly, he underlined.

novel coronavirus (COVID-19), Secretary-General of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development (SCPD) Dr Khaled Mahdi listed the four approaches as abrupt recovery, abrupt recovery associated with a steady stage, dual recovery and slow long-term recovery. He predicted that an imminent oil price rebound could be conducive to a fast-track economic recovery, SCPD said in a press release on Monday.

He added that the council was using economic models to see post-coronavirus forecasts, noting that the ramifications of the COVID-19 crisis were being scrutinized globally. The SCPD chief pointed out that following the 2008 economic crisis, there had been a global economic growth at remarkable rates, but a normal economic slowdown has started since early 2020. The coronavirus crisis, unfortunately, hit the globe at the beginning of the world economic slowdown, cutting off supplies and trade exchange among world countries, he said. The drop in oil prices has also prompted a decline in growth



Finance Minister Barrak Al-Sheetan

rates, thus negatively impacting on the private sector and labor market, he concluded. — KUNA

News in brief

Kuwait, Egypt discuss ties

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah on Monday held a virtual meeting with Egyptian Ambassador to Kuwait Tareq Al-Qoni. Both sides discussed Kuwaiti-Egyptian relations and the latest regional and international developments. Assistant Foreign Minister for the Deputy Foreign Minister's Office Ambassador Ayham Al-Omar attended the meeting.

Govt assistance

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Social Affairs announced that tomorrow will be the last day to receive application forms from Kuwaitis with no salaries to receive government assistance, noting that it has received 4,726 applications so far and necessary action will be taken.

No shorts allowed

KUWAIT: Al-Riqqah Co-operative Society placed a sign outside its building saying that customers wearing shorts will not be allowed to enter.

Kuwait to host GCC body HQ

KUWAIT: Members of the GCC Winter Games organizing committee have backed Kuwait to host the body's headquarters, according to Kuwait's representative. During a remotely-held meeting, they also extended, for a second term of four years, the presidency of Kuwaiti Fuhaid Al-Ajmi, who also heads the Kuwait Winter Sports Club. Committee members saw the need to improve winter sports in the region and place an emphasis on encouraging the creation of women's teams.

Stay safe. Stay home. Stay informed.

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Kuwaiti aid continues to flow into disaster-hit Lebanon



BEIRUT: Planeloads of Kuwaiti aid continued to pour into Lebanon almost a week after a catastrophic port explosion sparked a tide of destruction that tore through its capital Beirut. Two planes carrying 100 tons of urgent supplies landed in Beirut on Monday to bring the total of

aid-laden aircrafts to have flown into the ravaged city to nine, said Abdullah Al-Shaheen, an advisor at Kuwait's embassy in Lebanon. Kuwait was among the first countries to have sent aid to Lebanon in the wake of a powerful blast in port warehouses near central Beirut, which wrought

destruction across swathes of the Mediterranean city. An international donor conference on Sunday raised pledges worth nearly \$298 million for a country that had already been in the throes of economic collapse prior to last week's tragic blast. —KUNA

Fake bills seized at money exchange

KUWAIT: Well-informed sources said that a local money exchange company filed a complaint against an Indian man after discovering that the money he was transferring to his country was fake. Case papers indicate that the company's clerk suspected the KD 200 the suspect paid to transfer the sum to India, and on examining the KD 10 and 20 notes, he found that they were fake. The clerk immediately reported the matter and withheld the counterfeit notes. The company insisted on filing a case despite the suspect's pleas to avoid it. The suspect was summoned for interrogation.

Armed driver hurt in crash

On responding to a collision opposite Fahaheel, police patrol officers found that one of the parties involved in the crash was a 54-year-old bedoon, who was injured, and who had a loaded M16 machinegun and ammunition in his car. The man was taken to hospital under police protection pending further investigations. —Translated by Kuwait Times from Al-Rai

Municipality closes 10 stores violating COVID-19 measures

KUWAIT: Kuwait Municipality shut down 10 stores in Hawally Governorate in July, for violating the country's measures to fight the coronavirus, an official said. The Municipality's teams issued 23 different fines and 2,405 warnings to restaurants, coffee shops, hair salons and others on committing to the measures issued by the Ministry of Health and the Cabinet on the COVID-19 pandemic, head of the municipality's Hawally Office Ahmad Al-Hazeem said in a press statement on Monday. He added that inspectors are continuously monitoring the commitment of store-owners to health measures, calling on everyone to follow the rules to avoid shutting down their stores. Meanwhile, the municipality called on anyone who wants to file a complaint to contact them on WhatsApp number 24727732 or through the hotline 139. —KUNA

LOYAC jumps in to help Beirut



BEIRUT: In the aftermath of the tragic explosion at Beirut Port, dozens of LOYAC volunteers responded to the humanitarian needs at the Lebanese capital through a campaign organized under the title 'Rise Up Beirut.' LOYAC Lebanon launched the campaign in cooperation with LOYAC Kuwait in order to provide urgent and immediate

aid to the victims of the explosion, in cooperation with the 'Homes' emergency program. Teams of volunteers were formed, including a control team to receive and find quick solutions for cases, a hospital and public facilities aid team to help clean and remove damaged structures, as well as an assessment and repairs team to help repair affected houses.



Parliament elections November 28th?

KUWAIT: The 2020 National Assembly elections are expected to take place on November 28th, Al-Jarida daily reported yesterday quoting sources familiar with preparations currently taking place at the Interior Ministry's Elections Department. Health precautions such as social distancing and requiring face masks will be observed at election halls, which will be open to voters between 8:00 am and 8:00 pm, said the sources who spoke on the condition of anonymity. The number of eligible voters reached around 574,000, the majority of whom are men, the sources said, noting that the number was calculated after removing around 7,000 voters who have passed away, as well as citizens convicted in cases of offending God or His Highness the Amir.

Residency violators

On a different topic, Al-Jarida daily also reported that security authorities in Kuwait are preparing a plan to arrest and deport around 126,000 expatriates living illegally in Kuwait, and who have failed to avail an amnesty announced in April for residency violators to leave the country without paying fines. Preparations include carrying out 'large-scale' security campaigns around Kuwait next month, according to security sources quoted in the report. Meanwhile, the Public Authority for Manpower and Ministry of Commerce and

Industry are coordinating to come up with a mechanism to identify inactive businesses that employ a large number of marginal laborers in Kuwait, said the sources who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Education process

In other news, the same daily reported yesterday that 97 percent of grade 12 students attended online cases on Monday; the second day since the Ministry of Education launched the second semester of the 2019-2020 school year for 12th graders at public and Arabic private schools. A number of educational zone directors quoted in the report said that the high attendance number reflects the 'huge success' of the e-learning experiment; the first real experience in which the Education Ministry provides learning exclusively through electronic means.

Silos

Separately, Al-Rai daily reported that a number of state departments held internal discussions recently on the possibility of establishing silos in different locations around the country, in order to provide further food security since the current silos in Kuwait are mostly located at Shuaikh Port. "The recent blast at Beirut Port led state authorities to revive discussions over the possibility of building silos in other locations than Shuaikh Port," said anonymous sources quoted in the report. They noted that Kuwait Flour and Mills Company has also reopened discussion into a proposal it had submitted in 2011 to build silos at other ports in Kuwait, except for the Shuaiba Port for environmental reasons since it is primarily used for shipment of oil product.

ABK supports doctors with zero interest loans

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK), is offering all doctors working for the Ministry of Health (MoH) in Kuwait a zero-interest loan scheme. The offering is part of the bank's ongoing commitment to supporting key health workers during the COVID-19 crisis. As an expression of gratitude to the nation's frontline workers, the zero percent interest loan of up to KD 10,000 can be applied for by doctors in the medical community.

To meet the eligibility criteria doctors need to earn a minimum salary of KD 2,000 and should not exceed 20 percent on their Debt Burden Ratio (DBR). Additionally, they need to confirm their salary transfer with the bank and present a salary certificate with ABK's account number.

As the virus continues to spread, the doctors at the frontline of the nation's defense, exert

unprecedented efforts in the containment and mitigation of the pandemic, and face the highest risk of becoming infected themselves on a daily basis. The impact of COVID-19 has taken its toll on the industry and its practitioners, both physically as well as financially. According to a recent study conducted by McKinsey and Company on physician employment and the effects of this pandemic on the medical practice landscape, "but the demand shock from COVID-19 is unprecedented, and many physician respondents believe that the resulting loss of revenue will put their practices at financial risk. Six weeks into COVID-19, 53 percent of all independent physicians reported that they were worried about their practices surviving the COVID-19 challenge."

The introduction of the offer highlights the bank's relentless determination to do its part in order to support and ease financial burdens of doctors. The limited scheme is not only a token of appreciation in recognition and honor all doctors fighting on the country's behalf but a concerted effort to provide financial assistance to soften the impact of COVID-19.

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Man shot outside the White House

Defying China, Hong Kongers rush to buy pro-democracy newspaper

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Egypt holds low-key Senate elections

Vote 'unlikely to revitalize already stagnant political scene'

CAIRO: Egyptians went to vote yesterday for a new Senate in an upper house election seen unlikely to revive vibrant political life under President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi's rule. The two-day vote for 200 of the Senate's 300 seats will be largely contested by candidates backing Sisi, who has quietened most opposition within and outside the legislature. The remaining 100 Senators will be appointed by Sisi, who was an army general when he took power following the 2013 ouster of elected Islamist president Mohamed Morsi on the back of mass protests against his brief rule.

The Senate vote is unlikely to revitalize "the already stagnant political scene in Egypt," said Mustapha Kamel Al-Sayyid, political science professor at Cairo University. "It could be useful in terms of being a way to reward those backing Sisi." Billboards promoting little-known candidates have popped up across Cairo and other cities in recent weeks, and online videos have explained the Senate's role and urged people to cast their ballots. The vote comes as Egypt has reinstated the upper house, which had been abolished after Morsi's ouster. It was previously called the Shura Council.

Under former president Hosni Mubarak, who was toppled in a 2011 popular uprising, the upper house was largely reserved for the elite and members of his now defunct National Democratic Party. Last year, Egyptians overwhelmingly voted in a referendum in favor of far-reaching constitutional amendments that included the reinstatement of the upper house. The changes also could see Sisi's rule extended until 2030, boosted his control over the judiciary and granted the army even greater influence in political life.

Freedoms rolled back

The vote is Egypt's first amid the coronavirus pandemic and comes as official infection rates have dropped off in recent weeks. Results are expected on August 19. The chamber, where women are allotted at least 10 percent of seats, is to sit for a five-year term. The Senate has few for-



CAIRO: Election campaign posters are pictured as Egyptians go to vote for a new senate in an upper house in an election seen unlikely to revive political life under President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi's rule. — AFP

mal powers but legally "is tasked with examining and proposing what it sees as bolstering the pillars of democracy, supporting social peace and the fundamentals of the society".

"The upper chamber's opinions should be taken into consideration and have rarely been ignored in the legislative chamber's history," Egyptian lower house lawmaker Mohamed Abu Hamed told AFP. "However, legally speaking, its opinions are non-binding," he said. The lower house has greater powers, but critics have long also decried the "rubber-stamp" role of the parliament which features only a small opposition bloc known as 25/30.

Under Sisi, Egypt has launched a sweeping crackdown on Islamists, especially Morsi's now-outlawed Muslim Brotherhood group, but also leftist and secular activists, journalists and bloggers. Heavy restrictions have been imposed on protests and critical websites blocked. Rights groups say freedoms gained in the 2011 uprising against Mubarak have largely been rolled back. Michael Hanna of the US-based The Century Foundation, commenting on what he characterized as Egypt's stagnant politics, said bringing back the upper house is "peculiar in this politics-less setting". — AFP

HRW eyes ban on 'killer robots'

GENEVA: Human Rights Watch said Monday it was seeking a new international treaty to halt the race towards fully autonomous weapons, claiming a growing number of countries wanted an outright ban. The non-governmental organization (NGO) said 30 countries are now explicitly seeking a ban, after compiling an overview of 97 nations with a stated position on the use and development of what it termed "killer robots".

Most of the 97 want a treaty "to retain human control over the use of force", said New York-based HRW. "Weapons systems that select and engage targets without meaningful human control are unacceptable and need to be prevented," HRW said in its summary of the overview report, released in Geneva.

"All countries have a duty to protect humanity from this dangerous development by banning fully autonomous weapons. Retaining meaningful human control over the use of force is an ethical imperative, a legal necessity, and a moral obligation." HRW's "Stopping Killer Robots" overview was prepared in time for a Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) meeting scheduled to open in Geneva on Monday. However, the UN body's gathering has now been put off until much later in the year. — AFP



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International

Man shot outside the White House; Trump evacuated from conference

Trump faces tough and bitterly divisive November election

WASHINGTON: US Secret Service agents shot and wounded a man who was apparently armed outside the White House on Monday. President Donald Trump said, after being briefly whisked away in the middle of a press conference. A 51-year-old male approached a Secret Service officer standing at the corner of 17th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, one block from the White House, according to Tom Sullivan, the chief of the Secret Service Uniformed Division.

The suspect told the officer he had a weapon and ran "aggressively" towards him, drawing an object out of his clothes, Sullivan said in a statement that was broadcast on Twitter. He then assumed a "shooter's stance" as if he intended to fire, whereupon the Secret Service officer shot him in the torso, Sullivan added.

Officers on the scene administered first aid, and emergency medical services were called. Both the suspect and the officer were taken to hospital. "The Secret Service Office of Professional Responsibility will be conducting an internal review of the officer's actions," Sullivan said, adding the DC Metropolitan Police Department had been contacted. As the president was speaking to reporters in the White House briefing room, a Secret Service bodyguard abruptly approached him and interrupted, saying in a quiet voice, "Sir, could you please come with me?"

Trump and staff members left. Doors to the briefing room, still filled with journalists, were locked. Outside,

black-clad Secret Service agents with automatic rifles could be seen rushing across the lawn and took up positions behind trees. According to Fox News, whose camera team was outside, two shots were heard. Minutes later, Trump reappeared at the press conference and announced that someone had been shot by the Secret Service outside the White House grounds. "Law enforcement shot someone, it seems to be the suspect. And the suspect is on the way to the hospital," he said.

Trump, a Republican who faces a tough and bitterly divisive election on November 3, said he knew nothing about the identity or motives of the person shot. "It might not have had anything to do with me," he said. There was no immediate precise information on what sort of threat the person allegedly posed. But when asked if the person had been armed, Trump answered: "From what I understand, the answer is yes." Trump said the incident took place "on the outside" of the White House perimeter, which is currently being reinforced by a new iron fence twice the height of the previous version. "I don't believe anything was breached, they were relatively far away," he added.

"The White House complex was never breached during the incident, nor were the Secret Service protectees ever in danger," Sullivan said. Returning to the podium after the disruption, Trump appeared calm. He resumed his virulent criticism of opposition Democrats and praise for his handling of the coronavirus crisis, which polls

“Sir, could you please come with me?”

Belarus election challenger flees to Lithuania

MINSK: The main challenger in Belarus's disputed presidential election had fled to Lithuania yesterday after a second night of street clashes between police and opposition supporters left a protester dead. Svetlana Tikhonovskaya, who has claimed victory over authoritarian President Alexander Lukashenko on Sunday's vote, had arrived in the neighboring country and was safe, Lithuanian Foreign Minister Linas Linkevicius said.

He did not provide any further details but EU and NATO member Lithuania, which like Belarus was once part of the Soviet Union, has a history of granting refuge to Belarusian and Russian opposition figures. Tikhonovskaya's whereabouts had been unclear after campaign staff said they had lost contact with her and there had been concern for her safety.

Her surfacing in Lithuania came after thousands took to the streets of the capital Minsk for a second night on Monday, after authorities said longtime ruler Lukashenko had secured a sixth term with 80 percent

of the vote. Tikhonovskaya, a political novice who has energized the opposition, came second with 10 percent and protesters are backing her claim to have won the election. For the second night in a row, police used rubber bullets, stun grenades and tear gas to disperse demonstrations, though protesters fought back with stones and fireworks and built makeshift barricades, AFP reporters, protesters and witnesses said.

"Too many people are against Lukashenko," Pavel, a 34-year-old protester, told AFP. "Our goal is to depose Lukashenko. He is not worthy of being president." Dozens of people have been injured in the violence and the first fatality was confirmed on Monday when police said a man died after an explosive device went off in his hand. Tikhonovskaya's staff had said earlier that she would not join demonstrations to avoid "provocations" and it was unclear how her sudden departure would affect the opposition.

'Intimidation of opposition'

Lukashenko's opponents have been calling for running protests against his regime and there were calls for a nationwide strike. The 37-year-old mother of two decided to run for president after the authorities jailed her husband, popular blogger Sergei Tikhanovsky, and barred him from contesting. Her campaign galvanised the opposition, presenting a historic challenge to former collective farm director Lukashenko, who has ruled Belarus since 1994, brooking no dissent and earning the nickname of "Europe's last dictator".



WASHINGTON: US Secretary of the Treasury Steven Mnuchin, Director of the Office of Management and Budget Russell Vought, member of the coronavirus task force Scott Atlas, and US President Donald Trump leave after a briefing at the White House in Washington, DC. — AFP

show two-thirds of Americans believe he has botched. Questioned on whether the security incident had rattled him, Trump answered: "I don't know, do I seem rattled?" "It's unfortunate that this is the world, but the world's always been a dangerous place," he said.

Philippus Melaku, one of a small group of veteran protesters who camp out near the White House, said he had heard a shot. "I heard a gunshot and before that I heard

screaming," he told AFP. "It was a male voice," he said. "After that immediately, pointing their AR-15s, at least eight or nine men came in running." Trump went on to praise the US Secret Service, which is in charge of guarding the president, as "fantastic people, the best of the best." "I feel very safe with Secret Service," he said. "A lot of terrific-looking people ready to go if something was necessary." — AFP



MINSK: Presidential candidate Svetlana Tikhonovskaya holds a press conference the day after Belarus' presidential election in Minsk. — AFP

Western governments have widely condemned the police crackdown, with some in the European Union suggesting it may reimpose sanctions on Lukashenko's regime that were lifted several years ago. The White House said it was "deeply concerned" by the violence, adding that "intimidation of opposition candidates and the detention of peaceful protesters" were among numerous factors that marred the election and its aftermath. — AFP

5 million cases: What is next for America's COVID-19 epidemic?

WASHINGTON: It took the United States just 17 days to move from four million to five million coronavirus cases—even as the country is finally starting to bend its curve downward. Here is the state of play of America's COVID-19 epidemic, and what may happen in the coming months.

The good

First some positive trends: the national daily new case rate has been falling for more than two weeks. The US is still recording more than 50,000 cases a day, a huge figure, but that's down substantially from 70,000 at the peak around July 23-24. The drop-off in cases is so far more pronounced than in April when the country headed into a long springtime plateau, which lulled many states into a false sense of security that paved the way for the spike that began mid-June. Experts attribute the decline to policy and behavior changes in the populous states behind the summer surge—namely California, Texas, Florida and Arizona. Widespread adoption of masks, physical distancing and closing down bars all helped, while some scientists believe that increasing population immunity may have also played a role.

According to covid19-projections.com, up to 20 percent of Florida may by now have been infected—and infection is thought to confer immunity to some extent. "I believe the substantial epidemics in Arizona, Florida and Texas will leave enough immunity to assist in keeping COVID-19 controlled," Trevor Bedford, a scientist studying viruses at Fred Hutch wrote on Twitter. "However, this level of immunity is not compatible with a full return to societal behavior as existed before the pandemic," he added.

The bad

Even if the trend is downward the daily case rate is still extremely high, and much more work needs to be done to bring the national curve back to baseline. Unless the curve is pushed down much further, hospitals will continue to be stretched and people will continue to die needlessly. The current daily average is more than 1,000 deaths a day. More than 163,000 have died so far - 22 percent of the world's total, though the US has just four percent of the world's population. Models predict 200,000 deaths by the middle of September. And experts can already see the next area of failure emerging: cheered on by the administration of President Donald Trump, some states are rushing headlong to reopen schools in virus hotspots. "We've seen the failure of federal leadership in the early days around PPE, we're seeing it over and over again around testing, and now we're seeing it around education policy," Thomas Tsai, a Harvard health expert told AFP. — AFP



IN SPACE: In this file photo, an artist's rendition shows the three new planets to be added to the solar system. The dwarf planet Ceres—long believed to be a barren space rock—is an ocean world with reservoirs of sea water beneath its surface, the results of a major exploration mission showed Monday. — AFP

Dwarf planet Ceres is an 'ocean world'

PARIS: The dwarf planet Ceres—long believed to be a barren space rock—is an ocean world with reservoirs of sea water beneath its surface, the results of a major exploration mission showed Monday. Ceres is the largest object in the asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter and has its own gravity, enabling the NASA Dawn spacecraft to capture high-resolution images of its surface. Now a team of scientists from the United States and Europe have analysed images relayed from the orbiter, captured around 35 kilometers from the asteroid. They focused on the 20-million-year-old Occator crater and determined that there is an "extensive reservoir" of brine beneath its surface.

Several studies published Monday in the journals Nature Astronomy, Nature Geoscience and Nature Communications also shed further light on the dwarf planet, which was discovered by Italian polymath Giuseppe Piazzi in 1801. Using infrared imaging, one team discovered the presence of the compound hydrohalite—a material common in sea ice but which until now had never been observed off of Earth. Maria Cristina De Sanctis, from Rome's Istituto Nazionale di Astrofisica said hydrohalite was a clear sign Ceres' used to have sea water. "We can now say that Ceres is a sort of

ocean world, as are some of Saturn's and Jupiter's moons," she told AFP. The team said the salt deposits looked like they had built up within the last two million years—the blink of an eye in space time. This suggests that the brine may still be ascending from the planet's interior, something De Sanctis said could have profound implications in future studies. "The material found on Ceres is extremely important in terms of astrobiology," she said. "We know that these minerals are all essential for the emergence of life."

Writing in an accompanying comment article, Julie Castillo-Rogez, from the California Institute of Technology's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, said the discovery of hydrohalite was a "smoking gun" for ongoing water activity. "That material is unstable on Ceres' surface, and hence must have been emplaced very recently," she said. In a separate paper, US-based researchers analyzed images of the Occator crater and found that its mounds and hills may have formed when water ejected by the impact of a meteor froze on the surface. The authors said their findings showed that such water freezing processes "extend beyond Earth and Mars, and have been active on Ceres in the geologically recent past." — AFP

News in brief

Israel closes Gaza crossing

JERUSALEM: Israel will close its goods crossing with the Gaza Strip, authorities said Monday, after militants in the Hamas-run territory fired rockets into the Mediterranean and launched incendiary balloons towards the Jewish state. The Kerem Shalom crossing was closed to all traffic except humanitarian equipment and fuel from yesterday. COGAT, the defense ministry unit that oversees the crossings, said in a statement. The move comes in response to the "continued launching of incendiary balloons" from Gaza, it added. Israeli sources said late Monday that several balloons had landed in areas of southern Israel, without causing casualties. Explosives tied to balloons and kites first emerged as a weapon in Gaza during intense protests in 2018, when the devices drifted across the border daily, causing thousands of fires in Israeli farms and communities. — AFP

French NGO head killed

GUATEMALA CITY: The French director of an NGO in Guatemala was killed Monday in an armed attack in the northeast of the country, a human rights organization said. Benoit Maria was the director of the agriculture and animal health NGO Agronomes et Veterinaires Sans Frontieres (AVSF) in Guatemala. According to local media, Maria was driving a van on a road near the indigenous village of San Antonio Ilo-tenango, 85 kilometers northwest of the capital Guatemala City, when he was shot dead. The motive for the attack is not yet known. "We denounce the murder of human rights defender Benoit Maria," tweeted the Guatemalan Unit for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (UDEFEUGA), calling for a public investigation. — AFP

Gunmen kill 13 in Nigeria

LAGOS: Gunmen have killed 13 villagers in central Nigeria's Benue state following a long-running "chieftaincy" dispute, police said yesterday. The attack on Edikwu in the Apa district on Monday, also left several people injured and many houses burnt, said Catherine Anene, the state police spokeswoman. "About 20 armed men invaded the community and shot sporadically at members of the community," she said in a statement. "A team of police officers was deployed to the scene where 13 corpses were recovered," she said. Anene said police had launched an investigation, adding that a dispute over "chieftaincy" matters was to blame for the violence. "Edikwu... was experiencing incessant crises over chieftaincy affairs until May 25 when the Benue government convened a peace meeting, headed by the deputy governor, Mr Benson Aboune, to put an end to the rancor," she said. — AFP

Court blocks home demolition

JERUSALEM: Israel's top court on Monday blocked the military's plans to demolish the home of a Palestinian accused of killing a soldier, in a ruling condemned by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The decision marked a rare judicial rebuke of Israel's controversial practice of destroying the homes of Palestinians suspected of carrying out attacks that critics say amounts to illegal collective punishment. Israeli soldier Amit Ben Ygal was killed by a stone-thrower on May 12 while his unit was patrolling in the village of Yaabad, near Jenin in the occupied West Bank. Israel arrested several people that day and later identified Nizmi Abu Bakr as Ygal's suspected killer. Trials of Palestinians suspects in the West Bank are conducted by Israeli military tribunals. Abu Bakr has not yet been convicted but his home demolition had already been scheduled. — AFP

International

Lebanon's leaders warned in July about explosives at port

Lebanese army had refused to accept the cargo of ammonium nitrate

BEIRUT: Lebanese security officials warned the prime minister and president last month that 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate stored in Beirut's port posed a security risk and could destroy the capital if it exploded, according to documents seen by Reuters and senior security sources.

Just over two weeks later, the industrial chemicals went up in a massive blast that obliterated most of the port and swathes of the capital, killed at least 163 people, injured 6,000 and destroyed 6,000 buildings, according to municipal authorities. A report by the General Directorate of State Security on events leading up to the explosion included a reference to a private letter sent to President Michel Aoun and Prime Minister Hassan Diab on July 20. While the content of the letter was not in the report seen by Reuters, a senior security official said it summed up the findings of a judicial investigation launched in January which concluded the chemicals needed to be secured immediately. The state security report, which confirmed the correspondence to the president and the prime minister, has not previously been reported.

"There was a danger that this material, if stolen, could be used in a terrorist attack," the official told Reuters. "At the end of the investigation, Prosecutor General (Ghassan) Oweidat prepared a final report which was sent to the authorities," he said, referring to the letter sent to the prime minister and president by the General Directorate of State Security, which oversees port security. "I warned them that this could destroy Beirut if it exploded," said the official, who was involved in writing the letter and declined to be named.

Reuters could not independently confirm his description of the letter. The presidency did not respond to requests for comment about the July 20 letter. A representative for Diab, whose government resigned on Monday following the blast, said the PM received the letter on July 20 and it was sent to the Supreme Defence Council for advice within 48 hours. "The current cabinet received the file 14 days prior to the explosion and acted on it in a matter of days. Previous administrations had over six years and did nothing." The prosecutor general did not respond to requests for comment. The correspondence could fuel further criticism and public fury that the explosion is just the latest, if not most dramatic, example of the government negligence and corruption that have already pushed Lebanon to economic collapse. As protests over the blast raged in Lebanon on Monday, Diab's government resigned, though it will remain as a caretaker administration until a new cabinet is formed. The rebuilding of Beirut alone is expected to cost up to \$15 billion, in a country already effectively bankrupt with total banking system losses exceeding \$100 billion.

Aoun confirmed last week that he had been informed about the material. He told reporters he had directed the secretary general of the Supreme Defence Council, an umbrella group of security and military agencies chaired by the president, to "do what is necessary". "The state security service" said it is

dangerous. I am not responsible! I don't know where it was put and I didn't know how dangerous it was. I have no authority to deal with the port directly. There is a hierarchy and all those who knew should have known their duties to do the necessary," Aoun said.

Many questions remain over why the shipment of ammonium nitrate docked in Beirut in late 2013. Even more baffling is why such a huge stash of dangerous material, used in bombs and fertilisers, was allowed to remain there for so long. The letter sent to Lebanon's president and prime minister followed a string of memos and letters sent to the country's courts over the previous six years by port, customs and security officials, repeatedly urging judges to order the removal of the ammonium nitrate from its position so close to the city centre.

The General Directorate of State Security's report seen by Reuters said many requests had been submitted, without giving an exact number. It said the port's manifest department sent several written requests to the customs directorate up until 2016 asking them to call on a judge to order the material be re-exported immediately. "But until now, no decision has been issued over this matter. After consulting one of our chemical specialists, the expert confirmed that this material is dangerous and is used to produce explosives," the General Directorate of State Security report said.

Hazardous material



Paper trail shows multiple warnings

India investigates 'terrorist' deaths

SRINAGAR: The Indian army said Monday it is investigating the deaths of three accused militants in a military operation, after a family said they were migrant workers who had gone missing. The army originally said the three dead from the July 18 operation were "Pakistani terrorists". However a Kashmir family said they had identified the three from photos posted on social media. Naseeb Khatana said his three cousins—Abrar Khatana, 18, Imtiyaz Ahmed, 21 and Abrar Ahmad, 25 — left their home in the southern district of Rajouri on July 16 to look for work in the Kashmir valley, but the family lost contact with them a day later.

The Indian army said on July 18 that soldiers killed three suspected "Pakistani terrorists" during a counterinsurgency operation in the south Kashmir village of Amshipora. The bodies, it said, had been buried in a remote border area. "Today we identified their bodies from photographs that appeared in social media," Naseeb Khatana told AFP from his home.

"We want justice and their bodies returned to us," Khatana said. The family also demanded DNA testing of the dead. Army spokesman Colonel Rajesh Kalia said in a brief statement that "the army is investigating the matter." "The three terrorists killed during the encounter have not been identified and were buried based on established protocols," the statement added. Following the killings in July, Brigadier Ajay Kotach said the military operation was launched after receiving information about the presence of rebels.

"We were also getting inputs of presence of certain identified Pakistani terrorists in that area," Kotach told a press conference. Police, who would normally have a presence at such operations, said they did not take part in this one and had launched their own inquiry, a senior police official told AFP, speaking on condition of anonymity. The incident has generated social media outrage and local pro-India groups, the Communist Party of India and the Jammu Kashmir Apni Party, demanded an independent probe into the deaths.

The incident raised memories of past incidents in the restive territory where a three-decade-old separatist uprising has left tens of thousands of dead, mainly civilians. In 2010, three army officers were

Indian ex-president Pranab Mukherjee contracts COVID-19



MUMBAI: Health workers wearing Personal Protective Equipments (PPE) suits walk down a flight of stairs of a building during a door-to-door COVID-19 coronavirus screening in Dharavi slum area in Mumbai. — AFP

MUMBAI: Former Indian president Pranab Mukherjee was put on ventilator support after undergoing surgery having contracted COVID-19, local media reported yesterday, quoting unidentified sources at the military hospital in New Delhi where he is admitted. The reports on Mukherjee, 84, who served as president between 2012 and 2017, came as the federal health ministry once again reported a daily increase of more than 50,000 cases in the coronavirus outbreak. At least 50,000 new cases have been reported in the world's second-most populous country every day since July 30.

Mukherjee, who also led India's federal defense, foreign affairs, finance ministries over a decades-long political career, said in a Twitter posting on Monday that he had tested positive for COVID-19 while visiting the hospital for a separate procedure. "I request the people who came in contact with me in the last week, to please self isolate and get tested for COVID-19," he said, without disclosing further details of his condition.

With more than 2.2 million confirmed infections in the pandemic, India has fewer cases than only the United States and Brazil, though it has reported a relatively low number of deaths, according to a Reuters tally. Epidemiologists say the peak of India's coronavirus outbreak is likely weeks away, and experts fear that the country's rickety health system may buckle under the burden, particularly as infections spread deeper into the hinterland. — Reuters

Defying China, Hong Kongers rush to buy Apple Daily paper

HONG KONG: Hong Kongers rushed to buy pro-democracy newspaper Apple Daily yesterday in a show of support for its owner, who was arrested a day earlier as police rounded up critics of China. A crackdown on dissent in Hong Kong has gathered pace since China imposed a sweeping security law in June, with opposition politicians disqualified and activists arrested for social media posts. The moves have provoked outrage in the West and fear for millions who last year took to the streets to protest communist China's tightening grip on the semi-autonomous city.

In one of the most dramatic days of the crackdown, media tycoon Jimmy Lai was among 10 people detained under the new law on Monday as around 200 police officers searched the newsroom of his tabloid, which is unapologetically critical of Beijing. In a show of solidarity for Lai, people in the city rushed to buy Tuesday's Apple Daily, with the newspaper saying it had upped its print run to 550,000 from its normal circulation of 70,000. One restaurant owner bought 50 copies at a news stand in the commercial district of Mong Kok, saying he planned to give them away for free.

"Since the government doesn't allow Apple Daily to survive, then we as Hong Kongers have to save it ourselves," the man, who gave his surname as Ng, told AFP. The newspaper's front page showed a picture of Lai being led away in handcuffs with a headline in typical lurid red characters—that said "Apple will fight on". Dozens of people lined up in Mong Kok and around the city to buy the paper, with some also paying vendors in advance so other people could take a copy for nothing.

"Hong Kong is a place with press freedom, but the police now suppress press freedom in a high-profile way. I feel very angry," said a woman called Chan, who bought 16 papers. With Hong Kongers too fearful to stage mass protests like last year, and with events in recent weeks showing even dissenting social media posts could be punished, some looked to other inventive ways to show solidarity. Lai's arrest sparked a buying spree in shares of his media group, and its stock value rose by nearly 1,000 percent on Tuesday from Monday morning.

Hong Kong's new national security law criminalizes secession, subversion, terrorism and colluding with foreign forces. The most serious crimes under the law, which was introduced on June 30 and is not supposed



KARACHI: A supporter of Pakistani Islamic political party Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) holds a placard during a rally to show their solidarity with people of Indian-administered Kashmir. — AFP

found guilty of killing three laborers who had been branded as Pakistani infiltrators. The killings sparked months of protests that left more than 100 civilians dead. In 2000, the army claimed to have killed five "terrorists" responsible for the massacre of 35 Sikhs. An investigation found the five were locals killed by soldiers in a staged gun battle.—AFP



HONG KONG: A vendor (2nd left) at a newsstand sells copies of the Apple Daily newspaper in Hong Kong yesterday, a day after authorities conducted a search of the newspaper's headquarters.— AFP

to be retroactive, carry up to life in jail. Its broadly worded provisions criminalized certain political speech overnight, such as advocating sanctions, and greater autonomy or independence for Hong Kong.

Similar laws are used on the authoritarian mainland to snuff out opposition. Lai, 71, was held on charges including colluding with foreign forces, as well as fraud, in an operation targeting his Next Digital publishing group. Among the others arrested were two of Lai's sons, young pro-democracy activist Agnes Chow and Wilson Li, a former activist who describes himself as a freelance journalist working for Britain's ITV News.

Even as police were conducting interrogations, Beijing hailed Lai's arrest, declaring him an "anti-China rabble-rouser" who conspired with foreigners to "stir up chaos". Critics believe the law has ended the key liberties and autonomy that Beijing promised Hong Kong could keep after its 1997 handover by Britain. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who met with Lai last year, described Lai's arrest as "further proof" that Chinese authorities had "viscerated Hong Kong's freedoms and eroded the rights of its people". "We're going to respond in real ways," Pompeo later promised in an interview with Newsmax.

The United States had last week already imposed sanctions on a group of Chinese and Hong Kong officials—including city leader Carrie Lam—in response to the crackdown. China condemned the sanctions as "barbarous" and imposed retaliatory sanctions on some senior American politicians and leading human rights campaigners. In a late-night briefing, Hong Kong's police said those arrested were part of a group that had previously lobbied for foreign sanctions. "After the national security law came into force, this group was still active," senior superintendent Li Kwai-wah told reporters.— AFP

News in brief

MEXICO CITY: Mexican authorities say they have launched an investigation into the castration of a black bear who became famous after appearing in a selfie taken by a fearless hiker. The animal made international headlines when a woman snapped a photo of it standing with its face just behind her head in an ecological park in northern Mexico. The 96-kilogram bear then ambled off, leaving her unharmed. It also approached another woman in a nearby area without hurting her. The bear was captured last week while sleeping outside a house and transferred to a veterinary faculty at a university in the northern state of Nuevo Leon for a routine check-up. Once there, a wildlife laboratory at the faculty decided that it was necessary to castrate the bear due to

Virus rocks Australia region

SYDNEY: Australia's Northern Territory will be closed to visitors from virus hotspots for a further 18 months to protect its large and vulnerable Aboriginal population, authorities said yesterday. The sparsely populated northern region is home to roughly 250,000 people - 30 percent of whom are Aboriginal—according to government figures. "We'll have our hard border controls in place for at least the next 18 months. And we're resourcing so we can do that," Chief Minister Michael Gunner told public broadcaster ABC. Indigenous Australians are considered more at-risk to diseases such as COVID-19 because of socio-economic and cultural factors affecting access to medical care and underlying health. Many Aboriginal groups fear the virus could sweep through remote indigenous communities where healthcare services are limited.—AFP

Bhutan orders first lockdown

THIMPHU: Bhutan ordered its first nationwide lockdown yesterday after a returning resident tested positive for coronavirus after being discharged from quarantine and coming into close contact with people in the capital Thimphu. The case took the total in the tiny Himalayan kingdom to 113, still the lowest in South Asia, and it has yet to record a fatality. Bhutan, which is heavily reliant on high-end tourists, banned tourism in March after an American visitor tested positive for the virus, and ordered a three week mandatory quarantine for everyone returning from abroad. The lockdown was ordered after a 27-year-old Bhutanese woman, who returned from Kuwait and was discharged from quarantine after testing negative, tested positive at a clinic on Monday.— Reuters

Biden eyes running mate

WASHINGTON: Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden has interviewed the finalists to be his running mate and his campaign is readying to announce his choice as soon as this week, a person familiar with the process said. Biden and his potential vice president will formally accept the party's nomination at the Democratic National Convention, scheduled for Aug 17-20, and he is expected to announce his pick before it begins. The New York Times reported earlier on Monday that Biden's campaign plans to announce a decision very soon - likely today, citing people briefed on the selection process. The newspaper said the committee that screened the candidates had "effectively disbanded" after completing its work. It noted that Biden has missed previous deadlines to announce his pick, and that the timeline could "slip again." — Reuters

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 12, 2020

Business

Sudan's peanut export ban hits traders

Govt wants to process nuts inside the country to earn more money

KHARTOUM: Sudan has been a top producer of peanuts for so long that the nutritious variety is called the "Sudani"—but a government export ban has left traders reeling. Rimaz Ahmed, commercial director of Abnaa Sayed Elobeid, one of Sudan's major agricultural export companies, was stunned by the sudden decision of the trade ministry to ban the export of raw peanuts.

The government says it wants Sudan to process the nuts inside the country to earn more money. But traders said they were not given time to prepare. "It's a shock because we were not warned," Ahmed said, of the April 1 restrictions. "Overnight, we lost important markets. Immediately, India replaced us." The two main customers for Sudan's peanuts were China and Indonesia. On the wall of Ahmed's office, a poster in English praising the crops—"Peanuts: a Culture with the Flavours of Sudan"—seems to be from another time.

'As if France banned wine'

The export ban was a shock for many in the African nation, which, according to the UN, is the fifth largest peanut producer, with 14 percent of world production. Protein-rich peanuts, which are also called groundnuts, provide rural employment and much needed foreign exchange. Before the trade ban, peanuts were Sudan's fifth biggest international earner after gold, sesame, oil and livestock.

The decision comes at a tough time for the country. Sudan has endured years of international isolation and sanctions, and is now emerging from decades of dictatorship. Longtime strongman Omar al-Bashir was toppled last year after months of mass demonstra-

tions. For Sudan, peanuts are a flagship product, like another of its major exports, gum arabic. "It is as if France banned the export of wine overnight, or if Italy stopped selling its spaghetti abroad," Ahmed said.

Income from the crop was rising.

Sudan produced 1.5 million tons in 2019, worth 205 million dollars, according to central bank figures, up from 59 million dollars earned in 2018. Trade Minister Madani Abbas Madani defended halting exports "to maximize the market value of peanuts and the added value of Sudanese products, in light of climate change which affects the quality" of the product. For the government, the hope is that Sudan can earn more money through selling products from processed peanuts—such as oil or butter.

Peanuts can also be used in industrial products, including cosmetics.

Critics of the ban on exporting unprocessed nuts have questioned why it was introduced so abruptly, suggesting that it might be a personal whim of the trade minister. But the minister has insisted his decision was "within the framework of government policy". He has yet to convince traders, however.

"We agree in principle it may be good for the country, but we are not at all prepared," Ahmed said.

"We have neither the machines nor the know-how. It will take time—and in the meantime we have lost our big customers." For Sudan, a predominantly agricultural country, the ban could have a major impact on rural employment.

'Shot itself in the foot'

The news has not yet reached some farmers. In

youngest and oldest workers, along with those in lower-skilled jobs. "Vacancies numbers began to recover in July, especially in small businesses and sectors such as hospitality, but demand for workers remains depressed," he added.

Finance minister Rishi Sunak plans to end the furlough scheme in October. In its place be a stimulus package worth £30 billion, including bonuses for companies retaining furloughed staff and offering apprenticeships.

Heathrow numbers

Meanwhile, Britain's Heathrow Airport renewed its call for COVID-19 testing at airports on Tuesday as it reported an 88 percent plunge in July passenger numbers due to ongoing restrictions on travel which it said were strangling the UK economy. Heathrow, which is owned by a group of investors including Spain's Ferrovial, the Qatar Investment Authority and China Investment Corp, said 60 percent of Heathrow's route network remained grounded, requiring passengers to quarantine for 14 days on arrival.

Despite thousands of Britons holidaying overseas after months of lockdown, the government has already reimposed quarantine on arrivals from Spain, Luxembourg, Belgium, the Bahamas and Andorra. Last week finance minister Rishi Sunak said the government would not hesitate to add more countries to its quarantine list when asked whether France could also join it. However, Heathrow believes airport testing of passengers

Facebook 'morass'

Boucher started out as a cub reporter on the Christchurch Press in the 1990s, before a stint in London that included finance reporting. After returning to New Zealand in 2004, she headed up the new Stuff website, which operated from a "broom cupboard" and was seen as a minor add-on to newspaper operations. This journalistic pedigree has prompted Boucher's boldest move since taking over Stuff, a decision in June to cut ties with Facebook, which had previously driven 15-20 percent of the website's traffic.

Stuff had already stopped advertising on Facebook last year when it failed to make meaningful reforms after a right-wing gunman killed 51 Muslim worshippers in Christchurch and lives-treamed the atrocity on the platform. After Boucher took control, Stuff severed links with Facebook completely, saying its issues had intensified during the pandemic. "The general morass of hoaxes, fake news and things, we felt like it didn't fit with us and we didn't feel comfortable being there," she said. "I have to say, there's been a very minimal impact on our audience," she added, saying the drop in readership was "in the lower single digits". It's a stance she'd like other news media to follow, saying a pandemic-fuelled surge of public interest in quality journalism offered an opportunity to connect to audiences without relying on the likes of Facebook. While the pandemic had "a big impact" on Stuff's revenues, she said "our audiences had never been stronger, as everybody was turning to journalism for trusted information to try to find out what was going on."

'Social media isn't news media'

Boucher is also a big fan of Australian plans to make Facebook and Google pay news media for their content. "Both of them have made huge businesses out of, one way or another, collecting other people's content," she said, urging the New Zealand government to consider similar action. Stuff's main outlet is the stuff.co.nz website but Boucher describes the group as "an ecosystem



KHARTOUM: Sudanese farmers snack on peanuts harvested on a farm in Ardashiva village in Sudan's east-central al-Jazirah state, 70 km south of the capital. Sudan was once so famous for its produce of peanuts some called the tasty seed snack 'sudani' in Arabic—but a government export ban has left traders reeling. —AFP

Ardashiva, a village 70 kilometers (40 miles) south of the capital Khartoum, Khair Daoud, 31, digs around his peanut plants. This year, he has planted over 12 acres (almost five hectares) of peanuts, saying that if prices rise as they have done in recent years, he would nearly double his production next season. "If not, I will rely on okra, cotton or sorghum," the farmer said, dressed in traditional flowing white robes, with a neat skullcap of the same color. "I haven't heard anything about exporting. I don't know if my buyers are selling my produce locally, or for export."

Peanuts are well suited to Sudan's climate, growing both under irrigation in the center and east, or from rainwater in war-torn Darfur in the west, or Kordofan in the south. At the chamber of commerce in Khartoum, businessman Izzeldin Malik said the government's ban was self-defeating.

"With this decision, Sudan shot itself in the foot," said Malik, owner of the Rubicon peanut export company. "While the deficit in Sudan's trade balance should be reduced, the minister made a decision to increase it." —AFP

UK sheds further 114,000 jobs in July: Data

LONDON: The number of workers on UK company payrolls slumped by a further 114,000 in July from June on fallout from the coronavirus pandemic, official data showed yesterday. A total of 730,000 positions have been shed since March, when Britain went into lockdown over COVID-19, the Office for National Statistics said in a statement.

The unemployment rate remained at 3.9 percent, the ONS added. The Bank of England last week warned that the rate would soar to around 7.5 percent by the end of the year following the closure of a UK government furlough scheme to subsidize workers' wages. "The labor market continues recent trends, with a fall in employment and significantly reduced hours of work as many people are furloughed," said Jonathan Athow, ONS deputy national statistician for economic statistics. The state has been paying up to 80 percent of wages for almost 10 million workers under its furlough scheme, who are not classified as unemployed. UK companies—from major retailers to airlines—are axing thousands of jobs despite government efforts to safeguard employment during the pandemic.

"The falls in employment are greatest among the

The Kiwi media mogul daring online giants

WELLINGTON, New Zealand: Tucked away in Sinead Boucher's sock drawer is the one-dollar coin that transformed the former journalist into New Zealand's biggest media mogul, giving her a platform to challenge Facebook and other social media giants.

Boucher, 50, bought media giant Stuff Ltd for the nominal sum of NZ\$1.00 (US\$0.67) in May, taking control of New Zealand's most popular news website, stuff.co.nz, and mastheads such as Wellington's Dominion Post and the Christchurch Press. Already a senior executive at the company, Boucher was well aware of the challenges facing news media world-wide—describing a business model "shredded" by the online giants, with revenues further slashed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Some companies, such as Germany's Bauer Media, decided New Zealand's small market was not worth the bother and shut their local operations, a fate Boucher was determined Stuff would avoid.

"I couldn't bear the thought of all these titles, not just the website but some of our newspapers that are 160 years old, just being extinguished without a really good fight," she told AFP. After agreeing the purchase price with Stuff's former owners, Sydney-based Nine Entertainment, Boucher visited a Wellington law office to complete the deal while New Zealand was in the midst of its COVID-19 lockdown. "It was the time of social distancing, so I had to throw my dollar to the lawyers," she said. "That was dropped the first time, so I had to pick it up and do it again." Then I swapped out that one for another dollar to keep (the original) as a tangible physical reminder... it's in my sock drawer, actually. It's in a frame, but I haven't got around to putting it up anywhere."



LONDON: British Airways passenger planes are pictured at the apron at London Heathrow Airport in west London. —AFP

could safely keep routes open and restart others to help the UK's economic recovery. "Tens of thousands of jobs are being lost because Britain remains cut off from critical markets such as the US, Canada and Singapore," said Heathrow CEO John Holland-Kaye.

"The government can save jobs by introducing testing to cut quarantine from higher risk countries, while keeping the public safe from a second wave of COVID." Over 860,000 passengers travelled through Heathrow in July - down 88 percent on the previous year, but a slight uplift in traffic since the start of the pandemic, driven by the UK government's creation of the first "travel corridors" on July 4. —Agencies



Sinead Boucher is now New Zealand's biggest media mogul and says she's using her platform to challenge Facebook and other social media giants —AFP

of digital businesses", some of which are not news related but help subsidize the expensive business of journalism. These include a broadband provider (which Stuff recently sold), an energy retailer, and Neighborly, which aims to provide local news and information often overlooked by media.

In a sector ravaged by job losses during the pandemic, Boucher is proud that no positions have been axed at Stuff. At the height of the crisis, staff took a 15 percent pay cut for 12 weeks—Boucher herself took 40 percent—but the company repaid the sacrificed wages last month.

Stuff has bolstered its bottom line by asking for reader contributions alongside slogans such as "because social media isn't news media". Boucher said both the contribution scheme and the Facebook boycott had received strong public backing, as people wanted to support trusted news sources in uncertain times. She said while the pandemic created challenges for news media, it could also help them redefine a relationship with readers who had previously taken journalism for granted. —AFP

Tech titans say block on worker visas harms US

SAN FRANCISCO: Amazon, Apple and Facebook are among tech industry titans and organizations signing onto a court filing saying US President Donald Trump's move blocking visas for skilled workers hurts the country. The brief was filed in federal court Monday in support of a suit by the US Chamber of Commerce and trade groups against a proclamation issued by Trump in June halting visas for various categories of guest workers including highly skilled talent sought by tech firms.

"The president's suspension of nonimmigrant visa programs, supposedly to 'protect' American workers, actually harms those workers, their employers, and the economy," the brief backed by more than 50 tech firms and organizations argued. "Beyond the overwhelming data undermining the proclamation's purported rationale, the administration's actions send a fundamentally un-American message to those abroad who might otherwise have brought their skills and ingenuity to the United States."

Trump's proclamation suspended a group of non-immigrant visa programs, including H-1B visas relied on by many technology firms to bring in engineers. The suspension is to last through this year and as long after "as necessary" under the justification of making jobs available to citizens amid economic disruption caused by the pandemic, according to the filing.

Evidence, however, overwhelmingly indicates that suspension of the visa programs will "stifle innovation, hinder growth, and ultimately harm US workers, businesses, and the economy more broadly in irreparable ways," the filing argued. Rather than safeguarding jobs for US citizens, the proclamation "all but ensures" firms will need to hire abroad essentially moving jobs to other countries, the companies said. Tech industry competitors in Canada, China, India and other countries are "pouncing on the opportunity" to attract skilled workers being shunned by the US, the filing contended. "Predictably, other countries are poised to benefit from the US's wholesale suspension of nonimmigrant visas, the filing argued.

"Global competitors are aggressively updating their immigration systems to attract skilled workers."

Others joining the petition included Microsoft, Twitter, Uber and several trade groups for the tech sector including the Information Technology Industry Council. —AFP

Business

Ahli United Bank reports net profit of KD 17.7m for first half of 2020

Total assets grew up to reach KD 4.4 billion at end of H1 2020

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank K.S.C.P announced its results for the first six months of this year by confirming taking all required measures, precautionary and impairment provisions to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on economy and on the materially impacted business sectors. Accordingly, the bank has recorded a net profit for the first half of 2020 amounting to KD 17.7 million which is lower by 43 percent than the KD 30.8 million of net profits recorded for the same period last year.



AUB takes all COVID-19 precautionary measures

In compliance with the directives of the Board of Directors and the governmental policies, the bank continued its efforts to expand the financing activities and extend all possible support to the business sectors affected by the pandemic. The bank has adopted lower profit rates on finance which came as part of the governmental economic stimulus being an attempt to overcome the tough implications of the pandemic on customers. Accordingly, the total assets have grown up to reach KD 4.4 billion at the end of the 1H2020 higher by 10 percent over the assets recorded in June 2019 with KD 4 billion (KD 4.35 billion in December 2019).

The finance and customer deposits portfolios have

grown to reach KD 3.1 billion and KD 2.8 billion respectively at the end of June 2020 higher than KD 2.9 billion and KD 2.5 billion recorded respectively at the end of 1H2019 representing a growth of 6.9 percent in finances and 12 percent in customer deposits (finances KD 3 billion and deposits KD 2.7 billion in December 2019).

To provide further relief for retail customers from the implication of this pandemic, the Bank has joins the Kuwaiti Banks in the initiative of postponing the retail finance monthly installments for 6 months without any additional fee or charge with a modification loss of KD 11.5 million recorded under the shareholders equity at the end of the period in accordance with CBK directives. The capital adequacy ratio has reach 14.85 percent at the end of June 2020 which is comfortably higher than the CBK current minimum required ratio of 11 percent currently adopted. The available margin will support the expansion in financing, services and operations as per the Bank's determined plans.

Following conservative measures in facilities classification, the non-performing finances increased to reach 1.9 percent in June 2020 (1.3 percent in December 2019) with an adequate provision coverage of 192.2 percent excluding the collaterals.

Commenting on the H1 2020 results, the Chairman of Ahli United Bank, Dr Anwar Ali Al-Mudhaf, said that 2020 has been unusual year by all means since its inception when businesses have been interrupted, travel was banned and the shutdown of commercial and service centers across the country. All these measures were considered mandatory to fight the quick spread of the virus however it has resulted in creating weaker demand and supply, slower economic growth rate in all markets and deterioration in the stock and financial markets in addition to a collapse in the international oil prices.



Dr Anwar Ali Al-Mudhaf

The bank dedicated in striking balance between satisfying the customer needs, provide relief and push the economic growth in one side and apply the maximum health and safety measures on customers and employees on the other side by working under the umbrella of CBK to assist on overcoming the pandemic implications at the minimum losses.

Dr Al-Mudhaf added, the bank has taken part of the KD 10 million CBK's fund to compliment the health and security policies in fighting the spread of the virus. This initiative is part of the Bank's overall corporate social responsibility. The bank has further relieved its retail and credit cards customers from the burden of 6 months of installments free of any additional fee or charge whereby the installment April-September 2020 have been deferred until the end of the contracts. Dr Al-Mudhaf advised: we are proud of witnessing our executive a management and the Bank staff members fully committed and extending comprehensive banking services and facilities to our clients and stay in full contact with customers and community.

Furthermore, the effective measures undertaken by AUB in the field of business automation has relatively reduced the business disruption and our customers are able to do many more services through bank's website and mobile application without visiting to the branch.

Dr. Anwar Al-Mudhaf expressed thanks and appre-

ciation for the Bank's shareholders and customers for their committed support to and deep trust in the Bank. He also expressed appreciation to the Central Bank of Kuwait, health and security authorities and all supervision authorities and lauded the efforts of the Bank's executive management and all its employees that enabled the Bank to manage this crisis.

Commenting on AUB half yearly financial results, Jehad Al-Humaidhi, Acting CEO of AUB advised that during this exceptional time, we have placed our customers and employees safety and health on the top of our priorities by launching an emergency business continuity plan. The plan has enabled the Bank to continue providing all required services to the customers embarking on its advanced 24x7 digital platforms. The customers are performing banking activities conveniently from home while preserving themselves, their families and community.

Jehad has affirmed that the Bank is continuing its services through the branches as well by adopting the required health and safety measures and with the business gradual recovery, the positive outcomes have been witnessed by showing higher volume in business. She has added: despite the challenges ahead, we are confident that the Bank with its capabilities will be able to overcome all implications caused by the outbreak of COVID-19 virus.

Al-Humaidhi concluded by extending appreciation to the employees of the Bank for their dedication and cooperation which has assisted in overcoming the implication of this pandemic and confirmed again the resilience, readiness and solid resources of the Bank to cope with any shortcomings that may come in the future. She has prayed for this pandemic to be recovered and Allah to protect Kuwait and the world.

Business Analysis

Hydrogen: Tipping the scales in energy revolution

By John Roper and Dr Axel Wietfeld

KUWAIT: Developing the most abundant element in the universe is fast becoming a focus for Middle Eastern stakeholders as the region joins - with the aspiration to help spearhead - the global energy transition. And it is not a moment too soon. The Middle East had one of the highest growth rates of CO2 emissions worldwide last year. As the region tries to decarbonize, how can it evolve hydrogen (H2) from a niche market into a commercially and environmentally successful one in the 2020s?

Keeping pace

Global momentum is clearly building. Strategy expects demand for green H2 to reach 530 million tons and potentially displace roughly 10.4bn of barrels of oil equivalent (37 percent of current global oil production) by 2050. And the results of DNV GL's annual survey of more than 1,000 senior oil and gas professionals revealed that 21 percent said their organization is already actively entering the H2 market. More than half (52 percent) expect the gas to form a significant part of the energy mix within a decade.

But it is not a case of flicking an H2 switch. Significant work goes into building the foundations of a green H2 ecosystem, especially as it requires large amounts of renewable power. The Middle East already has a good springboard. As per its support of the Paris Agreement, and governments' National Visions, the region is ramping up its solar projects, and wind to a lesser extent. The region also benefits from vast and flat areas of land to further develop renewables, plus good access to sea water. The latter is important as Strategy& estimates that meeting green H2 demand in 2050 will require around 5.6trn liters of deionized water.

Next steps?

One route is instilling market acceleration programs in the region, as the National Hydrogen Strategy has done in Germany, plus the Green Deal in the European Union. Underpinning today's positive momentum with a firm architecture will provide clear goals for stakeholders to work within and, critically, targets to hit. It also gives H2 a stamp of credibility - invaluable for a new commercial market.



John Roper



Dr Axel Wietfeld

The development of a multi-sectoral H2 economy could also start with the use of green H2 in the Middle East's refineries, which are some of the world's largest and most sophisticated facilities. It is also highly applicable in the chemical industry, especially in ammonia and methanol production, and in the mobility sector. Ship, air and logistics traffic are all big markets in the region, which is home to major ports, including the Port of Fujairah, the world's second biggest bunkering hub, and some of the world's biggest airlines. Battery-powered cars cannot do the full job. They weigh so much that it would require two trucks to transport the same payload as one H2 truck. This is not sustainable; time is money.

Critically, H2 can be stored for a long time in large quantities, which means it is possible to compensate for the increasing regional and temporal inequality between energy generation and consumption. This is a major plus, as concerns about how to plug intermittent supply with the growing renewables market (sun does not always shine, wind does not always blow) requires more flexibility and storage in the energy system. This will only become more relevant as the renewable market grows, after 39 percent growth over the last ten years in the Middle East alone. Consequently, H2 is the perfect tool for sector coupling, which refers to all the measures that lead to interconnecting (integrating) the power, mobility and heat (process heat and heating) sectors.

Middle Eastern energy stakeholders - and their international allies - have a busy few years ahead if they want to maximize this new energy ecosystem, decarbonize and deepen their influence on the global energy map. We will soon see declining costs for green H2 production, resulting from more advanced technologies and economies of scale. In addition, the Middle East is perfectly positioned to generate H2 with its immense renewable resources for both domestic use and export. The effort will be worth it, both for companies' bank balances and the natural world.

Note: John Roper is CEO Middle East, Uniper Global Commodities and Dr Axel Wietfeld is Senior Vice President Hydrogen, Uniper SE



TOKYO: A woman walks past a SoftBank mobile store in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

magnified by the coronavirus pandemic and plunges in global stock markets. Son has insisted that his strategy is sound, and that SoftBank's portfolio is broad enough to weather the storm, but acknowledged the challenges when the firm reported an eye-watering \$8.9 billion annual net loss in May, hit by the WeWork debacle and stock crashes.

The results come after SoftBank launched an aggressive plan to sell up to \$41 billion in assets to finance a stock buy-back, after Son said shares were

Gulf Bank announces winners of Al-Danah weekly draws

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank held two weekly draws on 9th August 2020 announcing the names of the winners for the week of 26 - 30 July 2020, and the week of 2 - 6 August 2020. Each weekly draw consists of five winners who receive KD 1,000 each, every week.

The winners for the week of 26 - 30 July 2020:

Abdulwahab Abdulrahman Abdulateef Almelhem
Nihal Ahmed Abdulatif Alsubeih
Mohammed Faisal Ali Faraj
Jana Radwan Abdullah Jamal
Turki Maiah Ali Saleh

The winners for the week of 2 - 6 August 2020:

Sara Jassem Abdulla Shukrallah
Fuad Jassim Mohammad Dashti
Ali Abdulkarim Joohar Alshatti
Sabha Fares Abed Ali
Abbas Abdullah Ali Alqattan

Al-Danah is now offering its biggest prize yet, with an annual draw prize of KD 1,500,000. The annual draw will be held on 14 January 2021, and the last chance to deposit into an Al-Danah account to participate is 30 September 2020.

Gulf Bank encourages customers to increase their chances of winning with Al-Danah by depositing more into their Gulf Bank accounts using the new ePay (Self-Pay) service, which is available on Gulf Bank's online and mobile banking services. Al-Danah offers a number of unique services to customers, including the Al-Danah Deposit Only ATM card, which allows account holders to deposit money into their accounts at their convenience. Account holders can also calculate their chances of winning the draws through the 'Al-Danah Chances' calculator available on the Gulf Bank website and app. Furthermore, loyal Al-Danah customers are rewarded with loyalty chances. Loyalty chances are the total chances accumulated from the previous year, which are added to the customer's chances the following year. Therefore, the total chances earned by Al-Danah customers in 2019, have been added to their 2020 chances, and the same process will take place in 2021, and so on. Terms and conditions apply. Gulf Bank's Al-Danah account is open to Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti residents of Kuwait. Customers require a minimum of KD 200 to open an account and the same amount should be maintained for customers to be eligible for the upcoming Al-Danah draws. If the customer's account balance falls below KD 200 at any given time, a KD 2 fee will be charged to their account monthly until the minimum balance is met. Customers who open an account and/or deposit more will enter the weekly draw within two days.

undervalued. The fundraising was also intended to reduce the firm's debts and increase cash reserves. Paired with the recent recovery in tech stock prices, the strategy appears to be paying off, analysts said.

"SoftBank has achieved a V-shape recovery," said Tomoaki Kawasaki, an analyst at Iwai Cosmo Securities. Kawasaki told AFP that investor sentiment had been boosted by the firm's decision to sell assets and buy back shares. "But we still need to carefully watch SoftBank's performance, which is heavily subject to stock markets," he added. SoftBank shares closed down 2.45 percent to 6,361 yen shortly before the results were announced, up significantly from their March low of 2,687 yen.

The firm also reported 983 billion yen in investment gains for the quarter to June, including profit from its Vision Fund. But it warned that the pandemic continued to cause uncertainty, bolstering its investments in e-commerce and food delivery firms, but hammering those in the hotel and hospitality sectors.

It said it would not offer a forecast "due to numerous uncertainties affecting earnings." Son has struggled to interest investors in a second round of the Vision Fund as he deals with the woes of some of his most high-profile investments, notably WeWork. —AFP

ITS partners with Software AG: Islamic banking digitization

KUWAIT: International Turnkey Systems Group (ITS), the leading provider of next generation technology solutions to the Islamic financial services industry, has announced a strategic partnership with Software AG, a global technology firm, to accelerate its digital transformation efforts in the field of Islamic banking and finance.

The agreement was signed by Esam Alkhesnam, CEO, ITS and Rami Kichli, Vice President, Levant and Gulf Region, Software AG. The partnership, which will further cement ITS's position as the leading provider of digitized financial services by leveraging Software AG's Application Program Interface (API) technologies, webMethods and Universal Messaging and OEM finance solution, under its flagship award winning, next generation core banking solution, ETHIX NG.

Commenting on the partnership, Alkhesnam said: "We are pleased to collaborate with Software AG in order to introduce new technologies to the region and provide our customers with competitive advantage. Digitization is vital today and ITS is bringing together the world's latest technologies designed to enhance operational efficiency and deliver elevated customer experiences. The new ETHIX NG is set to redefine the industry. It leverages Artificial Intelligence, Machine learning and Big Data to instantly modernize business processes, allow seamless collaboration between financial institutions and FinTech's, and deliver a complete retail and corporate banking solution."

Rami Kichli, Vice President, Levant and Gulf Region, Software AG added: "With the industry under constant disruption and even more with the present business changes witnessed by organizations across the world, it is vital for technology providers to calibrate solutions based on market realities. Integration is key to organizations transitioning into the digital transformation journey and webMethods' agility will act as a robust platform to deliver a 100% digitized system in support of real-time integration that delivers seamless customer experiences. We extend a warm welcome to ITS into the Software AG family."

Alkhesnam added: "ITS partnership with Software AG will deliver exceptional technology solutions to our clients that enable them to provide their customers with better products and services and bring their own innovative services to market faster." "Our elevated ETHIX NG core banking solution will optimize and automate business processes to improve customer responsiveness and fast track their digital transformation, so that they gain competitive advantage and are empowered to take advantage of the new business opportunities that today's highly connected business environment brings," he concluded.



Esam Alkhesnam

CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times
248 33 199

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DR. FAHAD AL-MUKHAIZEEM

Consultant Pediatrician

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



Tel.: 22269369 - Fax: 22269368

Al-Jabriya - Block 1A - St.1 - Mazaya Building - 15th Floor - Clinic B

Dr. Hamoud Abdullah Alarouj

ENT Consultant, Laryngologist

- ◆ Kuwait Board of Otolaryngology.
- ◆ Laryngology Fellowship, McGill University- Canada.
- ◆ Fellow of the European Board of Otolaryngology - Head & Neck surgery.
- ◆ Member of the American Academy of Otolaryngology Head & Neck Surgery.
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Dr. Abdullah Al Haddad

Surgery Department
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- o Referee reviewer of International journal of Dermatology.

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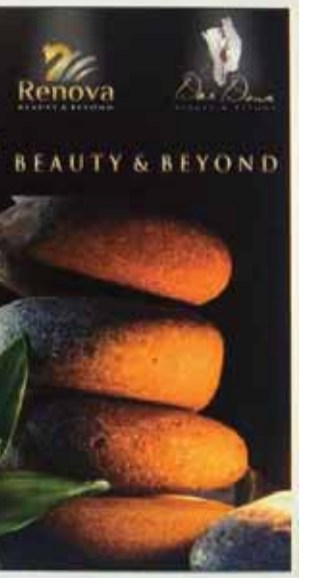
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Email: drbuhaimed@beautybeyond.com.kw

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DR. WALEED S BUHAIMED

Consultant of General Surgery
Laparoscopic and Bariatric Surgery



Academic Certificates - Training

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

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Dr. Ahmad Alaeddine

Head of Cardiology departmenta
at Dar Al Shifa hospital



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



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Classifieds

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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

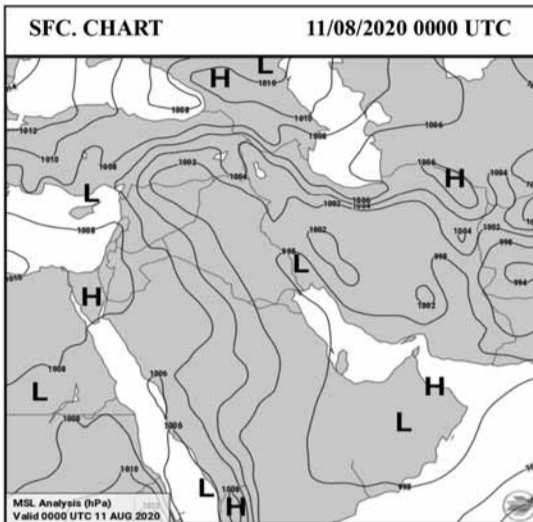
BY DAY: Hot with light to moderate freshening at times north westerly wind with speed of 12 - 45 km/h with a chance for rising dust over open areas and some scattered clouds will appear.

BY NIGHT: Hot to rather hot with light to moderate freshening at times specially over coastal areas north westerly wind with speed of 12 - 40 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

WEATHER WARNING: No Current Warnings

STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	45 °C	33 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	45 °C	33 °C
ABDALY	44 °C	30 °C
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C
JAHRA	45 °C	32 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	44 °C	33 °C
SALMIYAH	42 °C	34 °C
AHMADI	- °C	- °C
NUWAISIB	43 °C	32 °C
WAFRA	45 °C	32 °C
SALMY	44 °C	27 °C

DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures	Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.	
Wednesday	08/12	Hot and some scattered clouds will appear	46 °C	32 °C	NW 12 - 30 km/h
Thursday	08/13	Very hot	47 °C	32 °C	NW 12 - 32 km/h
Friday	08/14	Very hot	48 °C	33 °C	NW 12 - 40 km/h
Saturday	08/15	Very hot with a chance for rising dust specially over open areas	47 °C	32 °C	NW 15 - 45 km/h



4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Wednesday	08/12	Hot and some scattered clouds will appear	46 °C	32 °C	NW	12 - 30 km/h
Thursday	08/13	Very hot	47 °C	32 °C	NW	12 - 32 km/h
Friday	08/14	Very hot	48 °C	33 °C	NW	12 - 40 km/h
Saturday	08/15	Very hot with a chance for rising dust specially over open areas	47 °C	32 °C	NW	15 - 45 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	03:47
Sunrise	05:14
Zuhr	11:53
Asr	15:29
Sunset	18:32
Isha	19:56

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	46 °C
MIN. Temp.	32 °C
MAX. RH	23 %
MIN. RH	07 %
MAX. Wind	NW 50 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

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

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
Khalidiya	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, Antonio Jose D Cunha holder of Indian Passport No. M6716579 residing in Kuwait at present having permanent address Gurudev Shakti Flat S-3 P.O. Caranzalem Ilhas Goa Pin Code 403002 would like to change my father name from Mariano Santana D Cunha to Mariano Santana Da Cunha as per my birth certificate.

I, Antonio Jose D Cunha holder of Indian Passport No. M6716579 residing in Kuwait at present having permanent address Gurudev Shakti Flat S-3 P.O. Caranzalem Ilhas Goa Pin Code 403002 would like to change my mother name from Maria to Maria Augusta Carmelina Vicente as per mine and my mother's birth certificates.

I, Mary Fatima Justa D Cunha residing at Gurudev Shakti Flat S-3 P.O. Caranzalem Ilhas Goa Pin Code 403002 would like to change my name from Mary Fatima Justa D Cunha to Mary Fatima Justa Fernandes as per my birth and marriage certificates.

I, Antonio Jose D Cunha holder of Indian Passport No. M6716579 residing in Kuwait at present having permanent address Gurudev Shakti Flat S-3 P.O. Caranzalem Ilhas Goa Pin Code 403002 would like to change my name from Antonio Jose D Cunha to Antonio Jose Da Cunha as per my birth certificate. (C 5755) 11-8-2020

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

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

Word Search

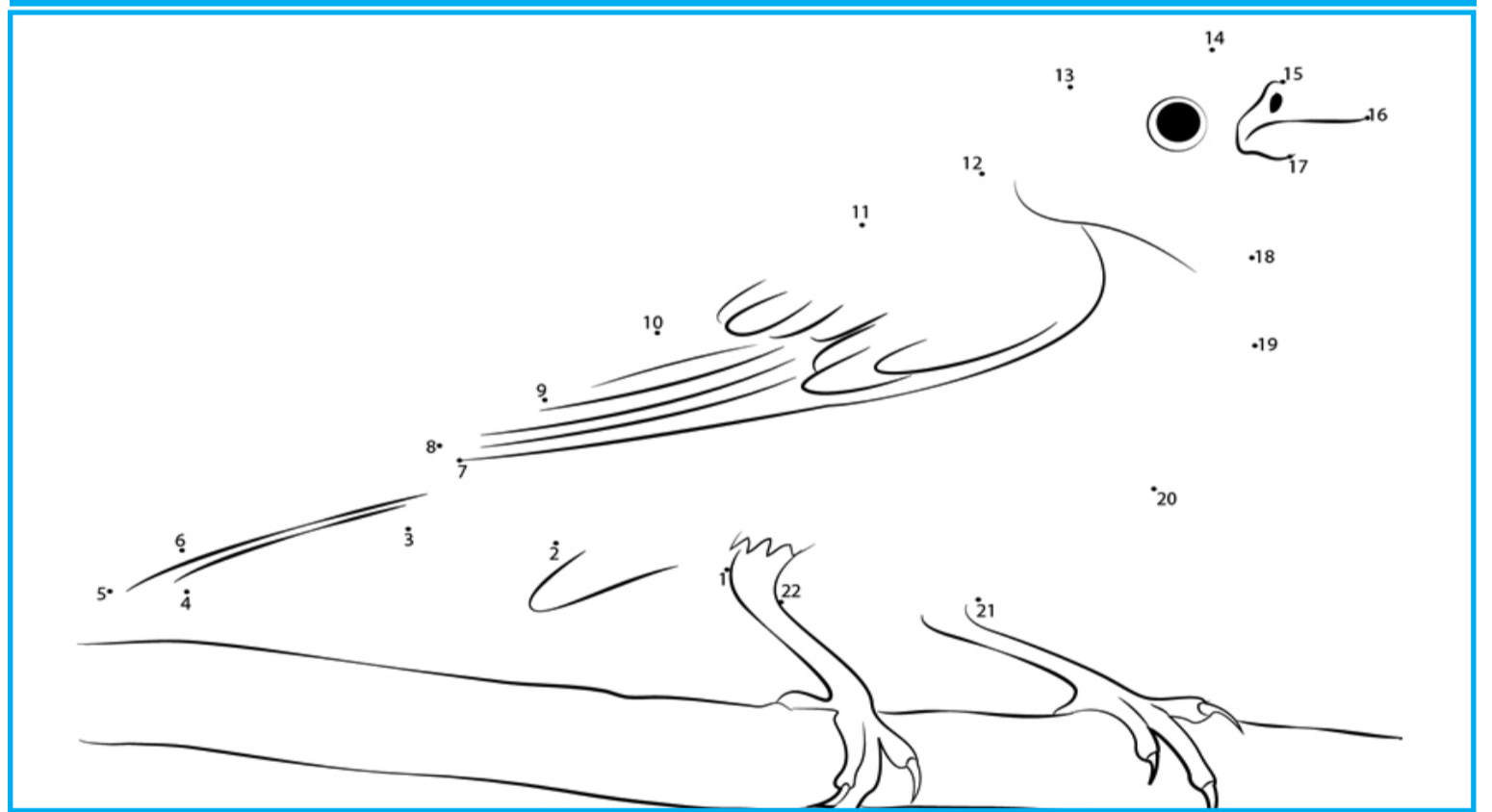
Elvis Word Search

Army
 Comeback
 Ed Sullivan
 Elvis
 Gold Record
 Graceland
 Gyrate
 Hound Dog

Hysteria
 Jailhouse Rock
 Jumpsuit
 Las Vegas
 Lisa Marie
 Love Me Tender
 Memphis
 Movies

Presley
 Priscilla
 RCA
 Rockabilly
 Sun Records
 Teddy Bear
 The King
 Tupelo

Join the Dot



STAR TRACK

<p>Aries (March 21-April 19) Does your job have a good profit-sharing plan, Aries, or do you own company stock? If so, expect to hear that its value has skyrocketed beyond what anyone had hoped. This is worthy of celebration. You and your colleagues should do just that. A romantic interest might offer congratulations. This trend is likely to continue. You might be a millionaire someday.</p>	<p>Cancer (June 21-July 22) A love partner may have heard some great career news today and want to take you out to celebrate, Cancer. Go - no matter what you have to reschedule. Your friend is in a great mood, looks wonderful, and is feeling very passionate and sexy. If you want a night to remember, don't let this chance pass you by. Also make sure you look your very best.</p>	<p>Libra (September 23-October 22) Today's planetary configuration fills your heart with reverence for what is right - whatever that means for you. You enjoy this feeling, and it will best be enjoyed privately. Do not look to impose any of what you feel on others by way of sharing, for it could very well go ignored or unappreciated, which will only detract from what you feel. Look to nature or your most trusted relationships to revel with during this beautiful conjunction.</p>	<p>Capricorn (December 22-January 19) There is beauty in the air, and it's going to make you feel good to notice it. Take the time to notice the little things that are truly beautiful in your life. If you are watching your diet and making sure to consume only locally grown organic produce you can see the beauty in the simple nutrition you get from this food, for instance. What's more, if you are preparing the food you eat for yourself and others, there is beauty in this communion.</p>
<p>Taurus (April 20-May 20) Romance should be going beautifully for you today, Taurus. Your romantic partner looks especially attractive and probably is in a great mood. You might decide to attend a lecture together or plan a weekend getaway. Communication between you is open, honest, supportive, and loving. Don't let this day pass you by. Make sure you get together, if possible. This could end up being a day to remember.</p>	<p>Leo (July 23-August 22) With today's planetary positions you will have no trouble focusing on your body and its various needs. A very "alive" feeling in your body must be celebrated and given very close attention. A workout, a healthy balanced diet and plenty of water are all things you must lavish upon yourself. In fact, today's aspect can have a way of making things difficult if the "right thing" is ignored due to laziness or indifference.</p>	<p>Scorpio (October 23-November 21) Your sign is going to be getting a lot of planetary attention throughout the next several months, so get used to hearing general statements, which may or may not necessarily apply to your particular situation. What is critical that you do, however, is pay straightforward attention to your body and its health needs. You must drink plenty of water and get regular exercise.</p>	<p>Aquarius (January 20- February 18) The beauty in daily life is accentuated by today's planetary alignment, and you must reach out and touch it! Put yourself in the position to be a part of things that are beautiful to you. Health is one beautiful part of life that you can enjoy to a greater degree than you have been doing under this transit! Bestow upon yourself the extra care that makes your skin glow, your body feel alive, and that puts your mind at ease.</p>
<p>Gemini (May 21-June 20) You've worked hard for your money, Gemini, and today you should reap the benefits of your efforts. Earnings, investments, property values - all should be worth considerably more than they were a year ago. Love, sex, and romance should also be going well, although you might have a few difficulties coordinating your schedule with your partner's. Bask in the glow of your success.</p>	<p>Virgo (August 23-September 22) Your fiery nature will be faced with making up for time misused or accidental oversights of a few days ago. Something's "not quite right" and you will have to look inward to find the cause of this dis-ease. Are you eating well? Are you taking your rest as seriously as you should? Are you exercising to get rid of the stress of your workdays? Maybe all of the above has made you say things to other people you shouldn't have.</p>	<p>Sagittarius (November 22-December 21) Today's planetary alignment impels you to focus your intentions on something physical and real. One way to express this is to start taking your physical health seriously. Are you still finding excuses rather than getting the regular exercise your body requires? Are you drinking enough water to stay hydrated all the time? Are you looking for healthy food when you go grocery shopping? Healthy habits can be formed during this transit.</p>	<p>Pisces (February 19-March 20) Watch yourself carefully and try not to allow your attention to be pulled from place to place. With the positions of the planets at this time, you will be offered an opportunity to get more out of life if you stick to your commitments. It creates an environment of discipline and duty, which, if you follow through on your end, can support you in achieving great things for yourself (of your choosing!).</p>



Ahmed Amarneh, stands by a tap at the kitchen of his home which he built in cave, in the village of Farasin, west of Jenin, in the northern occupied West Bank. — AFP photos



Ahmed Amarneh throws his daughter beneath a skylight hole as they play together at his home, built in cave in the village of Farasin.

Greek town of Preveza bets on slow tourism to overcome virus

Yannis Yovanos scans the waters of the Ambracian Gulf with his binoculars for dolphins shooting into the air before curving back down into the sea. His early warnings prompt just a dozen tourists on the deck of Yovanos' small boat to scramble for their smartphones, hoping to secure a snap of the aquatic mammals' aerial acrobatics. Officials in his home town of Preveza hope that it's just this kind of small, family-run business that will help them overcome the coronavirus' impact on travel while sparing the region the environmental impact and economic distortions of the mass tourism more common on Crete or the Ionian islands. "We don't want to stay all day on a beach, we're looking for a different experience," said Dutch tourist Frederika Janssen.

"The pandemic is an opportunity to promote alternative tourism, fishing tourism," as well as local life and culture "directly related to the natural resources that date from Antiquity," said Constantin Koutsikopoulos, who heads the agency charged with managing the Ambracian Gulf. Inside the gulf is a protected wetlands park, some 400 square kilometers (150 square miles) that is one of Europe's Natura 2000 wildlife diversity regions. One hundred and fifty dolphins, Loggerhead sea turtles and 300 species of aquatic birds including the rare Dalmatian pelican live in the lagoons and reed beds of the gulf. Nestled between green hills, the Ambracian Gulf is fed by rivers descending from the mountains of the Epirus region of northwestern Greece. Yovanos' hometown guards the little strait that connects the gulf with the Ionian Sea. Dolphin-watching trips like these mean "I am realising my dream of living the life of a fisherman among our natural riches," said the 49-year-old from behind a greying beard.

No scramble for beach spots

For Greece as a whole, a gamble on reopening its borders to tourists as early as June appears to have paid off for now. New coronavirus cases have appeared only slowly since then, with fewer than 6,000 cases and just over 200 deaths nationwide from the pandemic. Although Preveza has opted for a slower, more family-oriented approach to travel compared to better-known Greek destinations, it hasn't renounced Mediterranean holiday clichés altogether. With the sector suffering a big hit from the coronavirus epidemic, Preveza city officials launched a promotional campaign, securing the title of safest place for a European beach holiday from website European Best Destinations.

"Monolithi beach, the main beach of Preveza, is... the longest one in Europe... you won't have to struggle to get a nice spot, fix your beach umbrella and spend relaxing days in the sun," it wrote. And new infrastructure in the shape of a marina has helped draw sailors away from packed ports on the islands. "Preveza is the right place compared to Corfu which is a very nice island but very crowded," said Nick Ray, a British businessman, from the deck of his yacht that had put into the town's port. With its fishing and fish farming, the Ambracian Gulf is already the region's economic motor. Sustainable, environment-focused tourism should give the authorities even more reason to deal with the threats to the gulf such as pollution, poaching and illegal fishing. There's even something for ancient history buffs in the ruins of Nicopolis, founded by Caesar Augustus in honor of his naval victory nearby in 31 BC, where some Roman mosaics are still preserved.

Benefiting local society

"The pandemic has shown us that we must respect nature and shift towards small-scale tourism, far from the classic slogan of 'sun and sea'," said Roula Trigou, an environmentalist and head of communications for Greece's ornithological society. She believes the real challenge in developing travel is "making it benefit local society". Elsewhere in Greece, the tourist trade has brought in money—often at the expense of attention to environmental protection and maintaining the character of destinations. A European Parliament commission report last year upbraided Greek authorities for allowing over-tourism on the island of Santorini, warning the flood of visitors threatened to distort the island's character and social fabric. Gulf manager Koutsikopoulos said that "with proper planning, the development of tourism is a reliable ally for the protection of the gulf" which suffers from intense human activity. For now officials are keeping things low-key, with plans to clear paths in the reed beds to attract bird watchers. — AFP

PALESTINIAN FAMILY IN CAVE HOME FACES ISRAELI EVICTION

Ahmed Amarneh's home, with a wooden door opening onto cushion-lined rooms, is not the first Palestinian residence in the occupied West Bank to receive a demolition notice from Israel. But it may be the first built inside a cave which the Jewish state has threatened to destroy. Amarneh, a 30-year-old civil engineer, lives with his family in the northern West Bank village of Farasin, where Israel insists it must approve any new resi-

dent construction and can tear down homes built without permits. "I tried twice to build (a house), but the occupation authorities told me it was forbidden to build in the area," Amarneh told AFP, using a term for Israel used by some Palestinians. The Oslo peace accords of the 1990s gave the Palestinians self-rule in parts of the West Bank.

However, some 60 percent of the territory dubbed Area C, where Farasin is located, remains under full Israeli civil and military control. The United Nations considers Area C as occupied Palestinian Territory. But Israel has increasingly allocated land there for construction of Jewish settlements—communities considered illegal under international law. Convinced he would never get Israeli approval to build a home in his village, Amarneh set his sights on a cave in the foothills overlooking Farasin. Amarneh said he figured that as an ancient, natural formation, Israel could not possibly argue that

the cave was illegally built, while the Palestinian Authority (PA) agreed to register the land in his name.

'I didn't make the cave'

Amarneh, whose handyman skills are considerable, sealed the entrance to the cave with a stone wall and installed a wooden door at its centre. He fashioned a kitchen, a living room and sleeping areas for himself, his pregnant wife and their young daughter.



Ahmed Amarneh and a neighbor chat outside his home, built in cave.

There is even lodging for guests. He told AFP he had been living there for a year and half, but received a demolition notice from the Israeli authorities in July, along with 20 other Palestinian families in Farasin. The Israeli military branch responsible for civilian affairs in

ter. There is even lodging for guests. He told AFP he had been living there for a year and half, but received a demolition notice from the Israeli authorities in July, along with 20 other Palestinian families in Farasin. The Israeli military branch responsible for civilian affairs in



The wife of Ahmed Amarneh holds her daughter at their home built in cave.



A Palestinian family whose house located in area C of the Israeli-occupied West Bank and was demolished by the military, sit inside a cave they have turned into their home, near the village of Yatta.



The wife of Ahmed Amarneh prepares coffee at his home, built in cave. — AFP photos



Ahmed Amarneh (right), and family members sit on cushions at his home built in cave.

demolition notices were served to some Farasin residences because of "structures that were illegally built, without the necessary permits and approvals".

Those demolitions began on Monday, with Israeli troops destroying one home in Farasin and water tank, a AFP photographer said. Amarneh, whose home was not targeted on Monday, had told AFP he was "surprised" to learn that he had built anything illegally. "I didn't make the cave. It has existed since antiquity," he said, holding his young daughter in his arms. "I don't understand how they can prevent me from living in a cave. Animals live in caves and are not thrown out. So, let them treat me like an animal and let me live in the cave."

'You have one minute'

Arab residents established the village of Farasin in 1920, said local council head Mahmud Ahmad Nasser. It was abandoned during the 1967 Six-Day War, the year Israeli occupation of the West Bank began. But from the 1980s, former residents began to return to the area. Nasser put its current population at around 200. Farasin looks less like a village than a small collection of houses spaced widely apart. The PA officially recognized the community of Farasin in March, but the coronavirus crisis has prevented it from providing electricity to the area, the local council said. COGAT had indicated in April that it might suspend some scheduled demolitions due to the pandemic.

But, according to the Israeli anti-settlement campaign group B'Tselem,

Israel in June demolished 63 Palestinian structures. Roughly 450,000 Jewish settlers live in the West Bank, alongside some 2.7 million Palestinians. Farasin residents had been fearing the possible arrival of Israeli bulldozers for weeks and Amarneh said Monday's demolition had sparked concern about what might happen next. The soldiers "came and told the people in the house that they had one minute to collect all their things," Amarneh told AFP. "They told us, without any shame, to leave the village," he added, voicing fear that his cave home could be the next target, and that his wife and daughter were "in shock". — AFP



Ahmed Amarneh (left), and family members share a meal at his home built in a cave in the village of Farasin.

Spanish actor Antonio Banderas says tested positive for coronavirus

Spanish actor Antonio Banderas announced on his 60th birthday Monday that he was in quarantine after testing positive for the coronavirus but was feeling "relatively well". "I am forced to celebrate my 60th birthday in quarantine after having tested positive for the COVID-19 disease," Banderas, known for roles in such films as "The Mask of Zorro" and "Philadelphia", said in a statement posted on social media which was accompanied with a black and white photo of himself as a baby.

"I'm feeling relatively well, just a bit more tired than usual, and confident that I will recover as soon as possible," he added. "I will take advantage of this isolation to read, write, rest and continue making plans to start giving meaning to my recently completed 60 years, to which I arrive full of desire and enthusiasm."

Banderas, who suffered a heart attack in 2017 in Britain where he has a home, did not say where he was staying. He skipped a charity gala which he was supposed to host on Sunday in Marbella

on southern Spain's Costa del Sol, not far from his hometown of Malaga. The actor in January received his first Oscar nomination for his role in Spanish director Pedro Almodovar's "Pain and Glory" in which he plays a film director in decline who reflects on his life. In the end the award for best actor in a leading role went to Hollywood actor Joaquin Phoenix. — AFP



In this file photo Spanish actor and director Antonio Banderas smiles during the presentation of the musical "A Chorus Line" in Malaga. — AFP



A view of the city from the Yellow Crane Tower in Wuhan in China's central Hubei province.

Shadow of coronavirus slowly lifts from epicenter Wuhan



People participating in a music festival in Wuhan in China's central Hubei province.



Couples dancing next to the Yangtze River in Wuhan in China's central Hubei province.



A vendor wearing a face mask as she works at her stall in a market in Wuhan in China's central Hubei province.



Workers carrying a bucket with fish at a seafood market in Wuhan in China's central Hubei province.

Fans dancing at an electronic music festival, long lines at breakfast stands, gridlocked traffic—the scenes in coronavirus ground zero Wuhan these days would have been unthinkable in January. The central Chinese city's recovery after a 76-day lockdown was lifted in April has brought life back onto its streets. The queues snaking outside breakfast stands are a far cry from the terrified crowds that lined up at the city's hospitals in the first weeks after the city was quarantined in January to curb the spread of COVID-19. The hazmat suits and safety goggles that were once the norm have given way to umbrellas and sun hats as tourists shield themselves from the scorching summer sun, posing for photos in front of the city's historic Yellow Crane Tower.



People walking around a night market in Wuhan in China's central Hubei province.

But all is not back to normal. Business remains slow in Wuhan, a city of 11 million people where the coronavirus was first detected late last year before it unleashed a global pandemic. "In the first half of the year, we only opened some projects that had been



A woman waiting for clients in her shop in Wuhan in China's central Hubei province.



People dancing during the afternoon next to the Yangtze River in Wuhan in China's central Hubei province. — AFP photos

decided before the outbreak," Hu Zeyu, an employee at a local real estate company, tells AFP. "Business volume has been greatly reduced." Food stall owner Yang Liankang says things are improving slowly, with sales growing from around 300 yuan (\$28.72) a day a month ago to more than 1,000 yuan. "It's not as good as my ideal," he says.

In some Wuhan neighborhoods, plastic barriers ubiquitous during the lockdown continue to restrict traffic. Many of the people first found to be infected worked at the Huanan Seafood Market, which was sealed off by the authorities. It still stands empty behind blue barriers. Some vendors have reopened their stalls elsewhere.

Wuhan has also had time to look back on its trau-

ma, though only some memories make it into the official narrative. At a pandemic-themed exhibition, families peer through glass at autographed hazmat suits used by medical workers at the height of Wuhan's outbreak, in an attempt to document an unprecedented period in the city's history. China has largely brought its domestic epidemic under control, but sporadic outbreaks and a summer of severe flooding have exacerbated the economic fallout. Despite fears of a resurgence, some Wuhan residents are keen to enjoy the city's recovery. "Now I enjoy every day as if it were the last," says Hu Fenglian. "I don't want to worry too much." — AFP



Couples posing for wedding photographers next to East Lake in Wuhan in China's central Hubei province.



People participating in a music festival in Wuhan in China's central Hubei province.

Rio to make beachgoers reserve space via app

Seeing to contain COVID-19, the mayor of Rio de Janeiro announced Monday the iconic Brazilian beach city will require sunbathers to social distance and reserve space on the sand in advance via an app. Mayor Marcelo Crivella said Rio's world-famous beaches could only fully reopen with clearly demarcated areas to keep people apart. But implementing the measure could prove difficult in a city where the sand has already been packed in recent weeks despite the threat of a 107-real (\$20) fine. "People will be able to remain in demarcated areas, based on the time they arrive and also by reserving via an app," Crivella told a news conference. "That way, we can better organize something that's not working well today."

Rio authorities closed beaches in March to fight

the spread of the new coronavirus, which has killed more than 100,000 people in Brazil, the second-highest death toll in the pandemic, after the United States. Rio Governor Wilson Witzel admitted at the time the measure amounted to "heresy" in a place known for its love of the beach. With more than 14,000 deaths, Rio state has been hit harder by the virus than any other in Brazil except for Sao Paulo.

On July 31, Crivella reopened the Rio ocean front for swimming, but sitting on the sand is still off-limits. Despite that, throngs of people have crowded legendary beaches such as Copacabana and Ipanema on recent weekends, soaking up the sun, playing football in the sand and gazing at the green mountains dotting the turquoise water. Crivella did not set a date for the reopening, saying

officials would give more details soon. In July, the mayor had said he would only allow people back on the beach when there was a coronavirus vaccine. Other beach destinations have also experimented with technology to reopen. Spain is using drones, Belgium is using sensors and cell-phone location trackers, and various places are asking beach-goers to reserve via websites or booking apps. Rio also authorized business conferences and corporate events again, effective immediately. On July 29, Brazil reopened to foreign visitors arriving by plane after a four-month suspension, hoping to revive its lockdown-devastated tourism industry despite its struggles to contain the virus. — AFP

Millennium-old skeleton found in Mexico

A millennium-old skeleton of a pre-Hispanic man has been unearthed in northeast Mexico, archaeologists said Monday, describing it as one of the first of its kind to be discovered complete. The body of the man, believed to be between 21 and 35 years old, had been placed inside a woven mat with a small mortar as an offering, the National Anthropology and History Institute said.

His remains lay untouched for more than 1,000 years and the skeleton and its position were preserved along with a ceramic relic, the institute said. He is thought to have lived sometime during the period 400 to 700 AD, it said. The skeleton was discovered by residents of the state of Tamaulipas constructing the foundations for a water tank, it said. — AFP

Sports

Photo of the Day



Sean Garnier performs in Kuwait. — Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

Japan swim queen Ikee to return to racing: Reports

TOKYO: Japanese swimming star Rikako Ikee has registered for a competition in Tokyo this month, her first since her shock diagnosis with leukaemia last year, local media reported yesterday. The 20-year-old was a strong favourite for 100-metre butterfly gold at her home Olympic Games before revealing last year that she had been diagnosed with leukaemia.

She was discharged from hospital in December after being hospitalised for about 10 months and resumed training in March. Public broadcaster NHK and Kyodo News said on Tuesday that Ikee has registered for a 50-metre freestyle race organised by the Tokyo Swimming Association on August 29.

A spokesman for the association declined to comment, saying only that registration for the event was still open. Ikee has documented her fight against the disease online, thanking her legions of fans for their support.

"It was a long and hard time," she said last year in a handwritten message posted on her Twitter account. Ikee was also considered a contender for the Tokyo 2020 200m freestyle, but her diagnosis forced her to switch her focus to competing in the 2024 Olympics.

She has not said if she plans to rethink and compete in Tokyo next year, following the postponement of the Games because of the coronavirus. She served as the key figure at a subdued year-to-go ceremony for the postponed Games last month, urging disheartened athletes not to lose faith. "Think of the coming year not simply as a one-year postponement, but a plus-one," she said. "To overcome adversity, what we need is hope, a flame of hope of glowing in the distance allows us to keep trying, to keep moving forward, no matter how hard it is." — AFP

Trout, Angels end Athletics' win streak, McCullers pitches Astros past Giants

Peralta, Marte lead way as D-backs outscore Rockies

ANAHEIM: Mike Trout homered twice, singled twice and led the Los Angeles Angels to a 10-9 comeback victory over the Oakland Athletics on Monday night in Anaheim, Calif. Trout's second homer and seventh of the season came in the bottom of the eighth inning, snapping a 9-9 tie and helping end Oakland's nine-game winning streak. The Angels trailed 9-4 going into the bottom of the fourth inning before rallying with three runs in the fourth, two in the sixth and one in the eighth. Los Angeles matched its season high with 10 runs and also got home runs from Anthony Rendon and Shohei Ohtani among their 14 hits. Oakland got a big night from third baseman Matt Chapman, who homered twice, tripled and drove in six runs — all in the first four innings. The Angels' bullpen, however, shut out the A's after the fourth.

ASTROS 6, GIANTS 4

Lance McCullers carried a no-hit bid into the seventh inning, and host Houston parlayed a four-run third inning into a win over San Francisco. McCullers (2-1), roughed up for a career-high-tying eight runs in his previous start, pitched effectively and efficiently. He induced 13 ground-ball outs while throwing 59 of his 86 pitches for strikes. He did not issue a walk and allowed just one other baserunner, plunking Austin Slater to open the third. Leading 1-0 courtesy of an opposite-field, run-scoring single by Carlos Correa in the second, the Astros had four consecutive baserunners reach with one out in the third against Logan Webb (1-1). Michael Brantley delivered the biggest swing of the frame with his bloop two-run double that landed just inside the left field line.

PHILLIES 13, BRAVES 8

Didi Gregorius hit a grand slam, Bryce Harper socked a three-run homer, and host Philadelphia routed Atlanta. J.T. Realmuto homered and knocked in three runs while Roman Quinn (three hits) and Jean Segura each went deep for the Phillies. Philadelphia compiled at least four home runs and 10 runs in the first two innings for the first time in franchise history, according to the Elias Sports Bureau. Phillies starter Aaron Nola (1-1) tossed eight strong innings, giving up two hits and one run and striking out 10 against one walk. Travis d'Arnaud homered and doubled, and Johan Camargo and Austin Riley also hit home runs for the Braves.

NATIONALS 16, METS 4

Asdrubal Cabrera homered twice, doubled

twice and drove in five runs as Washington rapped out 17 hits in pounding host New York. Juan Soto and Trea Turner socked two-run homers for Washington, which had dropped three straight games and was losing 5-2 to Baltimore on Sunday when rain forced the game to be suspended in the top of the sixth inning. Benefiting from the support was Patrick Corbin (2-0), who sailed through six stress-free innings, allowing five hits and two runs, one earned. He walked two and fanned four. Steven Matz (0-3) saw his ERA soar to 8.20. He was rocked for eight hits and eight runs in 4 1/3 innings, walking none and whiffing five.

DIAMONDBACKS 12, ROCKIES 8

David Peralta and Ketel Marte had four hits apiece, Kole Calhoun homered and doubled, and Arizona beat Colorado in Denver. Nick Ahmed had three hits, scored three times and stole two bases, and Christian Walker added two hits for the Diamondbacks. Alex Young (1-0) pitched two innings for the win, and Archie Bradley earned his fourth save. Charlie Blackmon had four hits to extend his hitting streak to 14 games and raise his batting average to a major-league-best .484. Nolan Arenado also had four hits, and Trevor Story and Chris Owings homered for the Rockies.

PADRES 2, DODGERS 1

Austin Hedges hit a home run and Cal Quantrill threw three innings of scoreless relief as San Diego capped its first visit of the season to Los Angeles with a victory. Eric Hosmer delivered a go-ahead single in the sixth inning for the Padres, who won for the third time in the past four games. Luis Perdomo started and went one inning for the Padres, giving up the Dodgers' lone run on a Cody Bellinger RBI single. He was followed by Matt Strahm, who tossed two innings. Quantrill (2-0) took over and offered a bit of length by giving up two hits and no walks while striking out three.

TIGERS 5, WHITE SOX 1

JaCoby Jones hit an inside-the-park homer, and Niko Goodrum had four hits, including a solo homer, as host Detroit topped slumping Chicago. Jones' homer, his fifth this season, capped a three-run seventh in Detroit's fourth straight win. Jeimer Candelario added two hits, a run and an RBI. Six Detroit pitchers combined to hold down the White Sox, who have lost five of their last six while scoring just 11 runs during that span. Daniel Norris (1-1) pitched two innings of scoreless

relief to get the victory.

TWINS 4, BREWERS 2

Eddie Rosario hit a grand slam and Randy Dobnak won his third consecutive start as visiting Minnesota snapped a four-game losing streak with a victory over Milwaukee. Dobnak (3-1) held the Brewers to one run on four hits and a walk over five innings. He struck out three and retired 10 of the last 11 batters he faced. Keston Hiura homered and had two hits to lead the Brewers' offense. Adrian Houser (1-1) allowed four runs on six hits, a walk and a hit batter over five innings.

MARINERS 10, RANGERS 2

Kyle Seager hit a grand slam, and Kyle Lewis blasted a three-run shot as Seattle routed Texas in the opener of a three-game series between the American League West rivals in Arlington, Texas. Seattle starter Justin Dunn (1-1) allowed two runs on seven hits in six innings for his first major league win. Dunn walked three and struck out two, leaving after the sixth inning with a 9-2 lead. After

scoring a combined 10 runs in their past four games, three of them losses, the Mariners ripped three home runs in their first-ever game in the Rangers' new ballpark. Rangers starter Kyle Gibson (0-2) surrendered four runs on nine hits in 4 1/3 innings. Gibson gave up Lewis' home run in the fifth that pushed Seattle into a 4-2 lead. Jimmy Herget, the third Texas pitcher, allowed Seager's grand slam in the sixth.

RAYS 8, RED SOX 7

Kevin Kiermaier hit a tiebreaking two-run double in the seventh inning. Manuel Margot had four hits, and Tampa Bay won at Boston. Kiermaier had three RBIs and two stolen bases, and Michael Perez drove in a pair as the Rays won for the fourth time in their past five games. Margot, Kiermaier and Perez combined to go 8-for-13 from the bottom third of the lineup to lead a 16-hit Tampa Bay attack. Kevin Plawewski and Jonathan Arauz had three hits and two RBIs apiece for the Red Sox, who lost for the second time in their past three games. — Reuters

British gymnasts treated 'like pieces of meat': Wilson

LONDON: Olympic bronze medallist Nile Wilson claims British gymnasts are "treated like pieces of meat" because of the "culture of abuse" that exists in the sport. Wilson is the most high-profile male gymnast to join the bullying and abuse allegations that have engulfed British Gymnastics.

The 24-year-old made history when he became the first Briton to win an Olympic medal on the

horizontal bar at Rio 2016. But Wilson's experience of the sport has not been all positive and he admitted he was originally scared to speak out for fear of harming his future selection prospects.

"I would absolutely describe it as a culture of abuse, and I have lived and breathed it for 20 years," he told the BBC on Monday. "It's emotional manipulation, being pushed through physical pain was certainly something I experienced. The gymnasts are still, in my opinion, treated like pieces of meat."

"I would say that I was abused. But we wanted to win Olympic medals - the governing body wanted to win Olympic medals, the coaches wanted to win Olympic medals." Earlier this year, Wilson made a complaint over an altercation with a senior member of staff at a social event at Leeds

Gymnastics Club.

The grievance did not relate to his training or coaching staff and, following an internal club investigation, it was dismissed - a decision upheld after a review by British Gymnastics. "I was told and felt like I was the problem. It was evident it was pushed under the carpet," he said.

"I just felt like I wasn't being heard and I was wrong. The governing body and Leeds, they didn't care at all. (I felt) completely worthless." According to the BBC, Leeds Gymnastics Club said it disputed Wilson's version of events and the allegations were "professionally" and "robustly" investigated, with the outcome independently verified.

Wilson has since left his hometown club and revealed he was concerned that airing grievances

may cost him a place at next year's Olympics in Tokyo. "For so long now we are made to feel fear or scared of speaking out," Wilson said.

"And, if I voice my concern, I may affect my selection for the Olympic Games. I am scared talking to you." The reason I am talking, which has been one of the hardest decisions I have made, is because my incident this year highlights that there is still a challenge in the culture of gymnastics and it starts at the top."

An independent review has been launched following public complaints from gymnasts from all ages and levels of the sport. British Gymnastics had defended its processes after Olympic medallist Amy Tinkler criticised the organisation for a lack of urgency with an investigation into her claims of bullying and abuse. — AFP

Sports

Kuzma's last-second three-pointer lifts Lakers past Denver Nuggets

Raptors beat Bucks in matchup of top East teams

ORLANDO: Kyle Kuzma's 3-pointer with 0.4 seconds left lifted the Los Angeles Lakers to a 124-121 victory over the Denver Nuggets on Monday night near Orlando. LeBron James had 29 points and 12 assists for the Lakers, who snapped a three-game losing streak. Anthony Davis finished with 27 points, and Kuzma contributed 25. Reserve guard PJ Dozier had 18 points to lead the Nuggets, who had eight players reach double figures. Michael Porter Jr. had 15 points on 6-of-6 shooting, including 3-of-3 on 3-pointers. Jamal Murray had 14 points, Paul Millsap scored 13 and Nikola Jokic chipped in 12 for Denver. The Nuggets rested their starters for much of the fourth quarter, and the loss left them 1 1/2 games back of the Los Angeles Clippers for the No. 2 seed in the Western Conference with two games remaining. The two teams meet today.

TORONTO RAPTORS 114 - MILWAUKEE BUCKS 106

Chris Boucher had a career-best 25 points to go with 11 rebounds, and Toronto defeated Milwaukee for the first time this season as both teams played without key players. Matt Thomas added a career-best 22 points for the Raptors and Norman Powell had 21 points and eight rebounds. Pascal Siakam added 14 points for Toronto. Kyle Korver scored 19 points for Milwaukee, Khris Middleton had 17, and George Hill netted 14.

PHOENIX SUNS 128 - OKLAHOMA CITY THUNDER 101

Devin Booker scored 35 points and Phoenix con-

tinued its surprising undefeated run through the NBA bubble, cruising past short-handed Oklahoma City. Booker, who sat out the fourth quarter, notched his 90th career 30-point game and tied Suns legend Walter Davis for most 30-point games in franchise history. Mikal Bridges and rookie Cameron Johnson added 18 points each for the Suns, who have won all six seeding games in the bubble and remain in the thick of the race for a postseason berth.

Darius Bazley's 22 points and 10 rebounds led the Thunder. Oklahoma City, which lost a 15-point lead in the first half, has already clinched a playoff spot and is 3-3 in the bubble.

DALLAS MAVERICKS 122 - UTAH JAZZ 114

Tim Hardaway Jr. led Dallas with 27 points and Seth Curry added 22 to lead the Mavericks to a victory over Utah. Boban Marjanovic added 20 points and nine rebounds and J.J. Barea chipped in 18 for the Mavericks, who rallied from a 22-point deficit. Jordan Clarkson scored 18 points to lead Utah. Rayjon Tucker added a career-high 17 points while Emmanuel Mudiay added 14 and Georges Niang chipped in 13 for the Jazz, who blew a late double-digit lead for a second straight game.

MIAMI HEAT 114 - INDIANA PACERS 92

Jimmy Butler, returning from a three-game injury absence, had game highs with 19 points, 11 rebounds and four steals to lead Miami past Indiana and into sole possession of fourth place in the Eastern Conference.



ORLANDO: Danny Green #14 of the Los Angeles Lakers shoots against Torrey Craig #3 of the Denver Nuggets as part of the NBA Restart 2020 at AdventHealth Arena at ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex in Orlando, Florida. — AFP

Butler, who also had five assists in 29 minutes, had been out with a sore right foot. The teams were tied at halftime, but the Heat led by as many as 18 points in an explosive third quarter and cruised from there, cooling off Pacers star T.J. Warren along the way. Warren entered Monday as the league's

top scorer in the restart, averaging an impressive 34.8 points on 60.5 percent shooting from the floor and 55.6 percent on 3-point attempts. However, Miami held him to 12 points on 5-for-14 shooting, including 2-for-6 on 3-point attempts. Victor Oladipo led Indiana with 14 points. — Reuters

Atalanta shoulder Italian hopes in Champions League

MILAN: Atalanta take on Paris Saint-Germain in the Champions League quarter-finals today with the tournament debutants the surprise standard bearers for Italian football in Lisbon. Serie A champions Juventus and Napoli were felled in the last 16, leaving Atalanta to carry the nation's hopes of a first major European trophy since Inter Milan's 2010 triumph.

PSG will not have superstar Kylian Mbappe available, but Atalanta look set to be without top scorer Josip Ilicic, who found the net 21 times in all competitions, including five in the Champions League.

"We miss Ilicic very much," said coach Gian Piero Gasperini. "It was his season. Until February, he was the most decisive player in our forward line." The 32-year-old Slovenian was on form until the coronavirus engulfed Italy and in particular the team's home city Bergamo, where at one point the army was called in to take away coffins because local morgues could not cope with the number of virus deaths.

Ilicic was overwhelmed by personal and psychological difficulties and has been sidelined for the team's final games of the season. But Atalanta's strength has been the number of players who have contributed to their all-competitions tally of 118 goals.

Colombians Duvan Zapata and Luis Muriel have scored 19 each in total, with Mario Pasalic netting 11, mercurial Papu Gomez eight and Ruslan Malinovskyi nine. And the unpredictable nature of the season has given 'La Dea' (The Goddess) reason to dream despite the club having won just one major trophy, the 1963 Italian Cup, in its 112-year history.

"Atalanta belongs to the city and you feel part of this," said captain Gomez. "We know we're a team from a city of about 100,000 people and not the big team of a capital. But we know where we are going and what we want."

"We've learned along the way, from the first match in the Champions League, when we conceded four against Dinamo Zagreb. "We raised the level and now they're asking us for the Champions League. Achieving this goal is priceless."

'BEYOND OPTIMISM'

Atalanta's transformation into Italian title contenders, with two third-place finishes in as many seasons, has been overseen by the club's billionaire

owner Antonio Percassi, who played as a defender for the club. The 67-year-old took over as president in 2010 and working with his two sons he has lifted the club to new heights. "It was not easy, but the last three years have gone beyond the most optimistic forecasts," said Percassi.

"It's our story, that of the entire 'Atalantina' family," Gasperini's European campaign started disastrously, losing their first three group games and conceding 11 goals, but they bounced back to qualify for the knockout stages.

Italy coach Roberto Mancini believes Atalanta have transformed the Italian game. "They have a modern spirit and principles — courage to dare, attacking style, search for dominance beyond the result," Mancini told Gazzetta Dello Sport.

"The top clubs in Europe all play with this mentality, but things are changing in Italy too, many coaches are more daring today, also thanks to Atalanta. "They have shown that a certain type of football, as well as being beautiful, reaps results."

"They have everything to play the quarter-final with confidence." Gasperini meanwhile will hope to follow Hector Cuper's Valencia, who two decades ago were surprise Champions League finalists, in the year of their third place league finish. Valencia lost to Real Madrid, but won La Liga the following season. — AFP

Is this Neymar's time in the Champions League?

LISBON: Paris Saint-Germain have once again been hit by a flood of injuries going into a crunch Champions League knockout tie, but this time Neymar is fit and seemingly ready to live up to his status as the world's most expensive player.

PSG face Atalanta in Lisbon today in the first quarter-final of the 'Final Eight', after UEFA turned the latter stages of Europe's elite club competition into something akin to a World Cup after the long coronavirus shutdown.

There will be no fans in the Estadio da Luz, but the French champions coped just fine behind closed doors when they beat Borussia Dortmund in their last 16, second leg in March. That night Neymar scored the opener in a 2-0 win as they overturned a first-leg deficit. After the game, the Brazilian sat on a step high up in the stands at the Parc des Princes and cried tears of joy. After all, his first two seasons in Paris following his 222 million-euro (\$264 million) transfer from Barcelona were marred by injuries at the worst possible moments.

First there was the broken metatarsal that saw him miss the last 16, second leg against Real Madrid in 2018 as PSG were knocked out by the reigning champions. And history repeated itself a year later, as another metatarsal injury forced him to miss the defeat against a mediocre Manchester United, when they contrived to throw away a 2-0 first-leg advantage.

Since then, the much talked about move back to Barcelona has not happened and does not look likely to happen in the post-pandemic market. Today's game comes a day short of three years after Neymar made his debut for PSG following that stunning, 222 million euros transfer from Spain.

Aged 28, Neymar now finally seems settled in Paris and is in fine shape to lead his team against Atalanta as they look to progress to the Champions League semi-finals for the first time since the Qatari takeover in 2011. "I think I'm having my best time since I came to Paris," he said in an interview with the club's website last week.

MBAPPE A MAJOR DOUBT

And how PSG — in the week they celebrate the 50th anniversary of the club's founding — need him as coach Thomas Tuchel has all sorts of selection concerns elsewhere. His other superstar forward, Kylian Mbappe, is expected to be on the bench at best as he battles to shake off an ankle injury suffered in last month's French Cup final against Saint-Etienne.

Angel Di Maria is suspended, while the club's all-time record goal-scorer, Edinson Cavani, left at the end of June when his contract expired. Ironically, he has been tipped to move to Lisbon to sign for Benfica.

Perhaps most worryingly of all, midfield maestro Marco Verratti is out with a calf injury and reports claim the Italian would possibly not even be fit for the final should PSG make it. To top it all, Tuchel is on crutches too, the German coach breaking his fifth metatarsal and spraining his left ankle during a workout.

But as long as Neymar is fit, PSG will remain hopeful of progressing to a semi-final next week against Atletico Madrid or RB Leipzig. "We're a very strong team together, we've won four titles already this season, and I'm very happy to be the Paris Saint-Germain manager," Tuchel told PSG TV this week. "It's a gift for me." — AFP

Ronaldinho set for August 24 release

ASUNCION: Brazil great Ronaldinho could be freed on August 24 following five months detention in Paraguay over a forged passport, judicial sources told AFP on Monday.

The former Barcelona, AC Milan and Paris Saint-Germain star was detained alongside his brother Roberto de Assis Moreira on March 6, accused of entering Paraguay in possession of false passports.

They spent a month behind bars before paying a \$1.6 million bail and being released to house arrest at the plush Palmaroga Hotel in the historic centre of the Paraguayan capital Asuncion. Judge Gustavo Amarilla has set a date of August 24 to hear the case against the brothers.

Prosecutors have submitted a proposal to the judge that would see Ronaldinho, 40, pay a \$90,000 fine "to repair social damage" but be allowed to return home to Brazil where he would have to appear before a judge every three months for a year. Ronaldinho denies having any knowledge of the passports were fake.

His brother — who allegedly knew about the false passports — would have to pay a \$110,000 fine and appear before a judge every three months for two years. Prosecutors also asked for a two-year suspended prison sentence for Roberto de Assis Moreira, who is also Ronaldinho's business manager.

The brothers arrived in Paraguay on March 4 without any issues, with Ronaldinho, 2005 Ballon d'Or winner, due to take part in event in support of disadvantaged children. However, shortly after their arrival, the pair were taken into police custody when investigators raided their hotel following the discovery they had fake documents.

The investigation has since expanded into a case of possible money laundering. Ronaldinho, considered one of the greatest footballers of all time, was crucial in Brazil's 2002 World Cup win. — AFP



SUZHOU: This photo taken on August 6, 2020 shows Qingdao Huanghai's physio Erica Hernandez speaking with a player during the Chinese Super League football match between Qingdao Huanghai and Shanghai SIPG. — AFP

'First woman physio' breaks down barriers in China football

SHANGHAI: Erica Hernandez calls herself the first woman physio in Chinese professional football — but the Spaniard is certain that she will not be the last. Together with husband Jordi Escura, a former Andorra defender, they head up medical services at Chinese Super League side Qingdao Huanghai.

Chinese media call them "the miracle-working medical couple". But while women are slowly becoming more involved in men's football, Hernandez is an incongruous sight in the male-dominated CSL.

"I just want to say that what I'd love to see soon is that we are not treated as women or men working in certain positions," Hernandez told AFP by email from Suzhou, where half the 16 CSL teams are in a "bubble" to ward off coronavirus.

"I wish that we will all just be treated as professionals, without taking into account our gender," added the 40-year-old, who believes that she is the only woman physio in the top two divisions of Chinese football. "From my experience what the player wants is to recover sooner and better, he or she doesn't care who treats them as long as you

help them get what they want." Hernandez, who has been with Qingdao for about five years after a stint in Thai football, is keen to stress that she has never faced any sexual discrimination at the club on China's northeast coast. "Having said this, I know that there are some superstitions and traditions that discriminate against women, such as not being able to go to the same bus as the team or not sitting on the bench during the match," she added. Hernandez names Eva Carneiro, who was the team doctor at Chelsea until 2015, as one of her inspirations.

In 2016 Carneiro settled a constructive dismissal case with the Premier League club, who apologised "unreservedly" over her treatment, and she also reached a discrimination settlement with former manager Jose Mourinho. Lorena Torres, performance director at the Philadelphia 76ers and also from Spain, is another Hernandez looks up to for the way she forged a career in the NBA. Hernandez believes that sometimes women place an extra burden on themselves because they feel they have to prove themselves. "It is because we want to avoid situations where somebody could just say, 'If she was a man it wouldn't happen,'" she said.

Hernandez's place in Chinese football has come into sharp focus since the coronavirus-delayed season finally kicked off last month because Qingdao are newly promoted to the top division. The 16 CSL teams have been split into two groups, in Suzhou and Dalian, and they are not allowed to leave a designated hotel in each city to prevent contact with the outside world. — AFP

14 Trout, Angels end Athletics' win streak, Astros past Giants



15 Kuzma's last-second three-pointer lifts Lakers past Denver Nuggets



15 'First woman physio' breaks down barriers in China football



COLOGNE: Manchester United's Serbian midfielder Nemanja Matic (C) heads the ball during the UEFA Europa League quarter-final football match between Manchester United and FC Copenhagen at the Rhein Energie Stadion, in Cologne, western Germany. — AFP

Fernandes sends Man Utd into semis

Lukaku leads Inter into Europa League semi-finals

COLOGNE: Bruno Fernandes scored a penalty in extra time as Manchester United scraped past FC Copenhagen 1-0 on Monday in the quarter-finals of the Europa League, reshaped into an eight-team straight knockout tournament in Germany due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The Portugal international notched his competition-best seventh goal of the season as United set up a semi-final clash against Sevilla or Wolves, joining Inter Milan in the last four following the Italian side's 2-1 victory over Bayer Leverkusen in Dusseldorf.

"Third time this season we've been to the semis, every competition we've been in. Delighted we've gone through, we deserved to win tonight," United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer told BT Sport.

"Their keeper was fantastic, unbelievable. We hit the post a few times, there were a couple of VAR decisions against us. It could have been one of those nights that you end up with penalty shoot outs. They made it hard for us."

All games from the quarter-finals onwards in this season's Europa League are being played behind closed doors as one-off ties across four venues — Cologne, Duisburg, Dusseldorf and Gelsenkirchen — in a unique format following a five-month interruption.

Solskjaer recalled Fernandes, Paul Pogba, Marcus Rashford, Mason Greenwood and Anthony Martial

but the 2017 competition winners struggled early, and 18-year-old Copenhagen forward Mohamed Daramy was twice involved as the Danish underdogs threatened a creaking United backline.

Eric Bailly intervened just as Daramy attempted to stab home a bouncing cross, and the Ivorian defender was then played into trouble by Fred with Jens Stage's subsequent effort blocked.



We deserved to win tonight

Rashford finally tested Karl-Johan Johnsson just before the interval with a long-range shot — the first of a multitude of saves for Copenhagen's outstanding Swedish goalkeeper. Greenwood looked to have put United ahead as he drilled in via the far post moments later only for the teenager to be ruled offside following a VAR review.

He again went close early in the second half when

he slammed against the upright, with Fernandes promptly smacking the opposite post with a dipping 20-yard drive.

The Portugal international, who scored five times in the group stage with Sporting, stung the palms of Johnsson with another hit from distance — shortly after Aaron Wan-Bissaka made a desperation block to thwart Bryan Oviedo after a mesmerising dribble from Rasmus Falk.

JOHNSON OUTSTANDING IN GOAL

Appearing in their first European quarter-final, and the first Danish club to reach this stage since 1997, Copenhagen continued to frustrate United as they sought a repeat of their 1-0 win when the clubs last met in the Champions League group stage in 2006.

Martial nearly won the game in normal time but again a sprawling Johnsson tipped away his curling attempt that appeared destined for the top corner.

The France striker was once more repelled by Johnsson at the start of extra time, but Martial won a penalty as United kept the attack alive and the striker was upended by Andreas Bjelland.

Fernandes blasted home from the spot on 95 minutes but Solskjaer's team were left to sweat until the end as Johnsson pulled off sensational stops from the

Portuguese and substitute Juan Mata, with Victor Lindelof the third United player to strike the post.

United though ultimately ensured their 2019-20 campaign will extend into a second year, having started the season 365 days ago with a 4-0 Premier League win over Chelsea. Awaiting them on Sunday will be Sevilla — who have won the Europa League and its precursor, the UEFA Cup, a record five times — or domestic rivals Wolves.

Former United striker Romelu Lukaku grabbed the decisive goal for Antonio Conte's Inter against Leverkusen as the Serie A runners-up moved a step closer to adding to their titles from 1991, 1994 and 1998.

Inter struck first as Nicolò Barella guided in from the edge of the area on 15 minutes, with Lukaku bundling in a second six minutes later. Kai Havertz reduced the deficit in possibly his final game for Leverkusen on 25 minutes after exchanging passes with fellow Germany international Kevin Volland, but Inter held on to seal their place against Shakhtar Donetsk or Basel in next week's semi-final.

"The defence did a tremendous job again tonight. We are growing but we have to learn to kill games off when we have the chances to do it, and we didn't tonight," said Lukaku. "Now we have time to recover physically and prepare for another great game. We will have to be ready." — AFP

Konta suffers heart scare in Lexington exit

LEXINGTON: Britain's Jo Konta suffered a health scare as she crashed out of the opening round of the WTA Top Seed Open in Lexington on Monday with a straight-sets defeat to the Czech Republic's Marie Bouzkova.

Third seed Konta requested medical attention just a few minutes into her 6-4, 6-4 first round loss to the unseeded Bouzkova. The 29-year-old Briton looked uncomfortable and kept holding two fingers to her neck to check her pulse before eventually resuming play.

Konta later explained that she is prone to sudden palpitations that

can send her heart rate soaring. "My heart rate shoots up for no reason, we didn't have a long point, I wasn't gassing in any way in my lungs," Konta said.

"It makes me a bit lightheaded, I just had to see the doctor and the physio. "I was having all the checks. I am as fit as a fiddle but it can happen. It took a while to settle down until about 4-3 in the first set, but then it did settle down and I was able to concentrate on the tennis."

Konta said it was the fourth time she had been affected by the problem during tournament play or practice. "We don't know why it happens, it's in stressful situations, in non-stressful situations. It's been sporadic and we haven't been able to capture it. I get very lightheaded and I can't function for the first few seconds," she said.

"I am worried. It's not ideal. I am going to have another EKG (electrocardiography) test, and hopefully

measure it. But probably now it won't happen again for another year or something." Konta, the world number 15, was the highest profile casualty on Monday in the opening round of the inaugural WTA event in Kentucky.

Other seeded players in action made it safely into the second round, with Polish sixth seed Magda Linette beating the United States' Lauren Davis 6-2, 6-2, and Tunisia's Ons Jabeur, seeded eight, downing another American, Caty McNally, 6-2, 6-4.

Second seed Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus was taken to three sets by Madison Brengle before claiming a 6-1, 6-7 (5/7), 6-2 win. This week's event is the first WTA tournament to be held in the United States following a five-month hiatus caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

Former world number Serena Williams plays her opening match of the tournament on Tuesday against Bernarda Pera. — AFP

Football 'whistle blower' under witness protection

LISBON: Rui Pinto, the Portuguese man believed to be the mastermind behind Football Leaks, has been freed from house arrest and is now in witness protection as he awaits trial for attempted extortion and other crimes, police said late on Monday.

Prosecutors have said Pinto, 31, created Football leaks — a trove of 70 million documents exposing the dealings of European soccer clubs including transfer fees, contracts and information relating to players' agencies.

His lawyers have described him as a "whistleblower" who acted in the public interest. Pinto was detained in Hungary in January last year on a European arrest warrant issued

by Portuguese authorities. He was then extradited to his home country.

Portuguese prosecutors brought various charges against him, mostly related to allegations of unauthorised access to data, attempted extortion and violation of correspondence. He had been in pre-trial detention in Lisbon since March 2019 before going under house arrest in April this year. He was released at the weekend.

Portugal's criminal investigation police agency (PJ) said in a statement Pinto was now in witness protection and that it "reserves the right and the duty to use all legal means at its disposal to discover the truth of the crimes it investigates".

According to Portuguese law, special protection measures can be applied to witnesses when there is danger for life, health, freedom or property. Pinto's trial is set to start next month. Earlier this year, Pinto also took responsibility for disclosing hundreds of thousands of files about alleged financial schemes used by billionaire Isabel dos Santos to build her vast business empire. She has repeatedly denied wrongdoing. — Reuters