



5 Beirut blast trauma adds new wounds to old scars



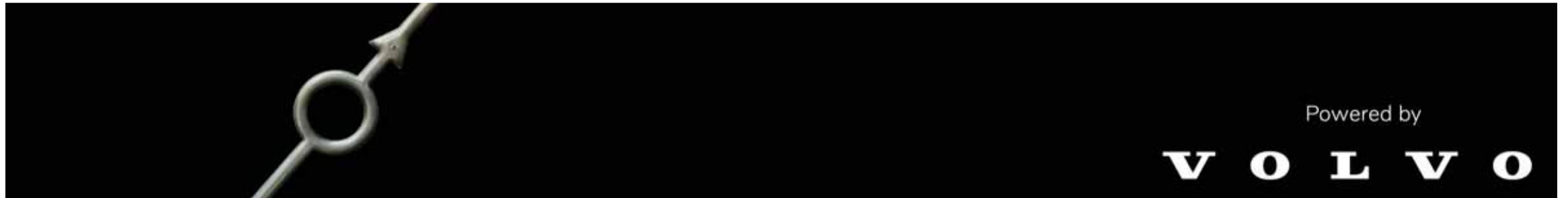
8 Apple on cusp of \$2 trillion milestone, defying pandemic



12 Venice nurtures its lagoon back to health



16 Timbers fell Orlando to win MLS restart tournament



Finance minister comfortably survives no-confidence vote

Lawmakers file to grill premier, education minister

75,000 iqamas lapse; curbs on expats over 60

KUWAIT: The total number of residents who lost their Kuwait residency visas because they failed to renew them online while out of the country has increased to around 75,000, security sources told Al-Rai daily, blaming the residents themselves or their sponsors for losing their visas as they had not seized the opportunity when the interior ministry opened online renewals.

Responding to a question about families holding dependent visas sponsored by residents whose visas have been cancelled, the sources said authorities are waiting for a decision to resume visa issuance and flights to find suitable solutions

for their problems by studying each case individually.

In a related development, informed sources told Al-Qabas daily that the manpower authority has started implementing verbal instructions to renew work permits for expats aged 60 who do not hold university degrees for only one year, during which they must start preparing to leave the country, as they will not be able to renew their residencies the following year.

The sources added that various labor departments have started implementing the new instructions, and expats in this category who managed to renew their residency

Continued on Page 2

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Finance Minister Barrak Al-Sheetan comfortably survived a no-confidence motion yesterday despite a concerted campaign to unseat the minister, who has only been in office for the past few months and has already faced two grillings. Thirty-two MPs renewed their confidence in the minister, while 12 voted against him with three abstentions. Only elected MPs who are not Cabinet members are allowed to vote on no-confidence motions.

Sheetan promised after the vote that the income of Kuwaiti citizens will not be touched as long as he is finance minister. But immediately after the vote, MP Abdulkarim Al-Kandari filed to grill HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah for alleged plans to tax citizens in the face of a deepening budget deficit and for allegedly mishandling the battle against the coronavirus.

Kandari said the government had in fact taken a decision a few months ago to initiate studies to raise charges on public services and the prime minister is directly



KUWAIT: Finance Minister Barrak Al-Sheetan gestures after surviving a no-confidence motion yesterday at the National Assembly. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

responsible for such decisions and not the finance minister, and thus the premier should be held accountable. He said he believes that the government has failed to deal adequately with the coronavirus crisis despite solid popular backing and should be questioned for this.

Three other MPs also filed two grillings

to question Education Minister Saud Al-Harbi for failure to run the ministry and employ bedoon (stateless) teachers. The grillings were filed by MPs Al-Humaidi Al-Subaei, Khaled Abul and Awdah Al-Awdah. With barely three to four weeks left for the current term of the Assembly

Continued on Page 2

Biden picks Harris as White House running mate

WASHINGTON: US presidential hopeful Joe Biden named Senator Kamala Harris, a former rival in the White House race, as his running mate Tuesday, marking a historic first for American women of color. Biden's announcement capped a months-long search for a Democratic partner to challenge President Donald Trump in November. Harris, who would become America's first female and first black vice president if elected, is a "fearless fighter for the little guy, and one of the country's finest public servants", Biden, 77, said in revealing his running mate. "I'm proud now to have her as my partner in this campaign."

The decision, announced in typical 2020 style on social media, was a crucial moment for Biden as he aims to build a

broad coalition of voters to oust Trump from the White House. It also provided an early financial windfall he said, tweeting after the vice-president announcement that "we are on track to have our biggest fundraising day ever". Harris, who at 55 is two decades Biden's junior, could appeal to younger voters and women, particularly those in the suburbs who have been fleeing Trump.

The former California attorney general is the first person of Indian descent in the running mate role, and personifies the diversity seen as key to building enthusiasm for the Democratic ticket, particularly in a year marked by a historic reckoning on race. Republican and staunch Trump supporter Sarah Palin - herself a former

vice presidential nominee - congratulated Harris on Instagram and posted a lengthy list of advice for the campaign trail, including keeping her allies close and staying true to herself.

Harris, who ran for the 2020 Democratic presidential nomination against Biden, said she was "honored" to join the ticket and would "do what it takes" to help him win. "@JoeBiden can unify the American people because he's spent his life fighting for us. And as president, he'll build an America that lives up to our ideals," she tweeted.

For Harris, being elevated onto a presidential ticket is the political moment of a lifetime.

Continued on Page 2



HOUSTON: Former Vice President Joe Biden and Senator Kamala Harris speak in this Sept 12, 2019 file photo after the third Democratic primary at Texas Southern University. — AFP

'Squad' sweep as Omar holds off challenger

WASHINGTON: US Representative Ilhan Omar held off a well-funded challenger Tuesday and won the Democratic primary in her congressional district, putting her on track for re-election in November along with other members of the "Squad" of four liberal freshmen. Omar defeated attorney Antone Melton-Meaux, who had accused her of prioritizing her celebrity over her constituents, and several other challengers, the New York Times said.

One of the first two Muslim women to be elected to Congress in 2018, Omar won 57.2 percent of the vote Tuesday compared with 39.4 percent for Melton-Meaux in Minnesota's 5th district, the Times said. She is likely to win again in November in the solidly Democratic district. "In Minnesota, we know that organized people will always beat organized money," Omar, 37, said in a statement. "Despite outside efforts to defeat us, we once again broke turnout records."

Progressive Democrats have generally done well this primary cycle. With Omar's victory, all four members of the liberal group of congresswomen nicknamed the "Squad" are expected to be re-elected in the autumn. The best-known "Squad" member, Representative Alexandria Ocasio-

Cortez of New York, dispatched a primary challenger in June. Last week Representative Rashida Tlaib won her primary, and the fourth Squad member, Representative Ayanna Pressley, is running unopposed in her primary in Massachusetts next month.

Minnesota, Wisconsin, Connecticut, Vermont and Georgia all held primary elections for Congress on Tuesday. The outcome will help set the stage for November elections to the House of Representatives and Senate that will determine the balance of power in Washington. Melton-Meaux, an attorney, criticized Omar for her comments on Israel, some of which have been seen as anti-Semitic, as well as her failure to show up for some House votes.

Continued on Page 2



MINNEAPOLIS: Rep Ilhan Omar bumps elbows with supporters at a campaign stop in the Dinkytown neighborhood on Tuesday. — AFP

Three killed in Bangalore over Facebook post

BANGALORE: At least three people died in clashes with police in the Indian city of Bangalore overnight after a Facebook post offensive to Muslims sparked protests in which a police station was attacked, and a politician's house and vehicles were torched. Unable to quell protesters using

batons and tear gas, besieged officers opened fire as they risked being overpowered during the violent unrest in a Muslim-dominated neighborhood, the southern city's police chief told Reuters yesterday, adding that 110 people had been arrested for alleged vandalism and attacking the police.

A police official said an emergency law prohibiting gatherings had been imposed in Bangalore, with nearly 10,000 police reservists patrolling the streets to keep order. The city of 12 million people, best known as India's Silicon Valley, is home to a sizeable Muslim community. Pant said the

person responsible for the offensive post had been arrested. The post, which reportedly involved Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), has since been deleted.

"What was written about the Prophet (PBUH) is the working of a sick mind with an intention to create violence," Congress Party lawmaker Dinesh Gundu Rao said on Twitter. Police gave the first name of the accused man as Naveen, and said he is the nephew of another Congress politician, whose house was attacked and burnt in the violence. The politician, R Akhanda Srinivasa Murthy, appealed for calm in a video message carried by media. — Reuters



BANGALORE: Policemen stand next to burnt police vehicles along a street yesterday after violence broke out overnight in the Devara Jevana Halli area following a derogatory Facebook post. — AFP

Local

Deputy Amir congratulates Finance Minister on house trust

Sheikh Nawaf receives parliament speaker

KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah congratulated Finance Minister Barrak Al-Sheetan for winning the parliament's confidence yesterday. He commended Sheetan for his answers of queries in an interpellation held on August 4, as well as the democratic practice by the parliament members. Meanwhile, His Highness Sheikh Nawaf received at Bayan Palace yesterday National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, as well as Kuwait News Agency's Board Chairman and Director General Sheikh Mubarak Duaij Al-Ibrahim Al-Sabah.

The National Assembly had rejected Wednesday a no-confidence motion against Sheetan with 32 members supporting him. Sheetan was opposed by 12 members while three lawmakers abstained. Article 144 of the parliament's bylaw states that majority of the house, excluding the ministers, could topple the minister. Sheetan said the confidence of the house was an "important push" for him to develop the financial system of the nation, address shortcomings, stop over-spending in the budget, and develop businesses and resources. Addressing the parliament, Sheetan said the government would employ citizens to run the state's institutions with the objective of developing the financial system. He reiterated that citizens' salaries and rights "will not be touched as long as I am a Finance Minister." — KUNA



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



His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Kuwait News Agency's Board Chairman and Director General Sheikh Mubarak Duaij Al-Ibrahim Al-Sabah.

Preparations underway for Kuwait-Iraq committee meeting

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah yesterday underlined the importance of the Kuwait-Iraq Joint Committee meeting, due at the end of this month. Jarallah made the remarks while chairing a meeting that gathered representatives of state departments to coordinate for the committee meeting, a foreign ministry statement said. He called for boosting partnership between Iraq and Kuwait to serve interests of the two countries and their people. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah chairs a meeting yesterday to prepare for the Kuwait-Iraq Joint Committee meeting. — KUNA

Zain recognizes winners of KON social program

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, participated in recognizing the winners of the KON Social Entrepreneurship Program during the virtual ceremony held online to commemorate the conclusion of the program's first phase. Zain's participation came as part of the company's Gold sponsorship of the program and its extended strategic partnership with LOYAC, a non-profit organization that aims at developing youth's talents and skills.

Zain's Gold sponsorship of KON for the third year running came as part of its strategic partnership with LOYAC, which continues this year for over 16 consecutive years. The partnership comes in line with the company's corporate sustainability and social responsibility strategy, which centers around the development of the education and youth sectors, especially in regard to nurturing and developing entrepreneurial skills within the youth.

Commenting on the first phase's conclusion,

Waleed Al-Khashti, Zain Kuwait's Chief Corporate Communications and Relations Officer, said: "With the closing of the first phase of the KON Social Entrepreneurship Program, we saw great passion within students to learn new entrepreneurship skills. They have exerted amazing efforts into developing their skills and make use of their time at home to invest in themselves."

Khashti explained: "The KON Social Entrepreneurship Program achieved great success in previous years, where our youth displayed great passion and ambition to develop their skills and enter the world of business via small enterprises. This is especially true as KON is brought to Kuwait in collaboration with Babson College in Boston, considered the most prestigious entrepreneurship college in the United States and the number one institution in the world for entrepreneurship education."

Khashti further added: "We did not allow the unusual circumstances imposed by the COVID-19 outbreak to stop us from further supporting the program, which came this year in a fully online form. This has reflected the pivotal role played by technology in empowering active communication between people and achieving productivity even in such unusual times."

Khashti continued: "We are proud to continue the strategic partnership between Zain and LOYAC for the



sixteenth consecutive year. Today, LOYAC is considered one of the top national projects dedicated to empowering Kuwait's youth and progressing their skills with world-class programs, while offering them the appropriate environment to develop their talents within a social, educational, and fun setting. This perfectly goes in line with our strategy at Zain to achieve sustainability within the youth sector."

Khashti concluded: "I would like to thank LOYAC's young mentors who empowered the students to discover their potential and led them into success in spite of the current circumstances. We can't wait to see KON's newest success stories in the next phases."

This year, the KON Social Entrepreneurship Program witnessed the participation of 32 bright students aged 12-16 years, who formed seven different teams each with an innovative idea for a socially responsible and profitable business that tackles an

issue within the local community.

Recently, Zain organized a virtual workshop for KON's participants, where Khalid Al Amiri, an entrepreneur and alumni of the Zain Great Idea tech startup accelerator program, took part in sharing great tips with the students on how to creatively present their business ideas online through Zoom and record their presentations in preparation of presenting them to the judging panel.

Zain is proud to be one of the strategic partners of LOYAC since its inception, especially that it is considered one of the most prominent national programs that cater to the youth and offers them a healthy and empowering environment to develop their skills and talents in an educational, fun, and social atmosphere.

Zain believes in the development of the communities in which it operates, and it is a very important part of the company's overall success. The company considers education as a core element in the community development process, and it will continue to support it to contribute to the further progress of the country's youth.

Since its inception in 2002, LOYAC has grown to be the first choice of the youth in Kuwait when it comes to innovative and high-quality educational programs. LOYAC runs several programs for the youth to develop their professional skills, enhance their personal growth and to help them find their sense of purpose by extending themselves to others.

Biden picks Harris as White House ...

Continued from Page 1

And if they win, the telegenic but tough Californian would almost certainly become the frontrunner in the race for the 2024 or 2028 Democratic nomination. Biden would be the oldest person to take the office, and there is broad speculation that should Biden win, he would serve one four-year term and prepare his deputy to succeed him.

The former vice president is likely confident that Harris has the policy chops and governing experience to help lead from day one, and immediately step into the job as president if needed. Harris has shown herself to be more

progressive than Biden - she backed Medicare for All early on - prompting Trump to say Tuesday that she was "in favor of socialized medicine".

Trump poured scorn on Biden's announcement, saying he was "surprised" at his choice given what Trump called Harris' lackluster performance in the Democratic nomination race. He also attacked Harris for her role in the bruising confirmation hearings of Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh, calling her "the meanest, the most horrible, the most disrespectful of anybody in the US Senate".

But Harris, who beat out nearly a dozen other women to become the running mate, has shown she can parry such blows, a cherished quality for anyone facing an onslaught of negativity from a caustic president. During her own presidential campaign, she proved herself unafraid to speak her mind when she characterized Trump as a "criminal" living in the White House and called him a "predator". — AFP

'Squad' sweep as Omar holds...

Continued from Page 1

His campaign raised over \$4 million and received support from pro-Israel groups.

Omar has apologized for some of her statements about Israeli lobbying power, and her campaign said she had good reasons for missing some votes. Police reforms were a top campaign issue in Omar's district, where George Floyd, a Black man, was killed in police custody in May, touching off nation-

wide protests. Omar called for restructuring the police department, while Melton-Meaux said the police function should be "more narrowly focused".

A refugee from Somalia, Omar quickly became a target of conservative critics after she was elected in 2018. Republicans rebuked her left-wing politics, and President Donald Trump has falsely accused her of supporting Al-Qaeda. Members of both parties chided her for her comments on Israel.

In Georgia, a Republican businesswoman who has made inflammatory comments about Muslims like Omar and expressed support for QAnon, Marjorie Taylor Greene, defeated neurosurgeon John Cowan in a primary runoff for an open House seat. — Reuters

Finance minister comfortably...

Continued from Page 1

and as most of the sessions will be used to debate the budgets and final accounts, it remains doubtful if the grillings can be debated.

During the debate before the no-confidence vote, the griller MP Riyadh Al-Adasani said the "document" initiated by the minister to raise non-oil revenues is the most dangerous document ever and those who claim it does not exist are trying to cover up for the minister. He said Kuwait's ratings have been lowered twice during Sheetan's short tenure and if this happened in any other Gulf state, he would have been sacked.

MP Adel Al-Dhamkhi defended the minister, saying Sheetan is known for his "clean hands" and that cases against suspected corruption have been initiated only when

he was appointed to the post. He said the document only includes a number of ideas and that the minister has repeatedly pledged to protect citizens' incomes.

He claimed that the minister has been a target by the "deep state" which has controlled the country and covered up for criminals, adding that "we are with the people and the minister is against the deep state". Damkhi said value-added tax cannot be implemented without the approval of the National Assembly or an emergency decree by HH the Amir, and called on MPs to act as real statesmen by backing necessary reforms without undermining the pockets of citizens.

MP Mubarak Al-Hajraf charged the minister of being the driving force behind the economic document which "will destroy the peoples' income", adding that the document is on track for implementation and the situation is grave. Hajraf said as the Assembly has rejected the no-confidence motion against the minister, it means it has approved the government's document. MP Mohammad Hayef said the "economic document consists of proposals and the minister has pledged not to touch the pockets of citizens, and if he does not fulfill his promises, we will grill the prime minister".

75,000 iqamas lapse; curbs on...

Continued from Page 1

visas for a year will not be able to renew them any further, unless the current instructions are annulled. "This will help resolve the demographic imbalance problem, Kuwaitize administrative and supervisory jobs in the private sector and enable the manpower authority to control marginal laborers in the country," the sources highlighted.

Recent statistics revealed that the total number of expats aged 60 without a university degree in the private sector is 83,562 including 15,847 who are illiterate, 24,000 who can only read and write, 10,000 with a primary education, 16,000 who have middle school education and 16,000 with high school education.

Meanwhile, well-informed sources told Al-Jarida daily that the residency bill approved by the Cabinet and submitted to HH the Deputy Amir pending referral

to the parliament will give expats five years of continuous residency in Kuwait, while investors and real estate owners will be allowed 10 continuous years of residency.

The sources added that the bill will be effective upon approval by the parliament. Kuwaiti women, who were not originally granted citizenship by marriage to Kuwaitis, will be able to grant their non-Kuwaiti husbands and children residency, provided none of them works for a government body. The new bill also allows domestic helpers to stay out of the country for only four months instead of the current six months.

As for expat parents' residencies, the sources said the residency affairs directorate has so far not issued any decisions on suspending the renewal of article 22 residency visas (dependent visas), and therefore they can still be renewed until further notice.

The sources said the manpower authority will start rejecting work permit applications of marginal laborers and those older than 60, as they can get residency visas based on those work permits. "Article 22 residency visas can still be transferred online to article 18 visas upon the director's approval", the sources added. —Al-Rai, Al-Qabas and Al-Jarida

Local

Kuwait ready to help re-operate three Lebanese ports in wake of explosion

Kuwaiti, Lebanese officials discuss damaged port's reconstruction



KUWAIT: Director General of Kuwait Ports Authority (KPA) Sheikh Yousef Abdullah Sabah Al-Nasser Al-Sabah meets with Lebanese Charge d'Affaires to Kuwait Basil Oweidat. — KUNA



Food aid is loaded into a plane that left Kuwait for Beirut yesterday.



Two Kuwait Air Force planes carrying humanitarian aid pictured shortly after arrival at Beirut International Airport on Tuesday.

KUWAIT/BEIRUT: Director General of Kuwait Ports Authority (KPA) and President of the Arab Sea Ports Federation Sheikh Yousef Abdullah Sabah Al-Nasser Al-Sabah said Tuesday the KPA is ready to provide all necessary assistance for the re-operation of the ports of Tripoli, Sidon and Tyre in Lebanon. This was brought up in a press statement by Sheikh Yousef Abdullah, who is also CEO of the Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport (AASTMT), on the sidelines of his meeting with Lebanese Charge d'Affaires to Kuwait Basil Oweidat.

Sheikh Yousef Abdullah said that Kuwait places its expertise in the field of food security at the disposal of the Lebanese side, as it ranks first in the Arab world in this field, indicating that the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States has an initiative to develop the food security system for any Arab country based on the experience of Kuwait. He mentioned that the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) and Kuwait Flour Mills and Bakeries Company were addressed to implement this initiative, as the response of both sides was affirmative, underlining that if Lebanon requests Kuwait's expertise in food security, those parties will not hesitate to help accordingly. He pointed out that the unfortunate explosion of the Beirut port is the right time to activate this initiative, to return to what it was in the year 1968.

In a similar press statement, Oweidat greeted and thanked Kuwait, the leadership and the people, for their quick response after the explosion, whether by operating an

air bridge or providing health and medical supplies or through the Kuwait Red Crescent Society initiative. Oweidat considered that this Kuwaiti concern towards Arab countries is not surprising in the country of humanity, especially in periods of crisis, noting that Kuwait has always been the first supporter of its Arab neighbors, especially in crises. He indicated that the initiative of KPA to offer its assistance to Lebanon was among the first initiatives in this regard, explaining that the meeting with the KPA's chief discussed ways of cooperation and assistance that Lebanon needs to restart the Beirut port and operate other Lebanese ports.

planes carrying humanitarian aid left Kuwait yesterday, heading to Lebanon in order to meet the needs of people affected by Beirut's blast. The two planes carried more than 105 tons of food, to reach a total of 610 tons carried by 13 aircrafts since the Beirut explosion. Two Kuwait Air Force planes had landed on Tuesday at Rafic Hariri International Airport on Tuesday, carrying more than 105 tons of food as well. Kuwait's relief aid since the incident includes food and medical supplies, said Abdullah Al-Shaheen, a counselor at Kuwait's embassy in Lebanon, adding that more planes carrying aid to Lebanon are expected to leave Kuwait in the coming days.

Separately, Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRC) continued its relief efforts on Tuesday by distributing 500 food baskets to families affected by the recent Beirut port explosion, in addition to medical equipment to hospitals. Head of the KRC mission in Lebanon Dr. Musa'ed Al-Enezi reiterated that this aid aims to reduce the sufferings of affected families. He considered that providing hospitals with medical equipment and devices would help reduce the impacts of the disaster and enable them to continue their medical services. Enezi referred to KRC's cooperation through its field team, which flew to Beirut immediately following the blast, with the Lebanese Red Cross in coordination with the Kuwaiti embassy in Lebanon. Several Lebanese families thanked Kuwait and its people for the prompt relief response, stressing the importance of distributing help directly to those who were affected by the blast. KRC provided medical supplies to five damaged hospitals: Saint George Hospital, the Lebanese Hospital Geitaoui, Wardia, Karantina and Makassed General Hospital. — KUNA



Aid planes leave for Lebanon

Kuwaiti aid

In other news, two Kuwait Air Force

Tahboub honors outgoing AFSED director Hamad



KUWAIT: Palestinian Ambassador to Kuwait Rami Tahboub presents a gift to the manager of the Arab Fund for Social and Economic Development Abdullatif Al-Hamad.

KUWAIT: Palestinian Ambassador to Kuwait Rami Tahboub paid a courteous visit Tuesday to the manager of the Arab Fund for Social and Economic Development Abdullatif Al-Hamad on the occasion of the end of his tenure following a 35-year career he spent in serving Arab causes and development.

During the visit, and in the name of the President of the State of Palestine Mahmoud Abbas, Tahboub extended gratitude to Hamad for his contributions in serving Palestine and its cause throughout his career, during which

Palestine in general, and Jerusalem in particular, were on top of his priorities. Tahboub also presented a gift to Hamad in appreciation for his efforts.

Meanwhile, Hamad thanked Tahboub and said that he would always remain ready to serve the Palestinian cause and its people. Notably, President Abbas had also honored Hamad by the Jerusalem Star accolade on December 9, 2013 in appreciation of his great contributions in serving Palestine, its people and the Arab World.

News in brief

Nursery fees waived

KUWAIT: Parents of children in private nurseries are exempted from fees that became due starting from Feb 26, 2020 until the end of the 2019/2020 school year. Nurseries must refund money paid to them for the said period, the Ministry of Social Affairs said.

Traffic fines

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Interior denied rumors alleging plans to waive traffic ticket fines for citizens and expatriates, explaining that its website was undergoing maintenance, during which traffic fines failed to appear for a limited period of time when searched online.

No vaccine orders

KUWAIT: After Russia announced a vaccine for COVID-19 and more than 20 countries ordered over one billion shots, well-informed sources said Kuwait is not amongst these countries, Al-Rai reported yesterday. The sources added that Kuwait's health ministry is in constant contact with WHO concerning the vaccinations being currently developed and tested.

Oil price up

KUWAIT: Kuwait crude oil gained 23 cents to \$45.20 per barrel (pb) on Tuesday, against \$44.97 pb last Friday, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said yesterday. Benchmark Brent crude futures dropped 49 cents to \$44.50 pb and the West Texas Intermediate losing 33 cents to \$41.61 pb.

Volunteer work

KUWAIT: As the Public Authority for Youth marked the International Youth Day yesterday, it encourages young people to join volunteer work in new various environments, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic time, saying in a statement that Kuwaiti youth presented the most wonderful role models in serving their country.

Stay safe. Stay home. Stay informed.



Limited oil leak near 7th Ring Road

KUWAIT: Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) said on Tuesday that a limited oil spill was detected near the 18th km of the Seventh Ring Road. On its Twitter account, the company added that the relevant authorities dealt with the leak, affirming that the situation was safe and under control. The emergency teams, in coordination with the state's concerned bodies, dealt with the leak in accordance with the procedures and plans applied in such cases, it said, noting that work was underway to isolate the source of the leakage. The company stressed that it is keen on abiding by all regulations pertaining to health, safety, security and environment in such cases. —KUNA

GCC chief calls experts to inspect safer oil tanker

RIYADH: Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf on Tuesday called upon a team of experts to inspect the FSO Safer oil tanker in Yemen to avoid a serious environmental disaster. Hajraf made the remark while meeting with the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for Yemen Martin Griffiths to discuss the latest developments in Yemen, the GCC Secretariat said in a statement. The statement added that Hajraf confirmed in the meeting the GCC's role in supporting an end to the Yemeni crisis through a political solution, according to the references represented by the Gulf initiative with its implementation mechanism, the outcomes of the comprehensive National Dialogue Conference, Security Council Resolution 2216. Hajraf welcomed the steps taken to implement this agreement and form a new government, expressing appreciation for the efforts of Griffiths to end the Yemeni crisis according to the three references. Meanwhile, Griffiths deeply appreciates the efforts made by Hajraf to support the efforts of the UN, considering that this confirms the GCC's keenness to reach a political solution to the Yemeni crisis. —KUNA

Beach-side residents demand action against repeated violations

People forced to clean front yards from waste left by beachgoers

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: Residents of homes built along Kuwait's coastal areas are facing numerous issues related to the public's use of beaches. Kuwait Times spoke to some of the residents to learn more about the problems they encounter.

Laila and her family moved to a seaside home in Messila in 1975, one of the first families to move to the area. "When we moved to this area, we didn't have neighbors. Even the roads were not built yet and there was no electricity as well. The area was quiet even when more people moved to live here, until a few years ago when a restaurant complex opened here. More people started coming and using the beach, and it became dirty. It's the right of people to use the beach, but they should keep it clean and not litter," she complained to Kuwait Times.

"I go daily with my family or neighbors to clean the beach of people's trash. Sometimes we pay workers to clean the beach - we get tens of plastic bags full of waste collected from the beach. The beach here is very narrow when it's high tide, which will then make the sea filthy. We have even found syringes thrown on the beach by drug addicts and empty bottles of alcohol. When the government allows people to use the beaches in our neighborhood, they also should ensure to clean it, or close it for residents only and we will clean it," added Laila.

Visitors to the area often move beyond the public beach area - which is legally open to all - and into the private property of residents. "Last week I found five children swimming in my pool, and they didn't want to leave. Also last year, some girls wearing bikinis were swimming in my pool as well," she explained, noting that she did not know any of the children. During the full curfew in May, visitors invaded private spaces repeatedly. "I had to call the police three times to make people sitting in my garden and on my grass to leave," she added.

Violations have spread to the sea. "We go to rescue stingrays that are trapped in illegal fishing traps. Some people also use special weapons to kill the stingrays. And all these behaviors are damaging the environment - both the beach and the sea," said Laila.

Yasmeen is a resident of Messila as well and has experienced a plethora of problems related to visitors on the nearby public beach. "No one has trespassed into my garden, but many times we have been disturbed by loud music or other behaviors of people. Some people who come for fishing in our area are respectful of the beach and take with them everything they bring when they leave. But there are many others who leave their trash behind them and simply leave," she pointed out.

"The Municipality said their cleaners only clean the

Sundus, a resident of Bidaa coastal area, has also faced violations of her property. "Somebody stole my kayak that was in the yard of my house. A few weeks ago, someone stole my child's bicycle that was in the garden. People do not respect the privacy of our houses. Since they allow people to use the beaches, the government should also provide the neighborhood with guards who have the authority to hand fines to violators," she noted.

Littering of beaches and public spaces is a widespread and well-known problem in Kuwait. Despite efforts by local non-government organizations to organize beach clean-ups and awareness campaigns, many visitors to public parks and beaches still leave large amounts of trash behind. "Almost daily, we the residents of this neighborhood have to clean the beach of all kinds of waste left behind by beachgoers. This includes dog litter, dirty diapers and many other disgusting stuff," Sundus said.

"Furthermore, our families are annoyed by the jet skis approaching the beach, which is not allowed, mainly to harass girls sitting on the beach. Once I called the police, but before the police arrived, the jet skiers were gone. Also, it's forbidden for vehicles to drive on the beach, but many people do so. The Municipality blocked the access point so they cannot drive, but they found another way. These violators should be ticketed, but police don't have enough personnel to do this," Sundus further complained.

The gross negligence by many visitors to clean up after themselves has led residents in some areas to block public beach access or cordon off empty lots as a way to prevent visitors from reaching the beach. The measures have led to greater dissatisfaction on both sides and a rise in conflict, as well as an added burden for the Municipality, which is required by law to remove all obstacles blocking beach access. A solution will require greater public awareness and more adherence to anti-littering efforts from all those involved.



Visitors trespass into private properties

roads but not the beaches. So we have to clean this garbage ourselves almost daily. We even placed trash bins on the beach to encourage beachgoers to throw their waste in them, but after a few days, somebody stole the bins. We suggest the government develops the seaside and charges nominal fees for entry, providing facilities such as chairs, changing rooms, toilets and so on. This way the beaches will be cleaned daily," stressed Yasmeen.



KUWAIT: A group of restaurant and small business owners staged a gathering on Tuesday, calling for urgent government action to fulfill its promises to compensate them in order to help them deal with massive financial losses incurred due to measures taken to prevent the COVID-19 spread. Police told the gatherers to leave the Irada Square because they failed to obtain permission to stage their sit-in there, so they moved to Souq Sharq's parking lot then drove all the way to Seif Palace.

— Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh

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Drunk man assaults girlfriend, police

KUWAIT: An inebriated Kuwaiti man was arrested for assaulting his girlfriend and policemen, said security sources. Case papers indicate that a Kuwaiti woman called the police reporting that a drunken man had barged into her apartment and assaulted her. Reporting to the scene and knocking at the woman's door, policemen were surprised by the assailant who opened the door and assaulted them as well. Backup was dispatched to control the situation. Initial investigations showed that the couple had been having an affair and the woman decided to break up with her boyfriend, so he barged into her apartment under the effect of alcohol to retaliate. A case was filed.

Two suicides

Two suicide cases were recently reported in Mahboula and Jaber Al-Ali respectively, said security sources. The first case was reported by a passerby who spotted someone hanging from a tree, and after approaching him, he discovered he was dead. The second case was reported by a Kuwaiti man, who found his driver hanging inside his room outside the sponsor's house.

Theft at clinic

A female secretary working at a plastic surgery clinic in the Capital governorate was arrested for stealing money from a patient's purse, said security sources. Case papers indicate that a Kuwaiti woman discovered the loss of her money while at the clinic and called the police. The owner was interrogated and denied knowing anything about the matter. However, on checking CCTV videos, detectives found the thief was the secretary and receptionist, who was arrested and referred to relevant authorities.

Harasser taught a lesson

Fed up with a Kuwaiti man's harassment and chasing her vehicle till her doorstep, a woman called her father telling him about the man chasing her. The father waited for him at her house, where he taught him a lesson and handed him over to the police. A case was filed and further investigations are in progress.

Financial dispute

An Indian man reported that three unidentified people with whom he had been having financial disputes lured him into a basement and tried to force him to sign a promissory note. They then beat and threatened him. The man denied knowing his assailants but said he knew those who sent them to settle the financial dispute. He added that he refused signing the promissory note and managed to escape. A search is on for the assailants.

In my view

The ever-changing life

By Abdellatif Sharaa

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What makes our existence on earth interesting is that ours is a dynamic and ever-changing life. One must adapt to constant changes according to the everlasting cliché, which is "always expect the unexpected". Life sometimes calls for ignorance - ignoring persons, ignoring acts and ignoring talk, and this makes one resort to getting accustomed to smart ignorance, because not everything deserves your attention.

God created people from water and clay. Some had more water than mud so they turned into rivers, while some had more mud than water and turned into stone. It will be smart that you create a small hole in your life in which you dump mistakes of your friends, and it is important to forget where the hole is so you do not go back to it when a dispute erupts.

If you look deeply in what goes in life, you may find that happiness is not the spouse, kids, friends, travel, luxury or homes. Happiness as a whole is in your contact with God and your dealings with Him. Train yourself on referring to God so the connection remains between you and God. We must realize that most of the comfort is not keeping an eye on others, and half of good manners is not to interfere in what is not your business, and half of wisdom is silence.

Who is among us who does not have a sad story within him - a person who suffered from others who they loved and may be still suffering, and a person who became tired of sacrificing without getting the fruits of it! A person who cries every day for persons who left this world; a person who suffers from being a stranger even while being among members of his family!

There are those who may find themselves among the abovementioned lines - this is "dunia" (the current temporary life on earth), and that is why it is called "dunia". Just take a deep breath and say "thank you my Lord"! It is amazing how the chicken lays a cheap egg but fills the space with clucks, while a fish lays thousands of very expensive caviar and remains silent - the wisdom here is keep silent and let your achievements speak.

How beautiful it is when strangers become friends by fate, and how difficult it is when friends become strangers all of a sudden! No one will be humble unless he is self-confident, and those who are boastful know that they have an inferiority complex. You can own everything that you desire in this life, but remember that one day you will leave it the same way you arrived: with nothing.



Amazon fires 'a lie':
Brazil's Bolsonaro

India's COVID lockdown threatens efforts to stop spikes in child marriage

Page 7

Page 6



BEIRUT: A man drives a car loaded with electronic and household appliances on the Dbayeh highway, at the northern entrance of Lebanon's capital Beirut following a huge chemical explosion that devastated large parts of the city. — AFP photos

Beirut blast adds new wounds to old scars

Earth-shaking explosion - a sickening blow to a country already in crisis

BEIRUT: Tanya can't be alone in a room. Carla, for days, thought a war was starting. Survivors of Beirut's August 4 blast are still in shock over a disaster that disfigured their city. The earth-shaking explosion killed 171 people and wounded more than 6,000, a sickening blow to a country already in crisis. Almost every generation in Lebanon has experienced some kind of conflict, whether the 1975-1990 civil war or the 2006 hostilities with Israel. Those episodes are over, but for some the traumas they left are still vivid—and last week's explosion has added yet another scar to the collective psyche.

Carla was on her balcony in an old Beirut neighborhood when she felt her building shake. "I initially thought it was an air raid because I associated the noise with what I remembered from the 2006 war," the 28-year-old told AFP. After the explosion pulverized her windows, she rushed to the stairwell, petrified. But before Carla could pull herself together, her elderly neighbor, who had survived the 1975-1990 civil war, was already busy sweeping the floor.

"This is a reflex from the war, whenever something breaks they just sweep it up," Carla said. She is now staying with her family, and said she is not emotionally ready to move back to her blast-hit home. Even at her parents' house, she cannot sleep. "A car driving by on the street becomes the sound of an airplane,"

she said in English. "Everything now triggers memories of the 2006 war... I had never realized how much that war actually had traumatized me."

'Psychological pressure'

Doctors of the World, an international charity, spent several days in the leveled Karantina district, overlooking blast site. Its staff knocked on doors in the area to offer residents free psychological support. In the first days after the explosion, residents were too busy seeking medical



Survivors of Beirut blast still in shock

treatment or clearing debris from their homes. But as a kind of normalcy slowly returned, they seemed more ready to speak, said Noelle Jouane, director of the charity's mental health program.

"It helps relieve all of their anger," she said. But in the devastated district of Mar Mikhael, the slightest thud sparks alarm. At the entrance to the neighborhood, an old man was startled by the bang of a hammer against an iron plate. He immedi-

ately ducked and pressed his body against the hood of his car. "It's nothing," a passerby reassured him. Moments later, fear gripped the entire street, with people scrambling out after rumors spread that the August 4 blast site had once again caught fire.

Panic, fear, and in some cases a certain detachment from reality are among the "normal reactions to abnormal events," said Rima Makki, the mental health activity manager for Doctors Without Borders (MSF) in Lebanon. The port blast came as Lebanon was grappling with its worst economic crisis in decades—compounded by the coronavirus pandemic. "The whole of society was already under psychological pressure," Makki said. "A traumatic incident of this magnitude, obviously, will have repercussions."

'Haunting'

Tanya, 32, was in central Beirut when the explosion tore through buildings around her. "The first two days I was constantly crying," the accountant said. "But something inside was telling me: what are you crying about? I am safe, my family is safe, our house is safe." But the mother of two said she also felt "guilt for surviving." She said she didn't remember much from the moment of the blast, but the bruises on her body remind her of what happened.

Now, she is too scared to be alone. "During the day it's easier, but at night I



BEIRUT: A Lebanese protester hurls rocks at security forces across a burning barrier amid clashes in downtown Beirut.

can't. I ask someone to stay by my side," she said. Omar, a visual artist, believes he could have been killed or disfigured by the explosion that ravaged his neighborhood. Luckily, the man in his thirties was not at home at the time. "Knives flew from the kitchen, the entire glass facade shattered in the house," he said. "Just the image, the possibility of me being here was haunting."

During a massive anti-government rally near parliament on Saturday, a

fatigued Omar suddenly felt like demonstrations were going nowhere, although he had participated in several similar rallies since a protest movement emerged in October. "I felt how can we return to the same place we were a few months ago despite... this catastrophic event," he said. Two people he knew died in the disaster. "I don't know how or if one can get over something like that," he added. "I mean you continue your life, but you continue it differently." — AFP

Harris under scrutiny for 'tough-on-crime' prosecutor past

LOS ANGELES: Joe Biden's choice of Kamala Harris as his running mate was hailed on Tuesday as a historic first for women of color, but some warn her record as a tough prosecutor could dent her appeal with two key constituencies—black voters and liberals. Harris, the first woman and the first black attorney general in the history of the Golden State, portrayed herself as a progressive reformer during her own presidential bid, but some have cast doubts on that claim.

"Time after time, when progressives urged her to embrace criminal justice reforms as a district attorney and then the state's attorney general, Ms Harris opposed them or stayed silent," law professor Lara Bazelon wrote last year in an op-ed for The New York Times. "Harris turned legal technicalities into weapons so she could cement injustices," added Bazelon, a former director of the Loyola Law School Project for the Innocent in Los Angeles. Before serving as attorney general, the 55-year-old Harris was the district attorney in San Francisco. She was elected to the Senate in 2016.

"Kamala Harris had a reputation in California as a prosecutor and attorney general who waited rather than led, who moved on controversial issues only once she saw what was politically viable," the

daily Sacramento Bee wrote in a June editorial. As concerns police brutality—a subject very much in the news following the death of George Floyd, a black man whose killing at the hands of police in May sparked nationwide protests—Harris has also been criticized for failing to intervene in cases involving police violence.

While serving as attorney general in 2016, for example, she opposed a bill to investigate deadly police shootings following the death of a stabbing suspect—shot 21 times by police—that sparked huge protests. Harris has in addition come under criticism for pushing legislation that would punish parents in California for their children's truancy. But despite her controversial record on criminal justice, Harris has also been lauded for fighting for progressive change. Her most successful program, called "Back on Track," called for non-violent first-time drug offenders to avoid jail by getting a high school diploma.

'Just in the right place'

She also initiated a project for anti-bias training for law enforcement agencies throughout California. Arguably her biggest achievement in the eyes of civil rights activists was "Open Justice," an online portal that made a wide range of criminal justice data available to the pub-



California Senator Kamala Harris

lic, including the number of deaths and injuries in police custody.

Many today reject claims that she did not go far enough in pushing for criminal justice reform, arguing she was being judged by unfair standards. "I am a public defender. I work day and night fighting for justice in San Francisco ... and the fact is that she did implement very progressive programs, period, end of story," Niki Solis, who faced Harris many times in court when she was district attorney, told AFP.

Jack Pitney, a professor of American politics at Claremont McKenna College in California, stressed that in looking at Harris' tenure as attorney general, one should take into account that she was acting as a prosecutor applying the law, rather than a legislator. "As attorney general of the state of California, she had to defend laws in court whether or not she agreed with them," Pitney said. "So to that extent, I think the criticism is misplaced." — AFP

'I don't want to die': Blast traumatizes kids

BEIRUT: "I don't want to die." Those were the first words Hiba's six-year-old son screamed after the massive explosion at Beirut port sent shards of glass flying around their house. The blast a week ago that injured around 1,000 children and temporarily displaced 100,000 according to the UN had the magnitude of an earthquake. The mental shock it caused among Beirut's youngest was just as powerful.

When the boy saw blood on his feet, "he started screaming: 'Mom, I don't want to die,'" Hiba recalled. "What is this life? Coronavirus and an explosion!" her son told her after the blast. "Imagine that!" said the mother. "A child only six years old asking this question." The 35-year-old mother of two, who asked to withhold the names of her children and their family name, said her entire building shook when the catastrophe struck on August 4. Her son, who was sitting on a living room couch just across from her, was speckled with shards of glass from a blown-out window.

"The shattered glass whirled around us," Hiba said, a scene described by

countless survivors. For a few seconds her son sat motionless and unscathed on the couch. She then dragged him out of the room, they boy barefoot on a carpet of splintered glass that cut bloody gashes into his feet. "My son now twitches in panic every time he hears a loud sound," she said.

'Bottling up emotions'

Hiba's son was not the only one left traumatized. His infant sister, born just 16 days before the explosion, lost consciousness for 20 minutes. "It took a lot of time before she began to wake up and start crying," said Hiba, so shocked herself that she has struggled to breastfeed her since. She said she now keeps her son in his room, surrounded by his toys, instead of in the living room where the television broadcasts scenes of grief and devastation all day long.

"I don't know if he is bottling up his emotions," Hiba said. "But I'm trying to spend a lot of time with him in case he needs to talk." The explosion that gutted swathes of the city killed at least 171 people and left 6,000 physically wounded. Children are among the casualties and the UN children's agency UNICEF has warned that "those who survived are traumatized and in shock". In a video widely shared on social media showing plumes of smoke rising from the harbourside, the almost playful voice of a child can initially be heard in the background, saying "explosion, explosion". — AFP

International

Paris's 'Little Africa' fights back against racism and stereotypes

The Goutte d'Or neighborhood shunned as a den of crime

PARIS: Branded a "no-go zone" by Fox News in the wake of the 2015 Charlie Hebdo attacks, the Goutte d'Or neighborhood of northern Paris has long been shunned by outsiders as a den of crime, prostitution and drugs. Locals say the image is one-sided and unfair, and entrepreneurs and artists have taken it upon themselves to promote the area's bustling Afrocentric vibe with shoppers and tourists alike.

"I want people to discover the treasures of this place, beyond the fact that the roads are dirty and the buildings run down," said Jacqueline Ngo Mpii, founder of the company "Little Africa" offering guided tours of the Goutte d'Or since 2015. "It is a neighborhood of prostitution and drug sales, but it is also a neighborhood where renowned creators work, where African popular culture is based, and a neighborhood adored by its inhabitants!" says the Cameroon-born Frenchwoman.

The Goutte d'Or is a stone's throw from the emblematic artists' quarter of Montmartre and its Sacre Coeur basilica but in some ways it is a world apart. A dramatic change from the tourist trinkets and postcard stands that line the streets of Montmartre, the working-class neighborhood boasts over 300 shops and restaurants dedicated to

African fashion and gastronomy. The alluring whiffs of Senegalese, Malian, Beninese and Togolese cuisine waft through its streets, which dazzle with window after window of brightly-colored African traditional fabrics.

'Flavor of Paris'

Once outside the walls of inner Paris, the Goutte d'Or was incorporated into the city in the 1860s and populated in large part by successive waves of immigrants, mainly from French-speaking Africa, who continue being regarded as outsiders, said Ngo Mpii. "You can see that with time, it stayed that way in the mentality of the Parisians a bit."

During France's strict lockdown to contain the coronavirus pandemic, the area was often shown on television as a place where people flouted the rules, which critics say contributed to its vilification at a time that France is asking itself tough questions about race. The country has seen numerous protests over alleged police violence following the

deaths of two men in police custody in circumstances reminiscent of the killing of African-American George Floyd in the United States.

A large, colorful graffiti work in the Goutte d'Or neighborhood reads "Police everywhere, justice nowhere"—a popular slogan at the recent anti-racism rallies, and a sign that tensions remain high.

Patrick Banks, an African-American entrepreneur originally from the Californian city of Oakland, has lived in Paris for several years, and discovered the history of the Goutte d'Or on one of Ngo Mpii's tours. "Paris is diverse, is one of the most beautiful cities in the world, but if you don't experience (all its neighborhoods) you're missing so much of what gives the flavour of Paris," he said.

In the heart of the Goutte d'Or, brothers Youssouf and Mamadou Fofana, who have Senegalese roots, run the renowned fashion brand "Maison Chateau Rouge" that has paraded down the runways of Paris Fashion Week and sells its street-wear

creations in London, Tokyo and Beijing. Youssouf Fofana said he found it astounding "that one still has to demonstrate in 2020 for things to change", and regretted that so many African creators struggle to make it until they are validated by a big white name in the commercial world.

'Diversity is wealth'

Less than 100 meters away, the owner of the shop and brand "Mazalay Couture", Alexandre Zongo, is overwhelmed by orders. "People come from very far to my shop, and I actually have a clientele that is more European than African," said the tailor, who works in the traditional Faso Dan Fani cloth of his native Burkina Faso.

"They could have gone to the Marais but they are here," he said, referring to a chic neighbourhood in central Paris. Ngo Mpii's business, like so many others, has been hard hit by coronavirus prevention measures that have made tours difficult, and tourists scarce. She has applied to the Paris tourist office to set up a virtual tour of the Goutte d'Or. "We need to show who we are so that people can change their view and their mentality," she said. "This diversity is a... wealth for France." — AFP

The Kursk: Russia's deep-sea drama

PARIS: On August 12, 2000, the Kursk nuclear submarine, pride of Russia's Northern Fleet, sank after a torpedo exploded, and the fate of its 118 crew captivated the nation until the tragic conclusion nine days later. Here is a look back at the events 20 years ago in what remains the Russian navy's worst-ever disaster.

Submarine sinks

On that Saturday morning, the Kursk, a huge 154-meter-long submarine, takes part in naval exercises in the Barents Sea on the borders between Russia and Norway. At 11:28 am local time Norwegian seismographers register a major explosion followed by a second more powerful one two minutes later. The Russian navy locates the vessel at dawn on Sunday. All radio contact with the crew is lost. The only recording will be the SOS signal one seaman onboard the submarine makes by banging against the hull of the craft. Towards the end of the day the navy deploys a first mini-submarine manned by rescuers, but it collides with the wreckage of the Kursk and has to return immediately.

Rejecting Western aid

"Technical problems" is the terse summary the Russian navy uses on August 14 to announce the accident to the public, after a two-day delay. Russia's navy chief says the main theory of events "is an explosion in the first torpedo hatch", which would have led to the submarine sinking in neutral waters 150 kilometers from the coastal town of Severomorsk, the Northern Fleet's main base. The navy says the vessel has shut down its nuclear engines and is not carrying any nuclear weapons. No radioactive leak is recorded.

According to the navy, the crew-trapped 108 meters down at the bottom of the Barents Sea has enough oxygen to last until August 18. Despite concerns for the sailors, Russia refuses offers of help from Britain, Norway and the United States. With only old or unsuitable equipment, and battling a vio-



VIDYAYEVO: This file photo shows the Russian nuclear powered Kursk submarine (left) at its base in Vidyayevo. — AFP

lent storm, the Russians pursue their rescue efforts alone, ratcheting up a series of failures.

Putin on holiday

Meanwhile Russia's President Vladimir Putin continues his holiday in the Black Sea resort of Sochi. He waits until August 16 before making his first statement, appearing in casual dress, describing the situation as "critical". "Our experts say that we have everything we need," he is quoted by Interfax as saying. But just hours later he speaks with US counterpart Bill Clinton on the telephone to discuss the rescue mission. Finally Russia accepts help from Britain and requests assistance from Norway, though Putin does not cut short his holiday and his "deafening" silence draws media fire.

"From the word go, the rescue operation should have been not only the number one concern of the rescue teams but of the whole of the state," says the daily Izvestiya. The press accuses the military of lies and questions the cost of human life in post-communist Russia. As the uncertainty drags on, families of the trapped sailors describe their anguish as a living "hell". "Each television news report is like a stay of execution," says one woman whose commander husband is on board. On August 18, Putin returns to Moscow. The chances of a successful rescue "are

very small, but they exist", he says.

All dead

On August 21, after 30 hours, Norwegian divers manage to open the submarine's airlock. The interior of the Kursk is completely flooded. All the seamen are dead. The following day in Vidyayevo, the small coastal navy village and home base for the Kursk, the crew members' families gather and Putin faces the criticisms of tearful widows. A day of national mourning is declared on August 23, but the bereaved families refuse to take part. Putin says he bears "a feeling of full responsibility and a feeling of guilt for this tragedy".

Cruel evidence

The Russian prosecutor's office concludes its investigation in July 2002 declaring no one can be held responsible. It says the accident resulted from an explosion in one of the submarine's torpedo tubes caused by volatile fuel and the crew could not be saved. They died at the latest eight hours after the blast. A scribbled note by one officer, discovered in October 2000 in the man's pocket when rescue workers raised his body from the sub, provides cruel evidence that at least 23 sailors survived several hours after the explosion, having tried to seek safety in the vessel's rear. — AFP



BASRA: An Iraqi youth dives into the Shatt Al-Arab river in the southern port city of Basra. — AFP

Iraq fumes over Turkish deadly drone strike

BAGHDAD: Iraq cancelled a ministerial visit and summoned Turkey's ambassador as it blamed Ankara for a drone strike that killed two high-ranking Iraqi officers on Tuesday. Iraqi officials labeled the strike a "blatant Turkish drone attack" in the autonomous Kurdish region in northern Iraq, where Ankara has for weeks been raiding militant positions.

Two border guard battalion commanders and the driver of their vehicle were killed, the army said in a statement, marking the first Iraqi troop deaths since Turkey launched the cross-border operation in mid-June against Kurdistan

Workers' Party (PKK) rebels. Iraq's foreign ministry—which had already summoned the Turkish envoy twice over the military action on its soil—said the ambassador would this time be given "a letter of protest with strong words" rejecting such aggression.

The ministry also confirmed the Turkish defense minister would no longer be welcomed today. Ihsan Chalabi, the mayor of nearby Sidakan in the north of Arbil province, told AFP that the drone strike in the Pradost region targeted "Iraqi border guard commanders while they were in meetings with PKK fighters". Witnesses had reported clashes earlier in the day between PKK and Iraqi forces, and local sources said the drone strike targeted an emergency meeting called to try to calm the tension. The Iraqi presidency earlier denounced "a dangerous violation of Iraqi sovereignty" and called on Ankara to "stop all its military operations" in the region. — AFP

Amazon fires 'a lie': Brazil's Bolsonaro

RIO DE JANEIRO: Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro has said it is a "lie" that fires are ravaging the Amazon rainforest, despite data from his own government showing the number of blazes is rising. The far-right leader has faced international condemnation for presiding over huge fires and rising deforestation in the Amazon—criticism he took issue with in a speech to a video conference of countries that share the world's biggest rainforest. "Tropical rainforest doesn't catch fire. So this story that the Amazon is burning is a lie, and we have to fight it with real numbers," he said Tuesday.

Yet satellite data from Brazil's na-

tional space agency, INPE, show the number of forest fires in the Brazilian Amazon last month rose 28 percent from July 2019, to 6,803. Experts say the fires are typically not sparked naturally, but set by humans to clear land illegally for farming and ranching. Last year, huge fires devastated the Amazon from May to October, sending a thick haze of black smoke all the way to Sao Paulo, thousands of kilometers away.

The fires triggered worldwide alarm over a forest seen as vital to curbing climate change. Experts warn this year's dry season, which is just getting started, could see even more fires. The scrutiny is pressuring Bolsonaro, who has called for protected Amazon lands to be opened up to mining and agriculture. He has deployed the army to the Amazon basin, 60 percent of which is in Brazil, to fight fires and deforestation, declared a ban on agricultural fires and launched a task force to combat the problem. — AFP



MATO GROSSO, Brazil: Smoke rises from an illegal fire in Amazon rainforest reserve, north of Sinop in Mato Grosso state, Tuesday. — AFP

News in brief

Israel strikes Hamas positions

JERUSALEM: The Israeli military said yesterday it carried out overnight strikes on Hamas targets in the Gaza Strip after incendiary balloons were launched across the border from the Palestinian enclave. The army said the strikes were "retaliation" for the launching of multiple balloons from the Hamas-run enclave in recent days. Jets, attack helicopters and tanks struck a number of Hamas targets including "underground infrastructure and observation posts," a statement said. Fire services in southern Israel said the balloons caused 60 fires on Tuesday alone but reported no casualties. Explosives tied to balloons and kites first emerged as a weapon in Gaza during intense protests in 2018, when the makeshift devices drifted across the border daily, causing thousands of fires in Israeli farms and communities. Israel has closed its Kerem Shalom goods crossing with the Gaza Strip in response to the recent balloon launches. — AFP

Chad president named 'marshal'

N'DJAMENA: Chadian President Idriss Deby Itno was named a marshal, the first in his country's history, in ceremonies on Tuesday to mark the 60th anniversary of independence from France. Deby, a 68-year-old general who came to power in 1990, was given the honor by the National Assembly, where his party holds a strong majority, after he led an offensive against jihadists in April. "You are an icon and a symbol for Chad," the speaker of the assembly, Haroun Kabadi, said. Deby said the prestigious military rank was awarded for a "feat of arms" and he dedicated the tribute "to all my brothers in arms". "The threat of terrorism is still there, and it is ruthless," he warned. "The fight against terrorism is a vital imperative and will remain at the core of our concerns." — AFP

6 killed in Ethiopia region

ADDIS ABABA: At least six people have been killed in southern Ethiopia this week in unrest related to a bid to establish a new federal region, officials and a rights body said Tuesday. The violence in the Wolaita zone—which one official said left as many as 16 dead—marks the latest bout of ethnic unrest since Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, winner of last year's Nobel Peace Prize, took office in 2018. Protests kicked off Sunday in Wolaita after police began detaining senior politicians from the Wolaita ethnic group who have been campaigning to create their own region, a move permitted under Ethiopia's constitution. "Security forces in Wolaita Zone appear to have used excessive force in confronting protesters, killing at least six people on August 10, 2020," the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC), a government body, said in a statement Tuesday. — AFP

Family of slain Black man sues

DENVER: The family of a 23-year-old Black man who died after a violent encounter with Aurora, Colorado, police officers filed a civil rights lawsuit against the city and its police on Tuesday, alleging murder and routine use of excessive force against Black people. The man, Elijah McClain, was walking on the street alone in August 2019 when he was stopped by three officers based on a report that he was "being suspicious." According to the complaint, the officers held him in two carotid holds around his neck, tackled him although he presented no physical threat, and medics attending to him administered an overdose of the sedative ketamine which left him unconscious. McClain died days later in the hospital. — Reuters

International

Defectors say investigations threaten North Korean 'Underground Railroad'

NGOs worry about future of 'Underground Railroad' networks

SEOUL: A combination of coronavirus border closures and an unprecedented pressure campaign by a South Korean government keen to engage with North Korea may destroy networks defectors have long used to start new lives, activist groups say. South Korea's Unification Ministry said last month it will "inspect" 25 defector-run NGOs, citing their failure to file necessary documents, and check if 64 others are following conditions to stay registered. On Wednesday, the ministry expanded the investigation to a total of 289 organizations. The sweeping probe comes as South Korean President Moon Jae-in's administration strives to restart dialogue and economic projects with Pyongyang, which is under strict international embargoes due to its nuclear weapons program.

The ministry has already revoked the licenses of two defector groups that were sending anti-Pyongyang propaganda into the North, following complaints from North Korea. Only a handful of NGOs have been investigated since 1998, and just one other has previously been stripped of its license. Without a license, the organizations cannot get tax exemptions and hold fundraisers, though donations are still allowed.

Some 30 NGOs joined forces to issue a statement urging the ministry to halt what they called a "discriminatory crackdown". Many of the groups have for decades worked with Seoul behind the scenes to bring defectors to the South via an informal network of bro-

kers, charities and middlemen dubbed the North Korean "Underground Railroad". Hired and funded by the NGOs, the intermediaries work as guides and offer shelter for defectors during their long, dangerous journey across China into Southeast Asia.

Defector numbers plummet

This year, the number of defectors arriving in South Korea plummeted to an all-time low at 147 as of June, mainly because the North closed borders on coronavirus concerns. Moon's administration had already sharply cut funding and now the investigations are scaring away donors, activists said. Several NGOs told Reuters the defector networks may never recover, even when borders reopen.

"Even if the investigation ends up with nothing, rescue networks would mostly be dismantled, defection routes gone and the NGOs closed by then," said Lee Young-hwan, the founder of the Transitional Justice Working Group, which works with defectors. Unification Ministry spokesman Yeo Sang-gi said the investigation does not target defectors and was designed to ensure the NGOs follow rules.

Government less helpful

Activists say Moon's administration has been less helpful than previous governments in navigating the delicate diplomacy to ensure defectors are not caught and forcibly repatriated to the North. When 13 defectors were detained in Vietnam last year, US diplomats came

give their identities or elaborate on charges.

The Austrian foreign ministry said Tuesday it had had no access to Austrian-Iranian Mossaheb in custody or to his trial, due to his status as a dual national. Austria's efforts "for the prisoner's release will continue undiminished efforts at the highest level", in a statement to AFP in Vienna. Austria does not recognize dual nationality and says it considers dual nationals as subject to Iranian laws. In mid-2019, Austria called for the release of Mossaheb, who is in his early 70s. It said at the time that no formal charges had been pressed and the reason for his detention was unknown.

According to Austria's Der Standard newspaper, Mossaheb had travelled to Iran with a delegation from an Austrian research centre which had opened a subsidiary near Tehran. After his detention in January 2019, his family had no contact with him for weeks, before eventually learning that he was being held in Tehran's Evin prison. The Austrian-Iranian Society says its aim is to foster closer ties between the two countries, particularly in the economic sphere. Iran has recently announced several detentions and in some cases executions of people found guilty of spying by its courts.

The latest was Mahmoud Mousavi Majd, a former translator executed last month for spying for the US and Israel, including helping to locate top Iranian general Qasem Soleimani, who was later killed in Iraq by the



Probe comes as Moon seeks to restart dialogue

Iran jails 2 for spying

TEHRAN: Iran said Tuesday it has jailed two men over spying for Britain, Germany and Israel, the latest in a string of espionage cases that have led to arrests and executions. Judiciary spokesman Gholamhossein Esmaili told reporters that the two would each serve 10 years behind bars. One of them, Massud Mossaheb, had been "spying for (Israeli spy agency) Mossad and Germany" under the guise of general secretary of an Austrian-Iranian society, Esmaili said, quoted by state television's website. Mossaheb was found to have been providing them with information on Iran's "missile, nuclear, nanotechnology and medical fields".

The second man, Shahram Shirkhani, had been working for British intelligence, the spokesman said. Shirkhani had been seeking to "corrupt authorities and recruit" people as well as give away information on "contracts related to the central bank, Mell Bank and the defense ministry". Esmaili said five more people had been arrested recently for alleged espionage in the foreign, defense and industry ministries, companies working in the energy industry, and Iran's atomic agency. He did not

India's COVID lockdown threatens efforts to stop spikes in child marriage

MUMBAI: When the police knocked on the door as 15-year-old Muskaan prepared to head to the temple in their village in northern India, the bride-to-be was distraught. With a sick father and unemployed brother, Muskaan believed that getting married to a distant relative's son would alleviate the financial burden on her family and offer a better future. Yet a tip-off to the authorities in June by local activists concerned about a spike in early marriages during India's coronavirus lockdown led to Muskaan's wedding being called off, while her parents were charged under child marriage legislation.

"When my father fixed my marriage, I agreed," Muskaan, whose name has been changed to protect her identity, said by phone from her village in Jaunpur district in Uttar Pradesh. Yet she said she would have preferred to go to school if possible. "There is no food. We live in one room. My father was worried for me and was crying," she said. "My marriage would have taken care of everything. Now they say I will have to wait for three years (until the legal age of marriage in India)."

After the COVID-19 pandemic brought industry to a halt and shut schools in March, activists and officials in parts of India from the southern state of Tamil Nadu to western Maharashtra observed an unexpected trend: child marriages were on the rise. Before the outbreak, many early marriages revolved around public celebrations and huge dowries paid by the bride's family. Yet India's lockdown's restrictions mean many jobless and struggling families are performing ceremonies on the cheap and forgoing payments as they seek to ease their economic hardship.

With schools closed and weddings taking place discreetly, officials fear that children - especially girls - are harder to reach, educate, and save from marriages that limit their future. Early marriage makes it more likely that girls will drop out of school, and campaigners say it also increases the risks of slavery, domestic and sexual violence, and death in childbirth. Of 223 million women and girls in India who were married off as children, almost half were wed before turning 15, according to statistics by the United Nations children's agency (UNICEF).

UNICEF data from 2018 found that about 27% of girls get married before they turn 18, down from 47% a decade earlier. Yet advocates fear that progress may be at risk across rural India. Thameem Unisa, a social welfare officer in Tamil Nadu, said the number of child marriages in two of the state's districts rose to 27 in June from 5 in March. Her team managed to prevent 50 marriages in this period but 24 still went ahead, she added. "This is how it used to be 10 years ago," she said. —Reuters

Arrested Hong Kong media tycoon urges staff to 'fight on'

HONG KONG: Hong Kong pro-democracy media mogul Jimmy Lai yesterday told his reporters to "fight on" following his dramatic arrest, as China widens its crackdown against critics in the semi-autonomous business hub. The clampdown has gathered pace since Beijing imposed a sweeping security law on Hong Kong in June, with opposition politicians disqualified and activists arrested for social media posts. The moves have provoked outrage in the West and deepened fears for millions who last year took to the streets to protest communist China's tightening grip on the city.

In one of the most dramatic days of the crackdown, Lai was among 10 people detained under the new law on Monday as around 200 police officers searched the newsroom of his Apple Daily tabloid, which is unapologetically critical of Beijing. The 71-year-old was cheered by staff and handed a bouquet yesterday as he returned to the newsroom following a late night release on bail after 40 hours in custody. In images broadcast live on Facebook by his own reporters, he told staff to continue filing the kind of unvarnished dispatches that have infuriated China and pro-Beijing politicians in Hong Kong.

"Fight on! Let's fight on," he said. "We have the support of the Hong Kong people. We can't let them down." He told staff it was becoming "increasingly difficult" to run a media business in Hong Kong. "Luckily I was not sent back to the mainland," he quipped in a characteristic display of dark humor. China has declared it will have jurisdiction over especially serious national security crimes, toppling the legal firewall between the mainland's party-controlled courts and Hong Kong's independent judiciary.

Sweeping new law

Beijing imposed the new national security law in response to huge and often violent pro-democracy protests last year. It has described the law-its contents kept secret until it was enacted on 30 June-as a "sword" hanging over the heads of opponents in Hong Kong. It officially criminalizes secession, subversion, terrorism and colluding with foreign forces. But the broadly worded provisions outlawed certain political speech overnight, such as advocating sanctions, and greater autonomy or independence for Hong Kong.



SEOUL: A park beside the Han river is flooded following heavy rainfall in Seoul on August 11, 2020. —AFP

to rescue instead of South Korean authorities, two sources familiar with the matter said. Ji Seong-ho, a defector-turned-lawmaker who previously ran a rescue network, said he managed to help another group of refugees caught in China get to South Korea - despite little help from Seoul officials.

Ji was astounded more than six months later when the officials said they were still striving to free the group.

"I was speechless," Ji said. "Government involvement may not always be successful, but how would they get the defectors released without even knowing where they were? In fact, they were already living well here." A foreign ministry official said the government remains fully committed to defector support but some countries' relations with North Korea could complicate its efforts, without elaborating on the two cases. —Reuters



TEHRAN: Iranian youths cool down in the Cheshmeh-Ali natural spring pool in Shahr-e-Rey neighborhood in the south of the capital Tehran. — AFP

Americans. Iran executed another man, Reza Asgari, in July, after he was convicted of spying on Iran's missile program for the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). And in February, Tehran handed down a similar sentence for Amir Rahimpour, also convicted of spying for Washington and of conspiring to sell information on Iran's nuclear program. —AFP



HONG KONG: Hong Kong pro-democracy media mogul Jimmy Lai (center) pushes through a media pack to get to a waiting vehicle after being released on bail from the Mong Kok police station in the early morning yesterday. — AFP

Similar laws are used on the authoritarian mainland to snuff out opposition. The most serious crimes under the Hong Kong law—which is not supposed to be retroactive—carry up to life in jail.

Police have given limited details of their alleged case against Lai and those arrested on Monday. They say the group were involved in lobbying for foreign sanctions before the security law was passed and that they continued to operate in some form once the legislation came in. Among those arrested were two of Lai's sons, senior Apple Daily executives and three members of now disbanded pro-democracy party Demosisto—including 23-year-old Agnes Chow, a prominent activist.

Regional media hub

Critics believe the security law has ended the key liberties and autonomy that Beijing promised Hong Kong could keep after its 1997 handover by Britain. The US has declared Hong Kong no longer autonomous from the mainland and deployed sanctions in response. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo described Lai's arrest as "further proof" that Chinese authorities had "eviscerated Hong Kong's freedoms and eroded the rights of its people". Britain has said it will ramp up efforts to allow Hong Kongers to relocate there. Western criticism sparked fury in Beijing, which has responded with sanctions against US officials. Hong Kong is a major media hub with a vibrant local press and multiple international news outlets operating regional headquarters in the city. Both China and Hong Kong's government vowed the security law would keep press freedoms in tact. But the police operation against Lai sparked denunciations of plunging press freedoms. The city's ranking on the Reporters Without Borders press freedom index has already fallen from 18th in 2002 to 73rd in 2019. —AFP

Anti-government protesters return to Mali's streets

BAMAKO: Thousands of anti-government protesters returned to the streets in Mali Tuesday, resuming their months-long push to topple president Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, who they accuse of presiding over corruption and impunity in the poor Sahel nation. Demonstrators gathered in a central square in the capital despite rainfall and pleas from mediators to stay at home, with many blowing plastic vuvuzela horns and brandishing anti-government banners. "We want real change in Mali, IBK get out," read one, referring to Keita's initials.

The gathering marks the first time the June 5 Movement has staged a protest since July, when the opposition group declared a temporary truce in their campaign to oust Keita. The group has channeled deep anger over a dire economy, perceived government corruption and Mali's eight-year jihadist conflict. Keita had "put in place an oligarchic and plutocratic system of predation based on corruption and impunity" that had destroyed Mali, the movement named after the date of its first protest-said in a statement.

"This combat is to restore the Malian nation," Mahmoud Dicko, the Saudi-trained imam viewed as its figurehead, told protesters. "If IBK doesn't listen to us, he will see. I swear before God that he will see. But if we don't rush, we will win this victory." Late Tuesday night, many protesters remained encamped on the square with a handful of opposition leaders. The demonstration went ahead despite a call to stay home from Nigeria's ex-president Goodluck Jonathan, a mediator for the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

"Demonstrations do not solve problems per se," Jonathan told a news conference late on Monday, urging opposition figures to enter into dialogue. The June 5 Movement has repeatedly spurned compromise proposals put forward by ECOWAS, insisting on Keita's resignation. It added in the statement on Tuesday that the president had resorted to "scornful silence" and "simulated solutions" in response to opposition demands. "Keita's...misgovernance dangerously threatens the very existence of our country as a state," the statement said.

Mediation flop

Mali's political impasse has struck fear into the former French colony's neighbors and allies, who are keen to prevent it from sliding into chaos. Tensions snowballed into crisis last month when 11 people died during three days of unrest following an anti-Keita protest, in the worst political strife the country has seen in years. The 15-nation ECOWAS bloc stepped in to mediate. On July 27, the bloc's heads of government stuck by Keita, but proposed the formation of a new unity government, among other measures.

The June 5 Movement has rejected the proposals, however. Nigeria's Jonathan, who had already led a mediation mission to Mali in mid-July, made a surprise return to Bamako on Monday, when he met the president and opposition figures. Still, there is little indication that the impasse can be overcome, as anti-Keita protests have gone ahead despite Jonathan's admonitions. Dicko, addressing protesters on Tuesday, said that it was time for Malians to talk among themselves. "Even if we don't like the way they did it, we thank ECOWAS for its gesture," the influential imam said.

Constitutional Court

Keita, who first came to power in 2013, has meanwhile attempted to follow the ECOWAS recommendations. He swore in nine new judges to the Constitutional Court on Monday, which formed part of ECOWAS efforts to resolve an election dispute that has contributed to the crisis. —AFP

THURSDAY, AUGUST 13, 2020

Business

UK in recession as economy shrinks 20%

Sunak sees promising signs after record GDP hit

LONDON: Britain's economy contracted by a record 20.4 percent in the second quarter with the country in lockdown over the coronavirus pandemic, official data showed yesterday. "It is clear that the UK is in the largest recession on record," the Office for National Statistics said.

Britain officially entered recession in the second quarter after gross domestic product (GDP) contracted by 2.2 percent in the first three months of the year. The technical definition of a recession is two quarterly contractions in a row.

The ONS said that the contraction for the first six months of 2020 "was slightly below the 22.7 percent seen in Spain but was more than double the 10.6 percent fall in United States". It added that Britain's dire second quarter was driven by a 20-percent drop in output in April, "the biggest monthly fall on record reflecting widespread... declines in output across the services, production, and construction industries".



Lockdown hits economy in second quarter

Rebound begins

The economy is beginning to rebound, however,

as the government eases its lockdown restrictions. GDP output growth was 8.7 percent in June, the ONS said. "The economy began to bounce back in June, with shops reopening, factories beginning to ramp up production and house-building continuing to recover," noted Jonathan Athow, deputy national statistician as the statistics office.

"Despite this, GDP in June still remains a sixth below its level in February, before the virus struck.

"Overall, productivity saw its largest-ever fall in the second quarter. Hospitality was worst hit, with productivity in that industry falling by three-quarters in recent months," he added.

Britain's recession is its first since the 2008 global financial crisis. The grim economic news comes despite unprecedented government interventions, including spending tens of billions of pounds on job support schemes in a bid to avoid mass layoffs.

The Bank of England (BoE) is meanwhile pumping out hundreds of billions of pounds in cash stimulus and has slashed its main interest rate to a record-low 0.1 percent. ONS data released Monday showed that around 730,000 workers have been removed from the payrolls of British companies since March.

Announcements of job cuts have become a daily occurrence, with companies expected to pick up the pace of layoffs as the government's key employment support scheme ends in October.

The BoE expects the unemployment rate to shoot higher to around 7.5 percent by the end of the year from 3.9 percent currently. The central bank forecasts also that the UK economy will have contracted by 9.5 percent for the whole of 2020. It estimates that UK gross domestic product will rebound in 2021 by nine percent.

Promising signs

British Finance Minister Rishi Sunak said there were some "promising signs" that the country's economy was recovering from its record economic crash during the coronavirus lockdown which was announced earlier yesterday. Sunak said growth of 8.7 percent in gross domestic product in June was encouraging, even as official data showed the economy contracted by 20.4 percent in the second quarter as a whole.

Sunak told broadcasters there was too much uncertainty to know if Britain would have a swift, V-

round it and services that enhance it," said Avi Greengart, analyst with the consultancy Techspontial. "It all feeds back into the cycle for Apple."

In the past quarter ending in June, Apple reported profits rose eight percent to \$11.2 billion and revenues jumped 11 percent to \$59.7 billion.

Apple at home

The quarter showed a modest rise in smartphone revenue, buoyed by the new entry-level iPhone SE, and robust increases in sales of iPads and Mac computers, in demand for remote education and work-from-home buyers. Services made up more than one-fifth of Apple revenue as it expanded its offerings in music, digital payments, streaming television and boosted income from its App Store. Apple has also extended its lead in the smartwatch market amid growing interest in health and fitness applications.

"Apple entered the pandemic strong and the company's products are an even more foundational part of our lives today as we work, live, and play from home," said Gene Munster of Loup Ventures in a research note. Goldman Sachs analyst Rod Hall said markets appeared surprised by Apple's strong results and noted that "consumers and institutions are clearly spending even more than we had anticipated to support both work from home and study from home."

Steady tiller
A major factor in Apple's success has been leadership from Cook, who took over just ahead

millions of people into poverty, with poorer nations hardest hit from the pandemic's social and economic fallout, the United Nations has said.

Weakening the law

Even before the pandemic, growing pressure on land from an expanding population, and the demands of agriculture, industry and housing have led to increasing attacks on farmers and land rights activists, with 2019 being the deadliest year. At least 212 people were killed last year, and indigenous people made up 40 percent of the victims, Britain-based Global Witness said last month.

Restrictions on movement that prevented rural communities from tending to their land, or from attending public hearings during lockdowns made it easier for illegal loggers and companies to encroach on it, activists said.

"Destruction of indigenous lands has increased amidst the pandemic," said Windel Bolinget, chair of the indigenous group the Cordillera Peoples Alliance in the Philippines, ranked as the deadliest country in Asia for land rights.

The country's new anti-terrorism law will make it harder for rural communities to protect their land, Bolinget added. "The law has an over broad definition of terror, and gives authorities power that endangers indigenous peoples' rights to their ancestral land and to self-determination," he said.

Philippine authorities have rejected criticism of the legislation that U.N. experts have said may be used to target activists and critics of the government.

In Indonesia, despite a pledge by President Joko Widodo to return indigenous customary land, a new regulation could see more such land converted for industry in the name of public purpose.

In addition, a new Omnibus Bill would weaken environmental and social safeguards, said Grita Anindarini, a researcher at the Indonesian Center for



LONDON: Shoppers wear face masks on Oxford Street in London. Britain's economy contracted by a record 20.4 percent in the second quarter with the country in lockdown over the coronavirus pandemic, official data showed yesterday. —AFP

shaped economic recovery. "What we do know is that there are promising signs," he said. "There's still work to do and even as we recover many people are going to lose their jobs, already have lost their jobs, and we need to make sure that we are constantly focused on providing new opportunities for those people."

Sunak reiterated his opposition to extending the government's huge job retention scheme which is due to expire at the end of October. Economists expect a sharp rise in unemployment as the state-funded jobs subsidies end. Sunak also said he expected to see

more people returning to their workplace in the coming weeks after the government recently changed its guidance.

On Brexit, he said good progress had been made in several areas of the negotiations for a trade deal with the European Union but there were gaps on "a couple of big issues." He said asking Brussels for an extension of Britain's no-change transition period - which is due to expire on Dec. 31 - was not the right thing to do and the government had to prepare for all eventualities. —Agencies

Apple on cusp of \$2tn milestone, defying pandemic

WASHINGTON: Apple is on the verge of becoming the first \$2 trillion American company following a gravity-defying surge that has highlighted the value of its iPhone ecosystem during the global pandemic. Shares in Apple have roughly doubled from March lows, an astonishing performance which has lifted chief executive Tim Cook's net worth to \$1 billion for the first time, according to a Bloomberg Billionaires Index calculation.

A dip in Apple shares left its market value at around \$1.87 trillion Tuesday, ahead of Big Tech peers Amazon and Microsoft (both at \$1.54 trillion) and Google parent Alphabet (\$1.0 trillion). If it reaches \$2 trillion, Apple would be the only company other than Saudi Aramco to hit the milestone.

Even as other large tech firms have shot higher on robust demand during lockdowns, Apple has outpaced its rivals by delivering strong sales of gadgetry including wearables and tablets, along with new apps and services which have gained ground during the global health crisis.

"Apple has been wildly successful in building out its platforms, mitigating the fact that iPhone sales had peaked, by building products that sur-

Land, environment laws diluted as Asian nations eye growth

BANGKOK: Asia-Pacific nations are speeding up project approvals and removing environmental protections to spur economic growth dented by the coronavirus, moves that will hurt rural and indigenous communities, analysts say. Indonesia has issued a law that makes it easier to take over community land, including those of indigenous groups, and for forests to be cleared for industry.

India has opened coal mining to the private sector in forest land, while a new environment impact assessment (EIA) notification allows speedier project approvals and less compliance. Australia will fast-track approval for roads and other projects including the expansion of BHP Group's Olympic Dam, while the Cook Islands will grant seabed mining licenses to bolster its tourism-dependent economy.

But besides addressing jobs and infrastructure issues, stimulus projects must deliver "broad, long-term community value, reduce inequality and help counter climate change," said Elizabeth Mossop, a dean at the University of Technology in Sydney. "It is not clear that fast-tracking actually saves time in the long run, and there is little evidence that it provides us with good outcomes," she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

"The risks are that these projects benefit large corporations, rather than communities, rural areas, women and people who most need jobs," she said.

The coronavirus outbreak could set back human development for the first time since 1990, plunging



NEW YORK: People wait in line outside an Apple store in the Brooklyn Borough of New York City. Apple is on the verge of becoming the first \$2 trillion company following a gravity-defying surge that has highlighted the value of its iPhone ecosystem during the global pandemic. —AFP

of the death of Steve Jobs in 2011. "He didn't invent anything, but what he has done is keep a firm hand on the tiller, steering the ship and keeping the culture intact," said analyst Laura Martin at Needham & Company.

"He deserves a lot of credit for making the most out of Steve Jobs's inventions."

Cook was not one of Apple's founders and his salary, by Silicon Valley standards, was a relatively modest \$3 million in 2019, along with a bonus of \$7.6 million. But the value of his stock grants has pushed him into the club of billionaires for the first time, according to Bloomberg. —AFP

Environmental Law, a think tank. The bill would lift pollution controls of a large number of industries, shrink participation of communities in projects and weaken supervision of compliance, she said. "The government only focuses on achieving economic growth and forgot to see that environmental protection is one of the core elements of sustainable development," she said. Supratman Andi Algas, chairman of the parliamentary body that deliberates on the bill, earlier said rules on environmental protection would only be simplified, not changed.

Human suffering

Across the region, there are also efforts to boost rural livelihoods, and to mitigate worsening climate change impacts. In Thailand, more than 6 million trees will be planted over the next few years to increase green cover in the country, the environment minister said last week, while Laos is to build the largest wind energy farm in Southeast Asia.

Australia has fast-tracked approval for a \$16 billion solar power project, and India is mapping rural land to give titles to hundreds of millions of people. But also in India, coal mine auctions are opening up forested areas protected by the constitution, while environment impact assessments will be weakened by a new notification that exempts many projects from public consultations and compliance.

With a strict lockdown in place during the period for public feedback for the draft EIA notification, a Delhi court extended the deadline to Aug. 11. The coal auction removes end-use restrictions, allowing mine owners to extract coal for profit-making rather than public purpose including energy security, said Kanchi Kohli, a fellow at the Centre for Policy Research think tank in Delhi. In addition, it would allow companies to fence off land for years, irrespective of whether they extract coal or not. —Reuters

Google turning smartphones into quake detectors

SAN FRANCISCO: Google added an earthquake alert system in California on Tuesday, saying it is working on letting Android-powered smartphones double as tremor detectors.

Android phones will receive warnings triggered by a "ShakeAlert" earthquake early-warning system implemented on the West Coast by the US Geological Survey and partners.

ShakeAlert uses signals from hundreds of seismometers across the state to trigger warning messages that "an earthquake has begun and shaking is imminent," according to the system's website.

"We saw an opportunity to use Android to provide people with timely, helpful earthquake information when they search, as well as a few seconds warning to get themselves and their loved ones to safety if needed," principal software engineer Marc Stogaitis said in a blog post.

People anywhere with smartphones powered by Google's Android operating software were also invited to let handsets be part of a crowd-sourced network for detecting earthquakes.

Smartphones are typically equipped with tiny accelerometers that sense movement and can catch shaking caused by earthquakes, according to Stogaitis.

"This means your Android phone can be a mini seismometer, joining millions of other Android phones out there to form the world's largest earthquake detection network," Stogaitis said.

Android phones that detect what might be earthquake activity can automatically send a signal to a data center, where computers quickly interpret motion and location data in aggregate to determine whether a quake is happening, according to Google.

"We're essentially racing the speed of light - which is roughly the speed at which signals from a phone travel - against the speed of an earthquake," Stogaitis said. "And lucky for us, the speed of light is much faster!"

Earthquake alerts are starting in California because the state has an extensive seismometer network in place. The alerts are expected to spread to other locations during the coming year as the phone-based detection network is established. —AFP



The Google logo displayed on a tablet in Paris. Google launched an earthquake alert system in California on Tuesday, saying it is working on letting Android-powered smartphones double as tremor detectors. —AFP

Business

US court tells Uber and Lyft to classify drivers as employees

Gig workers eligible for unemployment, medical and other benefits

SAN FRANCISCO: A California court has given Uber and Lyft until the middle of next week to reclassify drivers as employees in compliance with a new state law. The order came Monday when a judge granted a restraining order in a lawsuit filed by California attorney general Xavier Becerra and three cities including San Francisco, where Lyft and Uber are based.



Court ruling paves way for a new model

The suit calls on the companies to comply with a state law that went into effect at the start of this year that requires "gig workers" such as Uber and Lyft drivers to be classified as employees, eligible for unemployment, medical and other benefits.

"The court has weighed in and agreed: Uber and Lyft need to put a stop to unlawful misclassification of their drivers while our litigation continues," Becerra said in a

release.

"While this fight still has a long way to go, we're pushing ahead to make sure the people of California get the workplace protections they deserve." Uber is backing a referendum in the state to overturn the law, while pledging to provide benefits for a social safety net that would keep gig workers independent.

The judge wrote in the ruling that Uber and Lyft could not indefinitely put off their "day of reckoning" when it came to complying with the law. Uber has argued that most of its drivers want to remain independent even if they also are looking for benefits.

Lyft vowed to appeal the judge's ruling, referring to the court battle as a fight for driver independence.

"Drivers do not want to be employees, full stop," Lyft said in response to an AFP inquiry. "Ultimately, we believe this issue will be decided by California voters and that they will side with drivers."

'A new model'

"Misclassification hurts drivers and puts the burden on taxpayers to pay for benefits that Uber and Lyft should be providing," said San Francisco city attorney



LOS ANGELES: Rideshare drivers demonstrate against rideshare companies Uber and Lyft during a car caravan protest in Los Angeles. — AFP

Dennis Herrera. "During this global pandemic, it's even more important for drivers to get access to protections like unemployment insurance."

The judge gave Uber and Lyft 10 days to comply with the order, which the companies can appeal. Uber outlined proposals this

week for a new type of relationship with gig workers, including its own drivers, that would keep them as independent contractors but with some guaranteed benefits.

The ride-hailing giant described "a new model for independent platform work" in a document it hopes can be used as a blue-

print for Uber and similar firms relying on independent workers.

The company seeks "to deliver certainty for millions of independent contractors who will increasingly rely on independent work to help them face the economic challenges that lie ahead," Uber said in its document. Uber proposed that gig economy companies be required to establish "benefits funds," allowing gig workers to accrue and use the money for benefits or paid leave.

Chief executive Dara Khosrowshahi, writing in *The New York Times*, said that the current employment system is outdated and "forces every worker to choose between being an employee with more benefits but less flexibility, or an independent contractor with more flexibility but almost no safety net." Uber argues that requiring drivers to be classified as employees would leave jobs only for a small fraction of its drivers and that costs would become more expensive.

More than 85 percent of Lyft drivers in California work fewer than 20 hours weekly, with many of them seeking flexible hours because they are parents, students, retirees or hold other jobs, according to the company. — AFP



A handmade oil barrier is seen in the water at the Mahebourg waterfront in Mauritius yesterday in order to prevent a further oil spill from the MV Wakashio vessel, belonging to a Japanese company but Panamanian-flagged, that had run aground at the beach in Bambous Virieux, southeast Mauritius. — AFP

The Japan firms behind Mauritius oil-leak ship

TOKYO: The Japanese firm that operates a ship leaking fuel off the coast of Mauritius has been involved in accidents before, including a 2006 oil spill in the Indian Ocean.

Mitsui OSK Lines operates the MV Wakashio, which ran aground on July 25 just off the coast of Mauritius, carrying 4,000 tonnes of fuel that has been seeping into the pristine coral-filled waters of the island nation.

Both the operator and the vessel's owner Nagashiki Shipping have apologised for the spill, and pledged to help mitigate the damage.

The accident is not the first involving Mitsui OSK Lines. In 2006, the Bright Artemis crude oil tanker operated by the firm suffered damage while attempting to rescue the crew of another ship, according to a company statement from the time. An estimated 4,500 tons of crude oil leaked from the ship into the Indian Ocean.

The leak took place for offshore and the spill was left to dilute and vaporize after the firm judged the crude unlikely to reach land. The company has been involved in other smaller accidents, including in 2013, when a container ship it operated sank in the Indian Ocean.

The Tokyo-based company traces its history back to 1878, when trading house Mitsui and Co. began operating a steamboat between Nagasaki and Shanghai.

In 1884, the shipping operation was devolved to a firm named Osaka Shosen

Kaisha Lines, or OSK lines, under the umbrella of the Mitsui zaibatsu, or conglomerate. The firm gradually expanded its routes in the 1930s and began carrying passengers and cargo between Japan and major cities in North and South America, including New York.

It was renamed Mitsui Steamship in 1942 and like many other Japanese private shipping lines was heavily involved in military transport before and during World War II.

It survived the chaos of the post-war period and was part of Japan's so-called economic miracle, involved in the export of Japanese cars overseas and the import of natural gas to the energy-poor nation. Following a series of mergers and acquisitions, it was renamed Mitsui OSK Lines in 1999, and now operates 740 vessels around the world, employing more than 1,000 people.

The MV Wakashio is owned by Nagashiki Shipping, which is based in western Japan's Okayama. The company currently owns 11 ships, including container ships, tankers and bulkers like the Wakashio, a so-called cape size bulker built in 2007. The MV Wakashio had passed its latest annual inspection in March without any problems, according to Japan's ClassNK inspection body.

Nagashiki Shipping began life as a salt ship line in the final years of Japan's Edo period (1603-1868), according to the firm's website.

It later expanded into the transport of bamboo, timber and charcoal and began plying coastal routes. Originally known as Nagashiki Ship Department, the firm also transported rice to Japan from the Korean peninsula, which was under Tokyo's colonial rule from 1910 to the end of World War II in 1945.

The firm lost all its vessels after the war, but was re-established in 1958 and renamed Nagashiki Shipping. — AFP

Cathay Pacific reports first-half loss of \$1.27bn

HONG KONG: Hong Kong carrier Cathay Pacific said yesterday it lost HK\$9.9 billion (US\$1.27 billion) in the first half of this year as the coronavirus pandemic sent passenger numbers tumbling, eviscerating its business. "The first six months of 2020 were the most challenging that the Cathay Pacific Group has faced in its more than 70-year history," chairman Patrick Healy said in a stark statement announcing the results.

"The global health crisis has decimated the travel industry and the future remains highly uncertain, with most analysts suggesting that it will take years to recover to pre-crisis levels," he added.

Before the pandemic struck, Cathay was one of Asia's largest international airlines and the fifth largest air cargo carrier globally. But like others worldwide, it has been battered by the evaporation of global travel. The firm said it carried 4.4 million passengers in the first six months of 2020 — a 76 percent plunge on-year-as the new disease burst out of central China and then spread around the world.

At the height of the global lockdowns in April and May, its entire fleet was averaging just 500 passengers a day. Cargo remained the lone bright spot, rising nine percent on-year to HK\$11.177 million. Demand was driven up by a squeeze on space for cargo, which is often carried in the hold of passenger planes. Cathay is especially vulnerable as it has no domestic market to fall back on, and it was already under pressure after months of huge protests in Hong Kong last year caused passenger numbers to plunge.

It was also punished by Beijing last year when some of its 33,000 employees expressed support for Hong Kong's pro-democracy movement. The airline's stock surged more than eight percent to HK\$5.70 in afternoon trade in Hong Kong.

Rescue package

Healy said 2020 had started promisingly, with signs that demand was beginning to return after the sometimes-violent protests had put travellers off visiting the financial hub. But "the global health crisis has decimated the travel industry and the future remains highly uncertain, with most analysts suggesting that it will take years to recover to pre-crisis levels", he warned.

In response to the health crisis, Cathay has tried to save cash by reducing capacity, cutting executive pay, introducing voluntary leave schemes and slashing other non-essential costs.

It has so far refrained from any large-scale job cuts. Hong Kong's government also came to its rescue earlier this year with a HK\$39-billion recapitalization plan. The deal allowed Cathay to raise some HK\$11.7 billion in a rights issue on the basis of seven rights shares for every 11 existing shares held.

Preference shares were sold to the government via Aviation 2020, a new company it owns, for HK\$19.5 billion and warrants for HK\$1.95 billion, subject to adjustment.

In return Aviation 2020 received two "observers" to attend board meetings. Healy predicted little optimism for business picking up any time soon, quoting the International Air Transport Association as saying global travel is unlikely to reach pre-pandemic levels until at least 2024. And he said Asia-Pacific airlines were likely to suffer for longer given spiralling tensions between the US and China.

"With a global recession looming, and geopolitical tensions intensifying, trade will likely come under significant pressure, and this is expected to have a negative impact on both air travel and cargo demand," he said. — AFP



HONG KONG: This file photo shows a Cathay Pacific passenger plane preparing to take off from Hong Kong's international airport. — AFP

Airbnb backs OECD approach to digital tax

LONDON: Home rental startup Airbnb said yesterday it supported the development of a digital services tax regime being discussed by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to bridge a divide between the United States and Europe.

The OECD talks involve over 100 countries on a major rewrite of global tax rules to bring them up to date for the digital era, but they have so far not produced results as the negotiations have been complicated by the coronavirus pandemic. "The almost century-old system we still use today was not designed with today's increasingly digital economy in mind and it should be improved," Airbnb said in a statement backing the OECD talks.

"We believe that for a global tax system to work effectively and efficiently, it needs to be truly global, consistently applied across borders, and simple to comply with." The EU and Britain view digital service taxes as a way to raise revenue from the local operations of big tech companies which they say profit enormously from local markets while making only limited contributions to public coffers.

But the United States has said that a digital services tax announced last year by France discriminates against US tech firms such as Alphabet's Google, Facebook and Apple Inc.

Both the French tax and retaliatory US duties have been deferred, in hope of a breakthrough in the OECD process. In June, the United States said it would pull out of negotiations, citing a lack of progress, though the OECD has said Washington is still committed to the talks. Google boss Sundar Pichai told Reuters last month that the tech giant supports the multilateral solution for taxing digital services being discussed by the OECD, saying its frameworks were the "right approach". — Reuters

NZ CB expands bond-buying, warns of negative rates

WELLINGTON/SYDNEY: New Zealand's central bank surprised markets yesterday by expanding its bond-buying program and warned that policy rates might have to go below zero to revive the coronavirus-battered economy as the country was plunged back into lockdown. The Reserve Bank of New Zealand expanded its large scale asset purchase (LSAP) program to as much as NZ\$100 billion (\$65.39 billion), from NZ\$60 billion previously, and extended the deadline for purchases out to mid-2022. It left interest rates at an all-time low of 0.25 percent, as widely expected.

Underlining policymakers' readiness to

step-up support, the RBNZ said it is also actively considering a package of additional monetary tools, including negative interest rates and low-cost funding to banks. The purchase of foreign assets also remain an option. "The Bank sent its clearest message yet that negative rates are coming," said Ben Udy of Capital Economics. "We still expect the Bank to wait until next year before bringing the OCR into negative territory, though the risk now is that the Bank moves sooner rather than later." In response to the central bank's statement, the New Zealand dollar slipped 0.5 percent to \$0.6540. The central bank's dovish tone comes as New

Zealand re-introduced mobility restrictions earlier in the day due to the emergence of a coronavirus cluster after sailing through for more than 100 days without COVID-19 cases at home. The discovery of four infected family members in Auckland led Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern to swiftly reimpose tight restrictions on movement in New Zealand's biggest city and travel limitations across the entire country. "Given the ongoing health uncertainty, there remains a downside risk to our baseline economic scenario," RBNZ said in a post-meeting statement.

In addition, members agreed the central bank should retain the flexibility to adjust the

pace and composition of bond purchases.

"The Committee also agreed that any future move to a lower or negative OCR, if complemented by a Funding for Lending Program, could provide an effective way to deliver monetary stimulus in addition to the expanded LSAP if needed."

The RBNZ stunned markets with a 75-basis-point cut in March as the coronavirus surfaced in the country, but has since left it unchanged. The pandemic jolted the economy into its worst slump in nearly three decades in the first quarter, and gross domestic product is expected to have contracted further in the June quarter, tipping

the country into its first recession since 2010.

Recent data had indicated that the economic impact of the pandemic was not as dire as first feared, with unemployment rates falling, inflation seen picking up and the housing market being resilient.

All the same, the Auckland virus cluster has heightened the uncertainty about the outlook. "Short of cutting the OCR today, it's difficult to imagine a more dovish outcome," ANZ bank's chief economist Sharon Zollner said. "The bad news delivered last night has ramped up uncertainty, but certainly does nothing to reduce the odds of further OCR cuts next year." — Reuters

Business

NBK offers free safe wristbands and stickers to its customers

In line with its commitment to keep customers safe

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) continues to reward its customers by offering them the most advanced innovative payment solutions during the crisis of coronavirus outbreak, in order to avoid the use of cash and to abide by social distancing rules. In this context, the bank provide its customers with a safe way to pay using Wristbands and Stickers for free, as part of its continuous efforts to upgrade contactless payment solutions and making it faster and easier.

Wristbands and Stickers allow customers to pay for their daily purchases seamlessly at NFC-enabled POS terminals in Kuwait in a faster and secure way. This comes as part of the bank's strive to keep customers safe and to encourage them to use contactless payment solutions.

Additionally, the bank has increased the limit of payments without entering the pin to KD 25, whereas purchases exceeding KD 25 will be paid through the normal payment process. In addition,

customers can issue the stickers or wristband by visiting any of NBK branches or calling 1801801.

Bader Al-Janah, Consumer Banking Group at National Bank of Kuwait, said: "Providing customers with Wristbands and Stickers for free comes as part of our keenness to enrich the banking experience of our customers and giving them more convenience by offering them all fast and easy banking services, while keeping them safe."

Al-Janah added: "NBK provides cutting-edge contactless payment solutions to avoid using cash, and to allow our customers to make faster, easier and secure payments, in view of social distancing

rules, as these payment methods proved to be highly effective, especially during coronavirus pandemic outbreak." "The bank is keen to be always closer to its customers by providing its

services 24/7 through its various digital channels, which undergo continuous development and upgrade by adding many new services that keep pace with its customers' expectations," Al-Janah pointed out.

Al-Janah affirmed that all new payment solutions provided by NBK, as well as the upgrade of existing ones, are part of its endeavors to meet customers' needs, and to provide them with services that suit their different lifestyles, with their safety in mind.

Noteworthy is that NBK recently launched "Garmin Pay", which enables customers to make their payments with one tap using their Garmin smartwatches. Besides, NBK was the first local bank to introduce "Fitbit Pay" using Fitbit smartwatches.

Furthermore, e-Payments that is available on NBK Mobile Banking is a fast and easy way to avail a variety of advanced services that enable customers to make hassle-free electronic payments at any time, including bill payment for the following companies: Telecom companies, iTunes, Google Play, Amazon, Apple Music, Skype and Spotify.



Bader Al-Janah



Cutting-edge payment solutions

Gulf Bank winner Al-Azmi claims cash prize worth 12 times her salary

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank has announced the winner of its seventh monthly Kuwaiti Salary Account draw of the year. This month's lucky winner, Sarah Musallam Braik Al-Azmi, will take home a cash prize worth 12 times her salary. The Kuwaiti Salary Account draw took place at Gulf Bank's Head Office in the presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce.

With the 2020 Kuwaiti salary offer, new customers who transfer their salaries to Gulf Bank are automatically enrolled in the monthly draws, giving them the chance to win cash prizes of up to 12 times their salary. Customers are also enrolled in a yearly draw of Kuwait's largest salary prize, a cash prize of up to 100 times the winner's salary.

Gulf Bank's Salary Account also gives new customers the opportunity to receive either a KD 100 cash gift upon transferring their salaries to Gulf Bank, or an interest-free loan of up to KD 15,000. Customers must have a minimum salary of KD 500 and are eligible for the offer following their first salary transfer to Gulf Bank. Customers can also enjoy additional benefits like a Visa or MasterCard credit card free of charge for a year. They can also apply for a loan of up to KD 70,000 with a repayment period of 15 years, or a consumer loan of up to KD 25,000.

Gulf Bank is one of the leading conventional banks in Kuwait with total assets of KD 6 billion for year ending 31 December 2019. The Bank provides a broad offering of consumer banking, wholesale banking, treasury, and financial services through its large network of 59 branches and more than 200 ATMs in Kuwait. The Bank was founded in 1960 and is listed on the Kuwait Stock Exchange (Boursa Kuwait) since 1984.

Apple must pay \$500m over patent violations: Court

SAN FRANCISCO: Apple must pay more than \$500 million in damages and interest for 4G patent infringements held by intellectual property company PanOptis, a Texas court has ruled.

The US tech giant now worth almost \$2 trillion will appeal Tuesday's decision, local media said. PanOptis, which specializes in licensing patents, took Apple to court in February last year, claiming it refused to pay for the use of 4G LTE technologies in its smartphones, tablets and watches. "The plaintiffs have repeatedly negotiated with Apple to reach an agreement for a FRAND license to the Plaintiff's patent portfolios which Apple is infringing," the court filing read. FRAND refers to terms that are "fair, reasonable and non-discriminatory" and is the IT industry standard for technology use.

"The negotiations have been unsuccessful because Apple refuses to pay a FRAND royalty to the Plaintiff's license," Apple argued unsuccessfully that the patents were invalid, according to legal publications. "Lawsuits like this by companies who accumulate patents simply to harass the industry only serve to stifle innovation and harm consumers," Apple said in a statement reported by media outlets. The case is one of many patent suits from licensing firms that make no products but hold rights to certain technologies. Critics call these firms "patent trolls."

The Texas court has twice ruled against Apple in the past, demanding it pay hundreds of millions of dollars to VlnetX-another company specializing in patent litigation.

On its website, PanOptis offers to manage its clients' patents, allowing them to concentrate on "innovation and new development." —AFP

US producer prices rebound in July; trend remains weak

WASHINGTON: US producer prices increased by the most in more than 1-1/2 years in July, but the overall trend in producer inflation remained subdued amid signs the economy's recovery from the COVID-19 recession was faltering. The jump in producer prices reported by the Labor Department on Tuesday, however, further diminished the risk of deflation, a decline in the general price level. Deflation is harmful during a recession as consumers and businesses may delay purchases in anticipation of lower prices.

Overall, benign inflation should allow the Federal Reserve to maintain its extraordinarily easy monetary policy as it tries to nurse the economy back to health.

"Fed officials will see no reason to be on high alert for inflation pressures after today's modest rebound in producer prices and there is little reason for them to temper their highly stimulative monetary policy," said Chris Rupkey, chief economist at MUEG in New York.

The producer price index for final demand increased 0.6 percent last month, driven by a surge in portfolio management fees and rising costs for gasoline. That was the biggest gain since October 2018 and followed a 0.2 percent decline in June. In the 12 months through July, the PPI dropped 0.4 percent after falling 0.8 percent in the 12 months through June.

Economists polled by Reuters had forecast the PPI would rise 0.3 percent in July and decrease 0.7 percent on a year-on-year basis. Excluding the volatile food, energy and trade services components, producer prices increased 0.3 percent last month after a similar rise in June. In the 12 months through July, the core PPI edged up 0.1 percent.

World's biggest container ships take shape in S Korea

GEOJE, South Korea: On the bridge of one of the world's biggest container ships, a worker in a grey protective suit installs the compass that will guide the leviathan across the world. The finishing touches are being put to the HMM St Petersburg at the Samsung Heavy Industries shipyard on the island of Geoje, at the southern tip of South Korea. Deep in the bowels of the enormous vessel, welders are dwarfed by the giant engines that will propel it at a maximum speed of over 22 knots.

At 400 meters (1,300 feet), the HMM St Petersburg is 100 meters longer than the Eiffel Tower is tall, and 62 meters wide. It has a capacity of 23,820 TEU (twenty-foot equivalent units, the standard measure of a shipping container), which owner Hyundai Merchant Marine (HMM) describes as enough to carry

seven billion choco-pies, a popular Korean snack-one for every human being on the planet.

It is the 12th and last of a new class of 24,000-TEU vessels HMM is putting into service, the largest of their kind in the world and costing 170-180 billion won (\$143-151 million) each.

The first of the class to begin operations, the 23,964-TEU HMM Algeciras, made its maiden voyage in April when it set a new world record for shipment volume. The South's shipbuilding industry is one of the world's biggest and was one of the drivers of its decades of economic growth, but in recent years has been hammered by global oversupply and cheaper competition from China.

Similarly the Korean shipping industry was plunged into turmoil by the collapse of Hanjin Shipping, once one of the world's top 10 container lines, which was declared bankrupt in 2017. HMM St Petersburg will be delivered in September and make its maiden voyage to Shanghai and other Chinese ports, before heading through the Suez Canal to Rotterdam,



At 400 meters (1,300 feet), the HMM St Petersburg is 100 meters longer than the Eiffel Tower is tall, and 62 meters wide. —AFP

Hamburg, Antwerp, and London.

The journey from South Korea to Europe and back is a 12-week round

trip, but despite its size and the distance covered, the vessel will have a crew of just 23. —AFP

Stocks shake off stimulus doubts, gold goes wild

LONDON: Europe's stock markets held their own yesterday after doubts emerged about fresh US stimulus, while it was shaping up to be another wild day for gold and silver and Turkey's troubled lira.

A lively start to European trading saw sterling shrug at news Britain had seen its worst economic quarter on record thanks to COVID-19. Gold swung almost 4 percent after its biggest fall in seven years and German Bund yields hit two-week highs amid a deluge of global debt issuance. Turkey's volatile lira took another 1.5 percent pounding as concerns about its economic health and policy making took hold again, while New Zealand dollar's dropped 0.4 percent after its central bank signalled it would stay highly supportive. Mixed sentiment had dragged on Asian stocks as sniping con-

tinued between China and the United States. Beijing had also reported weaker-than-expected loan growth, while the US Senate's majority leader described stimulus talks there overnight as "at a bit of a stalemate". "The bias at moment is probably to fade the S&P 500 and fade risk generally," said Societe Generale strategist Kit Jukes. "What happens next probably depends on what happens in US equity markets (which are focused on stimulus)... That might be the decisive factor for short-term sentiment."

On Wall Street on Tuesday, the S&P 500 snapped a seven-day winning streak after coming within reach of its all-time peak hit in February just before the global outbreak of the COVID-19. Barring a bipartisan deal on stimulus, the US economy could be left with measures US President Donald Trump called for on Saturday through executive orders to bypass Congress. "We have enormous uncertainty. It appears it's getting harder for both sides to compromise as the election is nearing... Trump's proposals would be smaller than markets have expected. There's question over whether they are viable, too," said Junpei Tanaka, strategist at Pictet. The US election campaigns look set to gather steam after Democratic presi-



dential candidate Joe Biden selected Senator Kamala Harris as his choice for vice president. The 10-year US Treasuries yield climbed a couple of basis points to 0.67 percent in Europe to stay at a one-month high.

The 10-year yield (+6.6bps) and 30-year (+7.5bps) yields saw their biggest increases in over a month on Tuesday, while the 2s10s curve steepened 4.6 basis points, the most since June 5th. The gap between US two-year and 10-year Treasury yields is a metric closely watched for signs of a slowdown. —Reuters

Classifieds

Thursday, August 13, 2020

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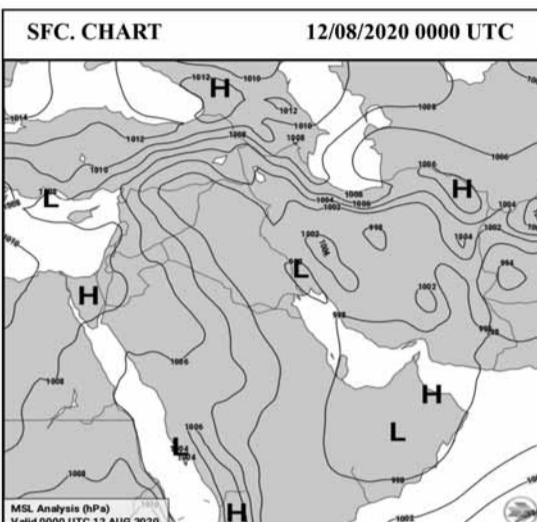
Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Hot with light to moderate freshening at times north westerly wind to light variable wind with speed of 08 - 40 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

BY NIGHT: Hot to rather hot with light variable wind to light to moderate north westerly wind with speed of 08 - 35 km/h and some high clouds will appear.

WEATHER WARNING: No Current Warnings

STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	44 °C	33 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	45 °C	32 °C
ABDALY	44 °C	28 °C
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C
JAHRA	44 °C	31 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	44 °C	32 °C
SALMIYAH	41 °C	34 °C
AHMADI	- °C	- °C
NUWAISIB	42 °C	31 °C
WAFRA	44 °C	30 °C
SALMY	43 °C	26 °C



DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Thursday	08/13	Very hot and some scattered clouds will appear	47 °C	33 °C	NW-VRB	08 - 38 km/h
Friday	08/14	Very hot	48 °C	34 °C	NW	15 - 40 km/h
Saturday	08/15	Very hot with a chance for rising dust over open areas	47 °C	35 °C	NW	15 - 45 km/h
Sunday	08/16	Very hot with a chance for rising dust over open areas	48 °C	33 °C	NW	15 - 45 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	03:49
Sunrise	05:15
Zuhr	11:53
Asr	15:28
Sunset	18:32
Isha	19:56

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	44 °C
MIN. Temp.	33 °C
MAX. RH	25 %
MIN. RH	10 %
MAX. Wind	N 53 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

REQUIRED

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

- Graduates
- Minimum 3 to 4 years exp in reputed organization
- Should be proficient in computing with good typing skills
- Excellent command over English language (both oral & written)

2. ACCOUNTANT CUM AUDITOR

- Should have Audit knowledge / worked in CA Firm preferable
- Should have good communication in English
- Should be well verse concept of accounting & financing
- Arabic reading is preferable
- Should have well knowledge of accounting software such as Tally Erp-9 etc.
- At least 5 years' experience in same field

Only male candidate

PLEASE SEND YOUR CV'S TO

hrr@rafif.net

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

EMERGENCY ☎ 112

Word Search

Civil War Generals

DIRECTIONS: Find and circle the ALL CAP NAMES in the grid. Look for them in all directions including backwards and diagonally.



General Ulysses S. GRANT



General Robert E. LEE



CONFEDERATE ARMY

Stonewall JACKSON
 J.E.B. STUART
 Nathan Bedford FORREST
 James LONGSTREET
 Braxton BRAGG
 George PICKETT
 Bloody Bill ANDERSON
 John MOSBY
 P.G.T. BEAUREGARD
 A.P. HILL
 Kirby SMITH

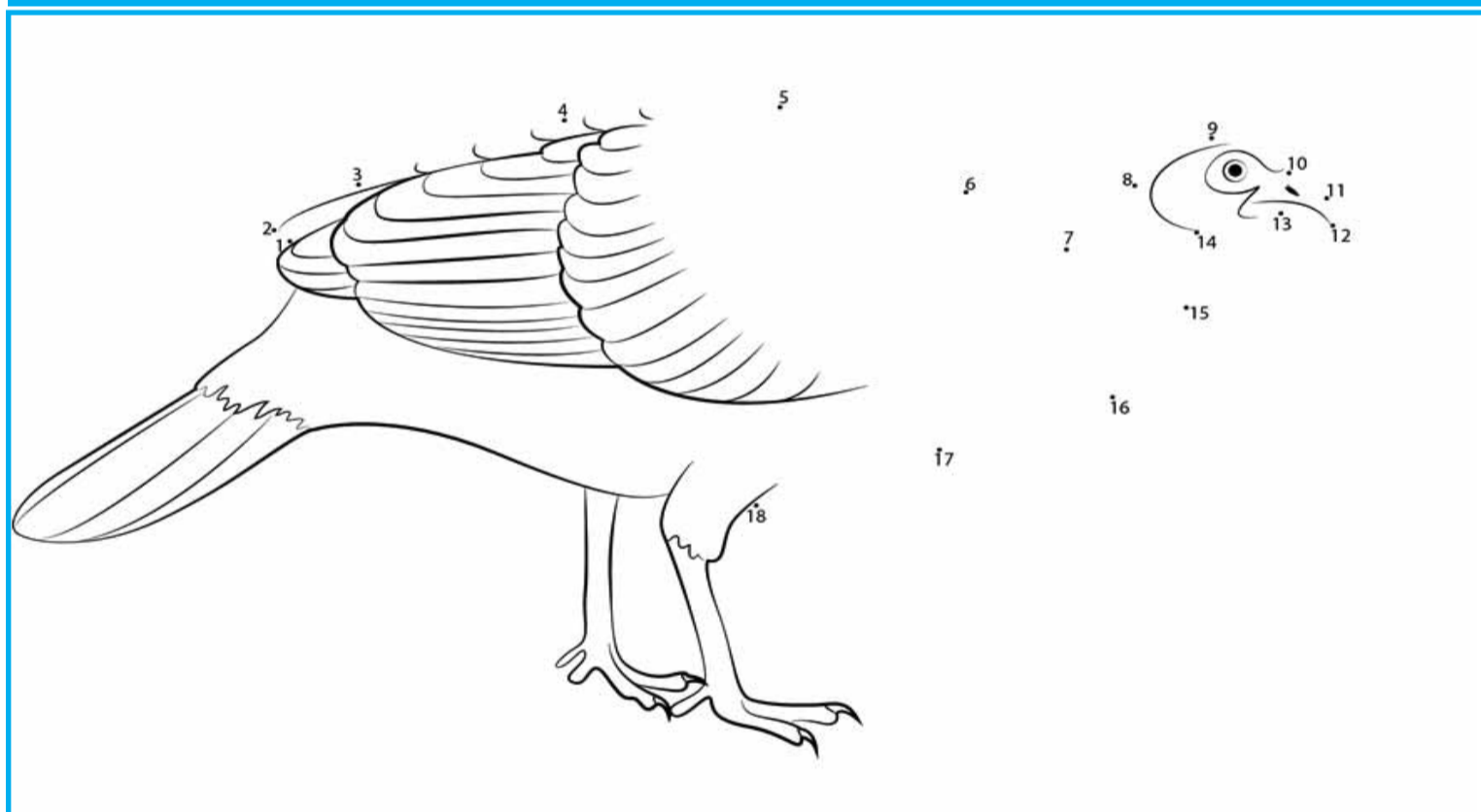
UNION ARMY

George MCCLELLAN
 Robert ANDERSON
 Nathaniel BANKS
 William T. SHERMAN
 George CUSTER
 Winfield Scott HANCOCK
 Abner DOUBLEDAY
 Ambrose BURKESIDE
 Arthur MACARTHUR
 Benjamin BUTLER
 Daniel SICKLES

George MEADE

George THOMAS
 Irvin MCDOWELL
 John BUFORD
 John POPE
 John REYNOLDS
 Joseph HOOKER
 Joshua CHAMBERLAIN
 Philip SHERIDAN
 Oliver HOWARD
 William Starke ROSECRANS

Join the Dot



STAR TRACK

Aries (March 21-April 19)
 A sum of money above and beyond your usual income could come your way. This could be a bonus, settlement, or even a gift of some kind. You could put it to work making changes in your home, perhaps repairs, perhaps remodeling or redecorating. This may seem like a daunting prospect, but you'll have the energy and enthusiasm in addition to the money. Go to it.

Cancer (June 21-July 22)
 Today you might wake up feeling that you can move mountains - and this might be exactly what you set out to do, figuratively speaking. Your physical energy, enthusiasm, and self-confidence are very high. Cancer. Your own and others' creative projects could take up a lot of your time. If you're coaching or helping others, however, avoid the temptation to take over the project.

Libra (September 23-October 22)
 New ideas for your career could be on your mind, Libra. You might be thinking not only about getting a new job but also entering an entirely new field. This could be a positive development, but don't be too impulsive and leap without thinking. List your options, cross out the unworkable ones, and do some research on the rest. Even though you may feel some urgency, there is none.

Capricorn (December 22-January 19)
 This is a great day to start new enterprises with others, Capricorn. Possible gatherings with friends or group activities could lead to ideas for new projects that fire your energy and enthusiasm. New immediate and long-term goals should be set. Some people may not be interested and could drop out, but don't worry. Others who share your interests will quickly step in to take their places.

Taurus (April 20-May 20)
 Some vast changes in your community could take place, Taurus. They're positive, for the most part. Today the news should spread widely, and you could be hearing about it from all sides - local newspapers, neighbors, and conversations on the street. The level of excitement in your neighborhood is likely high, and you could get caught up in it. Be prepared for some surprises.

Leo (July 23-August 22)
 Today you could recapture the joy in life that you had as a child, Leo. You're serious by nature, and feelings of joy are to be lived and treasured. You could be experiencing true flow. There might not be any real reason for it, so don't try to find one. Your imagination and your relationships with others could be enhanced as a result. Relish the moment.

Scorpio (October 23-November 21)
 Continued success and good luck should have you feeling charged up to move ahead with plans and ideas. Your energy and enthusiasm are high, Scorpio. You're likely thinking about expanding your horizons, perhaps through travel or education. You should definitely give these serious thought. Plan carefully and take care not to move before the time is right.

Aquarius (January 20-February 18)
 Activities of some kind could put you in the public eye today, Aquarius. Some work you've done well might bring you richly deserved acknowledgement. Your energy and enthusiasm are already high, and you're probably all fired up to do more. This could bring up thoughts of changes in your working situation. But don't give notice right away. Some careful thought is needed.

Gemini (May 21-June 20)
 Gemini, you might choose to do some volunteer work today or help a friend. This could make you aware of a talent you didn't know you had. It could pave the way to more income. You could feel very proud of yourself and decide to do more with this ability, leading not only to financial benefits but also to increased self-esteem. Go for it.

Virgo (August 23-September 22)
 Projects involving a group, perhaps your entire community, could take up a lot of your time, Virgo. Interesting news and stimulating conversations could come your way. Expect a lot of activity around you. You could be running around in the car, seeing people, getting errands taken care of. You could also find yourself changed somewhat - for the better, of course.

Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)
 Don't be surprised if sometime during the day you feel angry for no apparent reason, Sagittarius. It's probably rooted in the past, from a situation that wasn't resolved long ago. Take a good look at what's going on today. Did some person or event awaken old traumas within you? Let them and the anger go. This can only benefit you and clear the way for more positive emotions.

Pisces (February 19-March 20)
 Changes to your chosen field are indicated, Pisces. Ideas from other states or countries might fire your creativity. Your intellectual or artistic interests could take on a new dimension, expanding your horizons and opening new opportunities. You might toy with the idea of travel, perhaps to learn more about these matters. Possible formal education in new fields is also indicated.

'Fresh Prince of Bel-Air' set for gritty reboot



The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air is getting turned upside-down as a gritty drama set to be executive produced by Will Smith, Hollywood trade publications reported Tuesday. The idea for a dark modern-day "reimagining" of the smash hit 1990s sitcom that launched Smith's acting career came from superfan Morgan Cooper, who shot and posted his own four-minute trailer last year. Two versions of the trailer have been viewed over seven million times and won over Smith himself, who met Cooper last year and praised his "brilliant" idea. "Morgan did a ridiculous trailer for 'Bel-Air'-a brilliant idea, the dramatic version of 'The Fresh Prince' for the next generation," Smith said on his YouTube channel at the time.

According to the Hollywood Reporter and Deadline, the project is now in development with Smith's Westbrook Studios and Universal TV, and being pitched to various streaming platforms including Netflix. The project would feature hour-long dramatic episodes telling the story of how Smith's character became embroiled in a fight with Philadelphia gang members before being sent to live with wealthy relatives in the affluent Los Angeles suburb of Bel-Air. "I envision the first season being the rest of his junior year-there's no worse time for a kid to land in a new place, in the middle of the school year," Cooper told Smith last year.

Cooper's trailer includes a young Will's first meeting with popular charac-

ters from the original series, including Jazz-alias Jazzy Jeff-at a Los Angeles record store. Cooper will co-write the script, direct and be credited as a co-executive producer, working alongside several original members of the "Fresh Prince" creative team and showrunner Chris Collins ("The Wire") according to reports. Smith and Cooper's representatives did not immediately respond to AFP request for comment. "The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air" ran for six seasons from 1990-1996, becoming a global hit. It showcased the acting and comedic talents of Smith, then a young rapper who would go on to become one of Hollywood's biggest movie stars. — AFP

Last Blockbuster store lists '90s sleepover' on Airbnb

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s 2020 proving a bit too much? The last Blockbuster store on the planet is offering guests a chance to roll back the clock to simpler times with a '90s themed sleepover, it was announced Tuesday. An Airbnb listing for the hold-out video rental shop in the northwestern US state of Oregon promises to convert the store into a makeshift living room "with a pull-out couch, bean bags and pillows for you to cozy up with 'new releases' from the '90s." For just \$4 a night, four spaces will be available over three nights in September. "When you call dibs on this stay, you're booking a night back in the 90s, but this time you won't have to beg your parents to rent the latest horror flick-we'll

give you the keys to the entire store!" it promised.

The store in Bend, Oregon is the last of a chain that boasted more than 9,000 worldwide outlets at its peak in the early 2000s. Blockbuster suffered a precipitous decline with the advent of streaming platforms such as Netflix. But residents of Bend have remained loyal to its time-honored process of browsing for physical DVDs and VHS tapes before returning them through a slot days later. It has also become a popular tourist destination. In recent years, an endless stream of nostalgic fans have posed for selfies outside, and popped in to buy kitsch confectionary and view retro movie memora-

abilia including Russell Crowe's jacket from "Les Miserables."

But with the pandemic stifling tourism, "we've been missing the regular visits from friends, neighbors and tourists from around the world," the listing said. The advert promises to sanitize the store before each set of guests arrive, and provide face coverings, disinfectant wipes and hand sanitizer as well as free snacks and video games. "And remember, the store is all yours for the night!" it says. "So let loose, blast the boombox and wear your favorite '90s denim so that you feel right at home in another era." — AFP



These photos show the interior of the last remaining Blockbuster store, in Bend, Oregon. — AFP photos



In this file photo two North American beavers check out a man-made beaver dam in the new beaver enclosure during a sneak peak of the new American Trail at the Smithsonian National Zoo. — AFP

Dam odd: Satellite dishes on beaver huts tickle Canada

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atellite dishes are popping up on beaver dams across Canada-but it's not because North America's largest rodents are bingeing on television, as some have gleefully speculated. Rather, an investigation by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) revealed an enduring national prank that has returned to lift spirits during the COVID-19 pandemic. The broadcaster, after looking into one new installation on the outskirts of Thunder Bay, Ontario, uncovered similar setups in northern Manitoba, southern Saskatchewan and coastal Newfoundland, as well as near Montreal and several towns in Ontario.

The CBC reached out to Bell Canada, the nation's largest telecommunications company, over the Thunder Bay dish, and received the droll reply that Bell "could not find this beaver lodge in our customer database." Finally, a breakthrough came in the search: local resi-

dent Grant Carlson admitted to kayaking across a pond in May and wearing chest waders to screw the satellite dish onto the beaver lodge. Glum over the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on his wedding hosting business, he told the CBC he had hoped to put a smile on others' faces. It worked.

Brian Edwards, who drives past the beaver dam daily on his way to work, called it "wonderful." "I'm just expecting to see that beaver adjusting the dish one morning," he quipped to CBC.

Glynnis Hood, a beaver expert at the University of Alberta, advised that beavers use felled trees and whatever scraps they can find for building materials-potentially even a satellite dish. But, she told CBC, "I'm not sure if they could directionally install it in a way that they'd get a good (reception) of Downton Abbey." — AFP

Venice nurtures its lagoon back to health

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enice may be famed for Saint Mark's Square or the Bridge of Sighs, but the Italian city has another jewel that is often overlooked: its lagoon. Once home to a rich variety of fish and birds, mankind's meddling has raised the water's salt content dramatically. However, an environmental project aims to restore it to its former glory, by introducing more fresh water. "The idea is to recreate an environment that has been lost over time, because rivers were diverted out of the lagoon," Rossella Boscolo Brusa, the project's leader, told AFP. The diversions were done to clean up swampy areas and combat malaria, said Brusa, a researcher at the Higher Institute for Environmental Protection and Research (Ispra).

But the move had an unforeseen consequence.

"It led to increasingly salty water and drop in the number of reeds, a very precious habitat for protected species, or species of commercial interest," she said. It is peaceful out on the lagoon-the only noise comes from the occasional tourist boat or the calls of a lapwing, sandpiper or egret. Expert Adriano Sfriso, of the Ca Foscari University in Venice, said that over half the lagoon used to be reedbeds and salt marshes-some 17,000 hectares (around 42,000 acres). The city's Cannaregio district was even named after the plants-"canna" being the Italian for "reed". Today, only 34



Italian fisherman Andrea Salmaso shows small plants of seagrass that are replanted in the Venetian lagoon.

hectares remain, he said.

'Refresh'

The reeds tolerate some salinity. But in the inner part of the lagoon, where the water should be between zero and 15 on the salinity scale, it is 30 — not far off the amount found in seawater. Dubbed "Life Lagoon Refresh", the project, launched in 2017, diverts a freshwater flow from the Sile River into the lagoon. A man-made canal, operational since May, allows the flow of water to be modulated according to the project's needs or high tides. Barriers made of biodegrad-

able coconut fibres contain the fresh water in the target area and help the reeds develop.

In total, the project aims to restore about 20 hectares of reeds, Sfriso said. Replanters Carlo Marchesi and Adriano Croitoru meticulously uproot reeds, taking care not to disturb the birds, before punting a few kilometers away to replant the clods. "We're going to rebuild the lagoon as our great-grandfathers knew it, much richer in fish and birds," says Marchesi, 56. Local fishermen and bird hunters are also roped in to help transplant seagrasses that will speed up the return of aquatic plants.



Researcher at the University of Venice Luca Scapin (left) and owner of the company Laguna Project Riccardo Florin, use a hand held net to collect a sample of fish in the Venetian Lagoon to monitor the evolution of the species.

'Our world'

"The lagoon is our life, our world," said Massimo Parravicini, head of the main amateur fishermen and hunters' association. "If we preserve it, we will be able to enjoy it as much as possible, and pass it on to our sons," said the 58-year old, who regularly volunteers with the project, which he describes as "fundamental to the ecosystem". The salinity is continuously monitored, as is the water quality, vegetation and fauna. A large net is dragged vertically through the water as per the seine fishing method. A team is tasked with tallying the species.

Some, such as the grass goby, are protected, while others, including the sea bream, mullet, flounder or branzino, are important for small-scale fishing. Luca Scapin, also a researcher at the Ca Foscari University, said. The project, supported by the European Commission, also aims to draw birds such as the purple heron. The results will be shared with sites with similar issues, from Hyeres in France, to Albufera in Spain, and the Nestos Delta and Porto Lagos in Greece. — AFP



Owner of a valliculture company Carlo Marchesi (left) and his employee Adriano Croitoru transplant reeds in the Venetian lagoon, as part of a project that aims to restore its environment by increasing fresh water input, near Venice.



Alessandra Feola and Emanuele Ponis, both researchers at the Higher Institute for Environmental Protection and Research (Ispra), check the operation of a probe that measures salinity continuously in the Venetian lagoon.



Owner of a valliculture company Carlo Marchesi (left) and his employee Adriano Croitoru transplant reeds in the Venetian lagoon. — AFP photos

Lifestyle | Features



This combination of pictures shows (left) a night view of the Sursock Museum, once a private home built in 1912 and became a host to an impressive permanent art collection as photographed in the neighborhood of Ashrafiyeh in Lebanon's capital Beirut on October 7, 2015; and (right) a hand-out image obtained from the museum and taken on August 5, 2020, showing its damaged facade with empty windows after their stained glass was broken in the aftermath of the massive blast at the port of Beirut which ravaged entire neighborhoods of the city. — AFP photos



File photo shows a view of a Lebanese flag flying near the facade of the damaged Sursock Museum.

Desecrated: Blast leaves old Beirut's heritage gems in ruins

The monster explosion that leveled Beirut's port darkened the Lebanese capital's future but also blasted its past into oblivion, ravaging many beloved architectural and cultural treasures. Gems of the city's heritage, including some of the region's most elegant Levantine villas with their triple-arch windows, were damaged beyond repair. Many of old Beirut's remaining colonial-era and earlier landmarks had already been damaged by 15 years of civil war and decades of government neglect. The August 4 blast finished the job. Days after the disaster, Tania Ingea gave a tour of her home on Sursock Street, which bears her relatives' name and houses some of the most striking vestiges of the old Beirut aristocracy's heyday. "It feels like a rape," says the heiress of the mansion, previously known as Palais de la Residence.

The devastating blast of a pile of industrial fertilizer, widely blamed on government negligence, was so powerful that it literally redrew Beirut's coastline and skyline. Ingea's converted 18th-century palace now looks like it has been vandalized, with broken Ottoman-era artefacts in every one of both floors' rooms.

Wooden panels inscribed with Arabic calligraphy have been blown off doors and walls and now sit piled in corners of the house. Shards of stained glass more than two centuries old have been swept



File photo shows a view of "The Weeping Women" sculpture, depicting a Christian and Muslim woman mourning together in the loss of sons to war, in the courtyard of the damaged Sursock Museum.

aside to one corner with the rest of the waste. When Lebanon marks its centennial in three weeks, the port blast will have deprived it of some of the most graceful relics of that period. "There is now a cut between the present and the past," Ingea says. "It is an interruption in the transmission of memory of a place, of a family, of a portion of the history of the city."

Gallery of pain

Just next door is the Sursock Museum, a cultural beacon in a country whose treasures are often poorly protected and showcased. The mansion-turned-museum, which only a few months ago was housing a landmark Picasso exhibition, now tells the story of a city's desecration. Its facade is crum-

bling above a grand imperial staircase that curves upwards in an arch. The Mediterranean light that previously trickled through the building's stained-glass windows now floods the structure, rendered almost entirely open-air.

Jacques Aboukhaled, the architect who led renovation efforts there for around 20 years, says the "fabric" of the building is safe, but pressure from the blast blew off almost everything else. "As it is a closed building, there was an implosion from every single corner," says the 68-year-old. "I did not expect to see so much damage." Aboukhaled estimated that the repairs would take more than a year and cost millions of dollars. But he is not deterred: "I feel very attached to this building. It's like our house." Built as a mansion in 1912, the palace opened its doors as a museum nearly 50 years later, as instructed in the will of its owner, Nicolas Sursock, who wanted his grand home converted after his death. It reopened in 2015 after an eight-year closure for major renovation work, its new walls adorned with paintings from the country's "golden era" in the 1960s.

'Winter poses danger'

Between 20 and 30 artworks were damaged in the blast, mainly by flying shards of glass, according to a museum spokesperson. They include the art collection's main gem: a circa-1930

portrait of Nicolas Sursock, painted by renowned Dutch-French artist Kees Van Dongen. The blast caused the painting to fall, cutting a slash into the canvas that stops right at Sursock's forehead. "It's my favorite painting," said Elsa Hokayem, the museum's assistant director.

Inspecting the National Museum of Beirut after Tuesday's explosion, Culture Minister Abbas Mortada said he was relieved that Lebanon's main archaeological trove escaped disaster, with only its external facade slightly damaged. He couldn't say the same for "hundreds" of other heritage buildings already pockmarked and made frail by Lebanon's devastating 1975-1990 civil war. "Most of the heritage buildings are damaged," Mortada said. "It's going to take a lot of work."

He estimated that repairs would cost "hundreds of millions of dollars", but said they needed to be carried out urgently, before heavy winter rains sweep away what's left. A culture ministry team is conducting a damage assessment, but Mortada said he was banking on outside help, especially from France. "We need renovation works to happen as soon as possible," he said, warning of the coming rains. "If winter comes and they are not done ... this will pose a grave danger." — AFP



This undated handout file photo obtained on May 13, 2020 courtesy of the Calgary Zoo shows adult female panda Er Shun. — AFP

Canada pandas running on empty as bamboo dries up

A pair of pandas on loan from China to a Canadian zoo are facing a food shortage as their supply of fresh bamboo dries up, officials warned. And plans to send them back to China, where bamboo is abundant and easy to access, according to a Calgary Zoo statement, have been stalled by pandemic-era changes to import and quarantine regulations. Er Shun, a female, and Da Mao, a male, each require around 90 pounds (40 kilograms) of fresh bamboo daily. Calgary Zoo turned to farms in British Columbia for a temporary domestic supply after international borders were closed in a bid to limit the spread of COVID-19. But that supply will run out in September, it said. "You can't give them just any bamboo because they won't eat it," a Calgary Zoo spokeswoman told AFP. "Our fridges need to be replenished with fresh bamboo every three days in order to meet their dietary needs."

In May Calgary Zoo announced it would hasten the return of the two giant pandas to China. The pair had arrived in 2014 and were originally scheduled to go back after spending a decade in Canada. But the zoo has been unable to secure travel permits from China, and last week expressed "increasing concerns for the giant pandas' well-being." "To date, China has not been able to approve international permits due to changes in its import laws and quarantine facilities due to COVID-19," zoo president Clement Lanthier said in a statement. "The continued delays in international permitting is putting the health and welfare of these two beautiful giant pandas in jeopardy." — AFP

Back from the dead? Stem cells give hope for revival of Malaysia's extinct rhinos

Some skin, eggs and tissue samples are all that remain of Malaysia's last rhino, Iman, who died last November after years of failed breeding attempts. Now scientists are pinning their hopes on experimental stem cell technology to bring back the Malaysian variant of the Sumatran rhinoceros, making use of cells from Iman and two other dead rhinos. "I'm very confident," molecular biologist Muhammad Lokman Md Isa told Reuters in his laboratory at the International Islamic University of Malaysia. "If everything is functioning, works well and everybody supports us, it's not impossible."



Iman was the last wild rhino found in Malaysia. — Photo by Borneo Rhino Alliance

The smallest among the world's rhinos, the Sumatran species was declared extinct in the wild in Malaysia in 2015. Once it had roamed across Asia, but hunting and forest clearance reduced its numbers to just 80 in neighboring Indonesia.

Iman, 25, died in a nature reserve on Borneo island, following massive blood loss caused by uterine tumors, within six months of the death of Malaysia's last male rhino, Tam. Efforts to get the two to breed had not worked. "He was the equivalent of a 70-year-old man, so of course you don't expect the sperm to be all that good," said John Payne of the Borneo Rhino Alliance (BORA), who has campaigned for about four decades to save Malaysia's rhinos. "It was obvious that, to increase the chances of success, one should get

sperm and eggs from the rhinos in Indonesia. But right till today, Indonesia is still not keen on this."

Across the border

Indonesia's environment ministry disputed accusations of cross-border rivalry as a reason why Malaysia's rhinos died out, saying talks continue on ways to work with conservationists in the neighboring southeast Asian nation. "Because this is part of diplomatic relations, the implementation must be in accordance with the regulation of each country," said Indra Exploitasia, the ministry's director for biodiversity conservation. The Malaysian scientists plan to use cells from the dead rhinos to produce sperm and eggs that will yield test-tube babies to be implanted into a living animal or a closely related species, such as the horse.

The plan is similar to one for the African northern white rhinoceros, which number just two. Researchers in that effort reported some success in 2018 in producing embryonic stem cells for the southern white rhino. But the process is still far from producing a whole new animal, say Thomas Hildebrandt and Cesare Galli, the scientists leading the research.

And even if it worked, the animals' lack of genetic diversity could pose a threat to long-term survival, Galli told Reuters. Indonesian scientist Arief Boediono is among those helping in Malaysia, hoping success will provide lessons to help his country's rhinos. "It may take five, 10, 20 years, I don't know," Arief added. "But there has already been some success involving lab rats in Japan, so that means there is a chance." Japanese researchers have grown teeth and organs such as pancreas and kidneys using embryonic stem cells from rats and mice in efforts to grow replacement human organs. For now, however, Iman's hide will be stuffed and put on display alongside Tam in a Borneo museum. — Reuters



A mahout or elephant keeper sprays water over elephants during their daily bath in a river at the Pinnawala Elephant Orphanage in Pinnawala, about 90 km from the capital Colombo.

Virus gives Sri Lanka's threatened elephants a reprieve

Sri Lanka's coronavirus lockdown has helped reduce the death toll from clashes between elephants and humans, conservationists have said. A record 405 elephants were killed by humans in the country last year, up from about 360 in 2018. A total of 121 people were killed by elephants, up from 96 the year before, according to government data. Speaking ahead of World Elephant Day on Wednesday, Jayantha Jayewardene, a leading international expert on elephants, said: "We can say that the human-elephant conflict eased during curfews. "But this is a temporary situation. Farmers will start defending their crops and the killings will resume." Most of the killed elephants are shot dead or poisoned by farmers trying to keep them off their land. The beasts are considered sacred in the majority-Buddhist island and are protected, but prosecutions are rare.

Most of the humans are killed by elephants who have seen their habitat drastically reduced, rampaging in villages looking for food. Sumith Pilapitiya, a conservationist and former director-general of the government's wildlife department, estimated that the number of elephant deaths decreased by 40 percent during the coronavirus lockdown, which started in March and officially ended in June. Pilapitiya said an average of 240 elephants were killed annually between 2010 and 2017 and the rate had accelerated since.

Pilapitiya told AFP: "The Asian elephant is classified as 'endangered', so we cannot afford to lose elephants at that rate." He expressed hope that a "significant reduction" during the shutdown-which included nationwide stay-at-home orders, with people only allowed out to buy essentials-would bring down the overall

toll for the year. Sri Lanka's elephant population has declined to about 7,000 according to the latest census, down from 12,000 in the early 1900s.



Elephants take their daily bath in a river at the Pinnawala Elephant Orphanage in Pinnawala. — AFP photos

World Elephant Day

Pilapitiya said a new panel of experts on measures to reduce human-elephant conflicts in the country would have its first meeting on World Elephant Day.

"This may be an auspicious beginning and hopefully the government will implement the recommendations of this committee," he said. During the shutdown, Pilapitiya accompanied wildlife trackers who reported spotting baby elephant twins at the Minneriya sanctuary northeast of Colombo, the first pair seen in the wild in Sri Lanka and a rare sight anywhere.

But the shutdown of wildlife parks during the pandemic saw an increase in poaching and illegal hunting of all wild animals, prompting the government to order a crackdown in July. Environmental lawyer Jagath Gunawardena said law enforcement authorities were preoccupied with the coronavirus, which made poaching easier. — AFP

Photo of the Day



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

LPGA Shanghai tournament cancelled

SHANGHAI: The LPGA Tour yesterday cancelled its Shanghai tournament after China said it will not hold most international sports events this year because of coronavirus.

LPGA Shanghai, won last year by American world number two Danielle Kang, had been scheduled for October 15-18 but has been scratched "given the current health concerns and significant travel restrictions", the tour said in a statement.

"(We) very much look forward to returning to Qizhong Garden Golf Club, Shanghai in 2021," it added. It now appears inevitable that the men's prestigious \$10.5 million World Golf Championship-HSBC Champions, due to take place two weeks later in Shanghai, will also be cancelled.

Almost all leading international sports events in China this year, including WTA and ATP tennis, have been scrapped as the country tries to prevent imported virus cases. The Formula One Chinese Grand Prix in Shanghai, which was postponed in April, also looks doomed.

Men's and women's professional golf has made a tentative return in the US and Europe, but with no crowds and under strict virus-prevention protocols. The LPGA Tour 2020 season was shut down by the pandemic in February after just four events, two in Florida and two in Australia.

It teed off again only two weeks ago with back-to-back tournaments, without crowds, in Ohio, both won by last year's Shanghai champion Kang. The leading women's tour moves its bio-secure bubble to Scotland this week for the Scottish Open in North Berwick followed by next week's first major of the season, the British Women's Open at Troon. — AFP

Orioles edge Philadelphia on inside-the-park homer

Bundy razor-sharp again as Angels blank A's

PHILADELPHIA: Austin Hays hit an inside-the-park homer to lead off the 10th inning, lifting the visiting Baltimore Orioles to a 10-9 victory over the Philadelphia Phillies on Tuesday. With Andrew Velazquez stationed on second base to begin the 10th, Hays' liner off Deolis Guerra (1-2) was mis-played by diving center fielder Roman Quinn. The ball found its way to the wall, and Hays motored around the bases to give Baltimore a two-run lead despite only one batter coming to the plate. The unconventional offense allowed Cole Sulser (1-1) to pick up his first career win despite allowing a tying two-run single to Didi Gregorius in the ninth inning. Paul Fry surrendered an RBI single to Jay Bruce in the bottom of the 10th before Travis Lakins induced Rhys Hoskins to ground out with runners on second and third to secure the first save of his career. Renato Nunez collected three hits and two RBIs, and Pedro Severino had an infield single that plated two runs in the eighth inning for the Orioles, who recorded 16 hits en route to winning their third in a row. Bryce Harper belted a two-run homer and Jean Segura and Bruce also went deep for the Phillies, who have lost three of their past four games.

ROCKIES 8, DIAMONDBACKS 7

Nolan Arenado homered, Charlie Blackmon and Raimel Tapia had three hits apiece, and Colorado held on to beat Arizona in Denver. The score was 2-2 before the Rockies scored six times in the eighth inning. The Diamondbacks responded with five runs in the ninth before Colorado reliever Daniel Bard entered with runners at the corners and two outs. Bard struck out Stephen Vogt looking at a 2-2 slider to earn his first save. The win went to Carlos Estevez (1-0). Colorado's Garrett Hampson and Trevor Story had two hits each. Blackmon extended his hit streak to 15 games and raised his average to .500, tops in the majors. Christian Walker homered among his two hits. Carson Kelly also went deep, Starling Marte had three hits and Tim Lincecum added two hits for the Diamondbacks. Kevin Ginkel (0-1) took the loss.

ANGELS 6, A'S 0

Dylan Bundy struck out 10 and allowed just four hits over seven scoreless innings to lead Los Angeles past Oakland in Anaheim, Calif. The Angels offense gave Bundy plenty of support, getting home runs from Jason Castro, Anthony Rendon, David Fletcher and Brian Gooden among 12 hits. Castro, Rendon, Shohei Ohtani and Albert Pujols each finished with two hits. It was the second stellar performance in a row for Bundy, who was coming off a complete-game victory Thursday against the

Seattle Mariners. He struck out 10 in that game, too. He walked just one Oakland batter.

PADRES 6, DODGERS 2

Manny Machado hit a grand slam and Garrett Richards delivered a strong six innings as visiting San Diego continued to show its potential with a victory over Los Angeles. Jurickson Profar also hit a home run for the Padres, who won for the fourth time in five games and picked up their third victory in five games against the Dodgers this season. Machado went deep in the third inning against his former team, his fifth of the season and also his fifth against the Dodgers since moving to the Padres as a free agent in February 2019. Chris Taylor and Austin Barnes each had two hits and an RBI for the Dodgers while Justin Turner doubled in the second inning for his 1,000th career hit.



Blackmon extend his hit streak

RAYS 8, RED SOX 2

Visiting Tampa Bay scored six runs in its second straight decisive seventh inning in a victory over Boston. The Rays had a two-run seventh Monday in the series opener to break open a 5-5 tie en route to an 8-7 win, then scored six times in the frame Tuesday while holding a 2-1 lead to put away the game and win their fourth straight. Michael Chavis (triple), Andrew Benintendi and Jonathan Arauz had two hits each for Boston, which lost for the third time in four tries.

CUBS 7, INDIANS 1

Jon Lester continued his strong start to the season with six solid innings, while Jason Heyward homered and had four RBIs as visiting Chicago returned to action with a win over Cleveland. After their weekend series in St. Louis was postponed due to the Cardinals' continued COVID-19 issues, the Cubs didn't show much rust during their first game in five days. Lester (2-0) set the tempo, allowing one run on three hits and two walks. Heyward had three hits. The Indians, who entered winners in two straight and five of six, got a sixth-inning sacri-

just the fifth to go into quintuple overtime. The marathon featured goaltending performances for the ages from Columbus' Joonas Korpisalo and Tampa Bay's Andrei Vasilevskiy. The two goalies each made multiple games' worth of tremendous saves to keep their teams afloat in both regulation and overtime. Korpisalo stopped 85 of 88 shots, the most saves and shots faced in a Stanley Cup playoff game since they were officially tracked in 1955-56. Vasilevskiy stopped 61 of 63 shots.

FLAMES 3, STARS 2

Dillon Dube scored twice and Rasmus Andersson netted the game-winner as Calgary beat Dallas to take the opening game in their first-round Stanley Cup playoff series in Edmonton.



PHILADELPHIA: Scott Kingery #4 of the Philadelphia Phillies forces out Dwight Smith Jr. #35 of the Baltimore Orioles at second base on an attempted double play in the sixth inning at Citizens Bank Park in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. —AFP

fice fly from Franmil Reyes for their only run of the night. With two of Cleveland's four hits in the game, Reyes is 9 for 18 in the last five contests.

BLUE JAYS 5, MARLINS 4 (10 INNINGS)

Travis Shaw singled with the bases loaded and one out in the bottom of the 10th inning, giving Toronto the win over Miami in Buffalo. Danny Jansen sacrificed to send pinch runner Anthony Alford to third, after he began the 10th inning at second. Left-hander Stephen Tarpley (2-1) walked Cavan Biggio, and Bo Bichette was intentionally walked to load the bases. Shaw then took a 2-2 curveball to right field, ending the game. Bichette hit a three-run homer for the Blue Jays, who took a 4-1 lead into the ninth. A.J. Cole (1-0) pitched 1 1/3 scoreless innings to get the win. Miami's Francisco Cervelli hit a three-run homer with two out in the ninth against Anthony Bass.

YANKEES 9, BRAVES 6

Aaron Judge hit his major-league-leading ninth homer, Luke Voit hit a three-run homer, and New

York beat Atlanta Braves to improve to 5-0 at Yankee Stadium. Yankees starter Jordan Montgomery (2-1) allowed three runs on four hits in six innings. The left-hander struck out four, walked one and threw 78 pitches. Zack Britton breezed through a perfect ninth and notched his sixth save. Braves starter Touki Toussaint (0-1) allowed six runs (five earned) on four hits in four innings. Atlanta scratched Ronald Acuna Jr. due to a sore left wrist shortly before first pitch.

RANGERS 4, MARINERS 2

Nick Solak went 3-for-4 with three RBIs as Texas defeated Seattle in Arlington, Texas. Edinson Volquez (2-1) got the victory with one-third of an inning of relief. Rangers left-hander Mike Minor threw four scoreless innings of one-hit ball but was replaced after throwing 76 pitches as he was on a strict pitch count. The Rangers scored two runs in the first and two more in the third off Mariners left-hander Marco Gonzales (2-2), who allowed four runs on seven hits in five innings, with one walk and two strikeouts. — Reuters

Vegas beat Chicago in Game 1 of their Western Conference first-round series in Edmonton. Shea Theodore and William Carrier also scored, Jonathan Marchessault assisted on Smith's goals, and Robin Lehner made 19 saves for the Golden Knights, the top-seeded team in the West. David Kampf scored a short-handed goal, and Corey Crawford made 30 saves for the eighth-seeded Blackhawks.

HURRICANES-BRUINS, PPD.

Game 1 of the Eastern Conference playoff series between Carolina and Boston was postponed until 11 a.m. ET on Wednesday because the earlier game at Scotiabank Arena in Toronto. Tampa Bay-Columbus, went too long. — Reuters

Lightning edge Jackets in 5th OT

TORONTO: Brayden Point's goal in the fifth overtime period gave the Tampa Bay Lightning a dramatic 3-2 victory over the Columbus Blue Jackets in Game 1 of their Eastern Conference first-round quarterfinal series on Tuesday in Toronto. At 10:27 of the fifth extra period, a shot bounced off Columbus defenseman Vladislav Gavrikov and back to Point, who blasted the rebound into the net for his second goal of the game. The contest was the fourth longest in Stanley Cup playoff history, and

GOLDEN KNIGHTS 4, BLACKHAWKS 1

Reilly Smith had two goals and an assist, and

Sports

Stars aligning for Atletico with Champions League glory not so far away

Atletico unbeaten in 11 games after resumption

MADRID: Atletico Madrid's triumph over Liverpool in March was a throwback to a more celebrated past under Diego Simeone but five months on and the Champions League offers them a very real opportunity in the present.

Knocking out the holders at Anfield may prove to be the first glimpse of a new era under Simeone, where the likes of Joao Felix, Marcos Llorente, Jose Gimenez and Jan Oblak push Atletico to challenge for major honours again.

Or it could be a last hurrah for the Simeone project, which some believe will never again scale the heights of their incredible La Liga title win in 2014 or their runs to the Champions League finals in 2014 and 2016.

Either way, few believed Llorente's two goals in extra-time would be the start of something even more surprising, namely Simeone lifting the cup in May.

Certainly nobody anticipated football shutting down completely the following week, as nervousness turned to indignation about Atletico fans travelling to Anfield, before matches behind closed doors became matches postponed indefinitely.

And yet when football returned in June, Atletico were transformed. They went unbeaten in the 11 games after the resumption, to dispel concerns they could miss out on La Liga's four.

They won seven matches and drew four, one of them against Barcelona at Camp Nou, which helped Real Madrid clinch the title.

They scored 20 goals and conceded six. If the season had started when the league restarted, Atletico would have finished second.

"We did well and we know we're on a really good streak but the Champions League is a different competition," said Diego Costa last week.

Atletico face Leipzig in Lisbon today as one of the form teams still standing, in a tournament

that has gifted them the significantly kinder half of the draw.

If they beat Leipzig, who laboured to a third-place finish in the Bundesliga, they will face either Atalanta, the tournament's minnows or Paris Saint-Germain, who have played two games in almost half a year.

Meanwhile, in the other half, only one of Bayern Munich, Barcelona, Manchester City and Lyon can reach the final.

Without doubt, Atletico's opponents and potential semi-final opponents will be just as eager to capitalise, especially PSG, whose longing



Last hurrah

for success in the Champions League has come to define them.

And it is unknown how Simeone's squad will be affected by the club's announcement on Sunday that Angel Correa and Sime Vrsaljko tested positive for coronavirus, with both players, who would likely have been on the bench, left at home.

A required second round of tests on Sunday meant preparations had to be tweaked, including delaying the squad's flight to Lisbon from Monday until Tuesday afternoon.

But it is hard to shake the sense that as a team, Atletico are very well-placed, even if the club have



LISBON: Atletico Madrid's players arrive to the team hotel in Lisbon ahead of the UEFA Champions League finals. — AFP

always appeared more comfortable as under-dogs under Simeone than burdened by expectation.

Even the new format could suit them, in single matches where game management is likely to be key and technical superiority has less time to win out than over the traditional 180 minutes.

A riled Jurgen Klopp said after Liverpool's 1-0 defeat at the Wanda Metropolitan in February that Atletico's backs-to-the-wall approach would not be as effective without their own fans.

Yet they were able to frustrate Liverpool at Anfield too, before winning 3-2 in the second leg.

"It's important to accept the new format because once you accept it, you can adapt," said Atletico's Saul Niguez.

Leipzig, meanwhile, were still in the title race in March and considered a threat even in the Champions League, on the back of destroying Jose Mourinho's Tottenham in the last 16.

But they have been less effective since the restart and will be less potent without Timo Werner, whose move to Chelsea cruelly prevents him from finishing what he started in the Champions League. It could be Atletico's year. — AFP

IPL's Chennai expect Dhoni to play past 40

NEW DELHI: Indian Premier League favourites Chennai Super Kings expect former India captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni to keep playing past his 40th birthday until at least 2022, the team's chief executive said.

Dhoni has not played a competitive game since India's World Cup semi-final defeat last year, but is due to return to action when the delayed IPL begins in the United Arab Emirates next month.

While Dhoni is unlikely to play again for India, Chennai Super Kings chief executive Kasi Viswanathan said he was confident the legendary batsman-

wicketkeeper would not retiring soon.

"We don't worry about him at all. Yes, we can expect M.S. Dhoni to be part of both (IPL seasons in 2020 and 2021) and probably for even the next year, 2022," Viswanathan told India Today television late Tuesday.

Dhoni, who has led Chennai to three IPL titles, will celebrate his 40th birthday in July next year. He remains an influential figure in Indian cricket with any hint of retirement causing concern among fans.

Viswanathan said he had only seen media reports that Dhoni has been training in indoor nets in his home state of Jharkhand. "But we don't have to worry about the skipper," he said. "He knows his responsibilities and he will take care of himself and the team."

The CSK players are due to arrive in Chennai this week before leaving next week for Dubai where the IPL will start on September 19 after being moved because of the coronavirus pandemic. — AFP



M.S. Dhoni

Ben Stokes' absence leaves England with Pakistan problem

SOUTHAMPTON: England may have won the series opener against Pakistan but the absence of Ben Stokes leaves them with arguably the bigger selection headache going into today's second Test at Southampton.

Pakistan were much the better side for much of last week's first Test at Old Trafford and, despite a second-innings collapse, were still favourites to win when they reduced England to 117-5 in pursuit of a target of 277.

But a sixth-wicket partnership of 139 between Chris Woakes (84 not out) and Jos Buttler (75) turned the tide as England went 1-0 up in a three-match series on Saturday.

Since England won with more than a day to spare in Manchester, it has been announced that star all-rounder Stokes will miss the rest of the series as a result of travelling to New Zealand to be with his ill father.

A quad injury meant that the end of England's 2-1 series win over the West Indies last month — a campaign that marked inter-

national cricket's return from the coronavirus lockdown — and the first Test against Pakistan saw vice-captain Stokes effectively deployed as a specialist batsman by skipper Joe Root. Stokes, however, still took two important wickets on the third evening against Pakistan.

The obvious move for England would be to recall batsman Zak Crawley, who has missed out on the last two matches while an extra bowler has been deployed because of Stokes' injury problems.

Buttler underlined his skill in a run-chase last week but the wicketkeeper, by his own admission, had a poor match with the gloves. England do have the option to recall Ben Foakes, widely regarded as a better keeper, and play Buttler as a specialist batsman.

But Root appeared wary of that suggestion when he praised fellow World Cup winner Buttler's innings by saying: "I think it will provide him with a huge amount of confidence in all aspects of his game and he should take that forward for the rest of the series." Root himself could do with a big score having managed just one Test hundred in 18 months. England are in the middle of a sequence of six Tests in seven weeks, a gruelling schedule that has seen them adopt a policy of rotating their quicks. — AFP

Lillard ties career-high 61 in Blazers' win

ORLANDO: Damian Lillard tied a career-high with 61 points and assisted Hassan Whiteside on what proved to be the game-winning dunk in the Portland Trail Blazers' 134-131 defeat of the Dallas Mavericks on Tuesday in the Orlando area. Lillard also became the first player in Portland franchise history to score 50-plus points in consecutive games. Helping Lillard shoulder the offensive load was Carmelo Anthony, who scored 26 points on 10-of-17 shooting from the floor and 3-of-5 from behind the 3-point line. Anthony and Lillard combined for 12 of Portland's 15 made 3-pointers. Dallas shot a blistering 20-of-44 from 3-point range, with Kristaps Porzingis going 7-of-9 en route to a team-high 36 points before fouling out. All five Mavericks starters scored in double-figures. Luka Doncic added 25 points with 10 assists and eight rebounds for the Mavericks, while Tim Hardaway Jr. finished with 24 points. Finney-Smith finished with 15 and Burke scored 12 points with nine assists.

was injured, and Antetokounmpo was ejected immediately. The run-in occurred with 8:50 remaining in the first half and Milwaukee leading 35-25. Antetokounmpo finished with 12 points and a game-high nine rebounds in just 10 minutes. The Bucks scored the game's first six points, holding the Wizards scoreless for almost the first four minutes en route to just their third win in seven games in central Florida. Rui Hachimura had 20 points to pace Washington, which lost its seventh straight since the restart.

PHOENIX SUNS 130 - PHILADELPHIA 76ERS 117

Devin Booker had 35 points, nine rebounds and seven assists to lift surging Phoenix past host Philadelphia. Mikal Bridges added 24 points, Dario Saric contributed 18 and Ricky Rubio had 16 points and 10 assists as the Suns moved to 7-0 in the bubble. The Suns tied the Portland Trail Blazers for ninth place in the Western Conference to stay alive to participate in the play-in bracket to potentially earn a playoff spot for the first time in 10 years. Alec Burks led the Sixers with 23 points while Raul Neto added 22 and Mike Scott had 17. Glenn Robinson III had 15 and Furkan Korkmaz had 12 while Kyle O'Quinn swept 10 rebounds and also registered a career-high 11 assists. Philadelphia is currently the sixth team in the East.

BOSTON CELTICS 122 - MEMPHIS GRIZZLIES 107

Jayson Tatum scored 29 points, Kemba Walker added 19 and Boston handed Memphis a devastating defeat. Tatum and Walker combined to shoot 17-of-23 from the floor as the Celtics won their fourth straight game. Walker's 19 points were the most he's had in six games since the season restart. —Reuters

MILWAUKEE BUCKS 126 - WASHINGTON WIZARDS 113

Giannis Antetokounmpo was ejected in the second quarter for head-butting Moritz Wagner, but Milwaukee still beat Washington after Antetokounmpo was whistled for a charging foul for running into the Washington center, the two then jawed briefly and Antetokounmpo lowered his head and somewhat gently drove his forehead into Wagner's left temple. Neither player

England's Broad fined by father

LONDON: England paceman Stuart Broad has been sanctioned by his father Chris, a match referee, for a breach of the International Cricket Council's code of conduct during the first Test against Pakistan.

Broad was fined 15 per cent of his match fee — equivalent to around £2,000 (\$2,617) for a level one breach and also given one demerit point for using inappropriate language when dismissing Yasir Shah following a flurry of runs in Pakistan's second innings at Old Trafford on Saturday, hours before England completed a three-wicket win.

Broad admitted the offence and accepted the sanction proposed by Chris Broad, the former England batsman who is now a match referee. The punishment prompted Broad to joke on Twitter that his father was "off the Christmas card and present list".

Broad senior would not normally be officiating in a match involving his son. But in a bid to cope with travel restrictions imposed by the coronavirus, Chris Broad — the only Englishman on the ICC's elite panel of referees — together with a team of English umpires, is officiating in the current three-match series.

Chris Broad also presided over England's 2-1 win against the West Indies last month. Under the interim COVID-19 regulations, all such decisions are referred back to the ICC's headquarters in Dubai to guard against accusations of bias.

But as Stuart Broad did not contest the charge brought by on-field umpires Richard Kettleborough and Richard Illingworth, there was no need for a formal hearing.

Stuart Broad now has three demerit points on his record. The two previous instances concern Broad's use of a swear word towards South Africa's Faf du Plessis in Johannesburg in January and "aggressive language" directed at India's Rishabh Pant two years ago.

Demerit points stay on a player's record for 24 months, meaning the Pant sanction will lapse next week. Broad, however, could risk a one-match ban if he commits a similar offence during the second Test against Pakistan at Southampton, starting today. —AFP

Asia's WCup qualifiers postponed

KUALA LUMPUR: Asia's upcoming qualifiers for the 2022 World Cup and 2023 Asian Cup football have been postponed to next year because of the coronavirus pandemic, officials said yesterday. No new dates were announced for the games, which were due to take place over four match days around the region in October

and November.

FIFA and the Asian Football Confederation said the matches were postponed "with the aim of protecting the health and safety of all participants". "FIFA and the AFC will continue to work together to closely monitor the situation in the region and to identify new dates for the respective qualifying matches," they said in a joint statement.

Asia's World Cup qualifiers are just one example of the havoc COVID-19 has caused in international sport. No games have been played since November, with four match days missed already this year. The games also double as qualifiers for the 2023 Asian Cup in China. — AFP

14 Orioles edge Philadelphia on inside-the-park homer



15 Stars aligning for Atletico with CL glory not so far away



15 IPL's Chennai expect Dhoni to play past 40



DUISBURG: Sevilla's Spanish midfielder Suso (R) and Wolverhampton Wanderers' Portuguese midfielder Joao Moutinho vie for the ball during the UEFA Europa League quarter-final football match Wolverhampton Wanderers v Sevilla at the MSV Arena in Duisburg, western Germany. —AFP

Sevilla, Shakhtar reach Europa semis

Five-time competition winners Sevilla face Manchester United

PARIS: Sevilla qualified for the semi-finals of the Europa League on Tuesday after Lucas Ocampos' late header broke Wolverhampton Wanderers' hearts, while Shakhtar Donetsk thumped Basel 4-1 to join the Spaniards in the last four.

Five-time competition winners Sevilla face Manchester United in Cologne on Sunday thanks to a brilliant header from Argentine Ocampos with less than two minutes left on the clock which gave them a deserved 1-0 win, while Shakhtar take on Inter Milan on Monday in another intriguing tie.

Sevilla dominated their English opponents over the course of the match, as a tired-looking Wolves' dreams of European glory ended with a whimper. "I am very proud of my players. We needed to have lots of patience against a very good team," said Sevilla coach Julen Lopetegui, whose team are now unbeaten in 19 matches in all competitions, to BT Sport.

"We have ambition we work very hard... but we are going to play against Manchester United... the biggest team in world football." Premier League outfit Wolves

thought they were set to make the perfect start in the 11th minute when Adam Traore set off on a sensational surge towards goal from his own half and beat his man to the net as he batted the Mexican's tame shot aside.

However Raul Jimenez, who had scored all of his



Ocampos snatches victory

previous eight penalties for Wolves, sent a weak spot-kick towards Yassine Bounou, who could hardly believe his luck as he batted the Mexican's tame shot aside.

There were claims that Bounou had left his line while Sevilla players seemed to enter the area before the penalty was taken, but in any case that was to be

Wolves' last shot on target of the match as chances became hard to come by.

Sevilla though began to take a stranglehold on the play and force Wolves back into their own half. However they struggled to carve out many clear-cut opportunities, with Wolves' defence managing to snuff out their opponents when they did manage to break free.

The first good chance of the second half came when Jules Kounde met Suso's beautifully flighted cross in the 66th minute, but the Frenchman had to stretch for the ball and sent it looping over the bar.

Eleven minutes later Rui Patricio did well to tip over Ever Banega's dipping free-kick as Wolves began to rock, but the goalkeeper could do nothing to stop Sevilla's winner with two minutes left.

Banega was again at the heart of the action, whipping in a fizzing cross that Lucas Ocampos did brilliantly to guide into the bottom corner and send his team into the semis. In Gelsenkirchen Shakhtar booked their spot in the last four with a commanding win over Basel that will give Inter Milan something to think about

ahead of their semi-final clash on Monday.

"I'm feeling amazing because we have worked hard and we trust we can reach the final," said goalscorer Junior Moraes. "If you want to test yourself, you have to play against teams at this high level."

The Ukrainian side got off to a flyer thanks to Brazilian-born Moraes, who headed home Marlos' corner with less than two minutes on the clock, and they never looked back from that point on.

Taison put Shakhtar two ahead 20 minutes later when his deflected shot flashed past Basel's bamboozled goalkeeper Dorde Nikolic.

Alan Patrick put the result beyond doubt from the penalty spot with 14 minutes left after Taison's burst into the box was ended by a clumsy challenge from Basel defender Yannick Marchand. Shakhtar rounded off a fine display in the 88th minute when right-back Dodo combined with Tete before smashing home a superb finish. Ricky van Wolfswinkel's close range strike for Basel a minute into stoppage time made no difference to a thumping defeat for the Swiss. — AFP

Timbers defeat Orlando to win MLS restart tournament

ORLANDO: The Portland Timbers defeated Orlando City 2-1 on Tuesday to clinch victory in Major League Soccer's "MLS is Back" restart tournament. Goals from Congolese defender Larrys Mabila and Croatian center-back Dario Zuparic sealed Portland's second piece of MLS silverware in five years following their 2015 MLS Cup triumph.

Uruguayan midfielder Mauricio Pereyra had equalised for Orlando after Mabila's opener, but the Florida club were unable to cap their fairytale run to the final with the club's first trophy. Instead, it was Gio Savarese's well-organised Portland side who showed the greater composure at key moments in a sometimes testy final that saw seven players pick up yellow cards.

Portland took the lead after 27 minutes when a superb curling free-kick from the Timbers' veteran captain Diego Valeri picked out Mabila in the area, who headed home for 1-0. Orlando, however, responded

well and drew level six minutes from half-time with a goal that owed everything to the trickery of captain Nani. The former Manchester United and Portugal international glided down the left flank and beat his man to slide in a low cross that Pereyra controlled before smuggling a shot under Timbers keeper Steve Clark.

The winning goal came on 66 minutes, and once again, it was via another Portland set piece. Valeri's corner found Eryk Williamson on the edge of the area who shot towards goal. The midfielder's effort was touched on by US international striker Jeremy Ebobisse into the path of Zuparic, who turned the ball into the net from close range.

The Timbers' win put the seal on a broadly successful tournament for Major League Soccer, which relaunched its season in July after a four-month shutdown following the coronavirus pandemic. MLS chiefs based all of the league's teams at Orlando inside a secure, quarantined "bubble" to play in a one-off World Cup-style tournament without spectators at the ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex at Disney World.

Although the early days of the competition ran into problems, with both Dallas and Nashville forced to withdraw because of COVID-19 outbreaks, the tournament ran smoothly thereafter. Major League Soccer will resume its regular season this month with teams playing at their home stadiums with no fans allowed. — AFP



REUNION, Florida: Players of Portland Timbers celebrate with the champions' trophy after defeating Orlando City 2-1 in the final match of MLS is Back Tournament on Tuesday. — AFP