

6 Masks on the street but not at work? Experts urge consistency



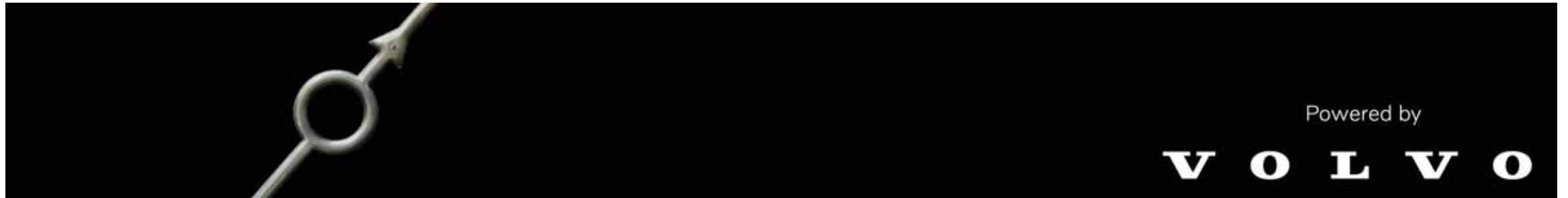
13 Son of a slave reflects on his American story



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UAE-Israel deal met with dismay, quiet welcome

Palestinians slam 'betrayal' • Turkey to review ties • Silence from Saudis, Kuwait



GAZA CITY: Palestinian protesters hold banners reading in Arabic "normalization is betrayal" and "Palestine is not for sale" during a demonstration on Friday against a US-brokered deal between Israel and the UAE to normalize relations. — AFP

JERUSALEM: From cries of "betrayal" to fears about "falling dominoes", the deal making the United Arab Emirates the third Arab state to forge ties with Israel stirred anger and dismay around the Middle East, but a cautious welcome from the UAE's Gulf allies. The mixed response highlighted new fault lines in a region where fear and distrust of Iran - shared by Israel and some Arab states - has challenged a decades-old allegiance to the Palestinian issue as a major driver of Arab policy.

Palestinians, who want to establish a state on West Bank territory captured by Israel in 1967, denounced the agreement as a betrayal of the long-held Arab stance that peace should be conditional on Israeli withdrawal from occupied territory. The agreement, which is set to make the UAE only the third Arab state after Egypt and Jordan to make peace with Israel, calls for a temporary suspension of Israel's planned annexation of occupied West Bank territory, but not withdrawal.

The deal, which US President Donald Trump helped to broker with support from senior adviser Jared Kushner, forms a new axis with the UAE aligning itself with Israel in confronting Shiite Iran and Sunni radicals in the region. This is likely to heighten tensions in the Gulf, which has in the past two years seen attacks on tankers and energy assets that the United States and Saudi Arabia have blamed on Iran, a charge Tehran denies.

Tehran condemned the deal as an act of "strategic stupidity" that would only strengthen the

Iranian-backed "axis of resistance". Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif also had talks with Ismail Haniya, head of the Islamist Palestinian movement Hamas which rules Gaza, on ways of "founding" the deal, Hamas.

Zarif said the deal aimed to hand Trump a win ahead of US elections in November, a view echoed by the leader of Lebanon's Iranian-backed Hezbollah movement. "It's shameful what Abu Dhabi did ... They don't see the Zionist regime as an enemy, but an ally and what's happening now is to help Trump in the elections," Zarif told Al Mayadeen TV.

Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, in a televised speech, described the UAE move as an "election favor" for both Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and said more Arab states would follow suit to "satisfy" Washington. "It is good, though painful, that the masks have fallen," he said. "This is a betrayal of Islam and Arabism, it is a betrayal of Jerusalem, of the Palestinian people."

Some worshippers at Al Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem, where Palestinians want to establish the capital of a future state, carried pictures of UAE Crown Prince with the word "traitor" underneath his image. "Just like Egypt, Jordan and now Abu Dhabi, the whole Arab world will start to fall like dominoes," said Mohammad Al-Sharif, 45, a member of Israel's Arab minority. In Ramallah, office worker Jihad Hussein said: "The Palestinian people have been stabbed in the back by the Emirates leadership."

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UN rejects bid to extend Iran arms embargo

TEHRAN: Iran yesterday hailed a UN Security Council vote rejecting a US bid to extend an arms embargo on the Islamic republic, saying its foe has "never been so isolated". President Hassan Rouhani said the United States had failed to kill off what he called the "half alive" 2015 deal with major powers that gave Iran relief from sanctions in exchange for curbs on its nuclear program.

"The United States failed in this conspiracy with humiliation," Rouhani told a televised news conference. "In my opinion, this day will go down in the history of our Iran and in the history of fighting global arrogance."

Only two of the Council's 15 members voted in favor of the US resolution seeking to extend the embargo, highlighting the division between Washington and its European allies since President Donald Trump withdrew from the Iran nuclear accord in May 2018. Washington's European allies all abstained, and Iran mocked the Trump administration for only winning the support of one other country, the Dominican Republic.

"In the 75 years of United Nations history, America has never been so isolated," said foreign ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi. "Despite all the trips, pressure and the hawking, the United States could only mobilise a small country (to vote) with them," he tweeted. The result increases the likelihood that the US will try to unilaterally force a return of UN sanctions, which experts say threatens to plunge the Council into one of its worst-ever diplomatic crises.

"The Security Council's failure to act decisively in defense of international peace and security is inexcusable," said US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. The embargo on conventional arms is due to expire on Oct 18 under the terms of a resolution that blessed the Iran nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

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Europe faces second wave of coronavirus

LONDON: Thousands of UK holidaymakers scrambled to get home to beat new restrictions on arrivals from European countries as a second wave of virus infections threatened more disruption and economic chaos on the continent. France and the Netherlands were removed from a list of quarantine-exempt countries Friday, sparking a rush for plane, train and ferry ticket by Britons hoping get home before 4am (0300 GMT) yesterday, after which arrivals will have to self-isolate for 14 days.

France is facing a resurgent wave

US seizes Iran fuel shipments to Venezuela

WASHINGTON: The United States said on Friday it had confiscated four Iranian fuel shipments that had been bound for Venezuela, disrupting a key

supply line for both Tehran and Caracas as they defied US sanctions. US President Donald Trump said Iran should not be sending cargoes to Venezuela and added that the seized shipments were bound for Houston, Texas, and suggested they may have already arrived. "They're going to Houston. And, they're there," Trump told a White House news conference. "We're moving them, and moved, to Houston."

Germany added all of Spain except

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Trump fans false birther theory about Harris

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump has stoked false claims that Democratic vice-presidential contender Kamala Harris is ineligible to hold that office because her parents were foreign born. The claims about Harris - who was born in the United States, making her constitutionally eligible to be both vice president and president - echo a base-

less theory that Trump long promoted about his predecessor Barack Obama.

"I heard it today that she doesn't meet the requirements," Trump said at a White House news conference on Thursday, referring to an August 12 opinion piece in Newsweek. The article by conservative law professor John Eastman says that "before we so cavalierly accept Senator Harris' eligibility for the office of vice president, we should ask her a few questions about the status of her parents at the time of her birth."

Trump said that Eastman, of Chapman University "is a very highly qualified, very talented lawyer. I have no idea if that's right."



LONDON: Passengers wearing facemasks as a precaution against the spread of the novel coronavirus walk along the platform to an escalator after arriving on a Eurostar train from Paris at St Pancras International station on Friday. — AFP

The US Justice Department said the seized cargo was now in US custody "with the assistance of foreign partners," adding that the amount confiscated from four tankers was about 1.116 million barrels of fuel, making it the largest-ever US seizure of Iranian fuel. The US State Department credited its outgoing special envoy for Iran for the seizure operation.

"Our diplomacy, led by Special

Representative for Iran Brian Hook, was able to both halt these shipments and assist the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security in executing a US seizure order," it said in a statement. Neither the Justice Department nor the State Department specify when, where or how the seizure took place. The latter also did not disclose what steps Hook, whose resignation was announced earlier this week, took to secure the seizure. — Reuters



WILMINGTON: US Sen Kamala Harris signs required documents for receiving the Democratic nomination for Vice President on Friday. — AFP

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Local

Kuwait budget deficit expands to KD 5.6 billion

Annual increase by 68%, but 31.8% less than projected deficit

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Finance said Thursday the budget deficit hit KD 5.6 billion (nearly \$18.4 billion) in the fiscal year ending on March 31. The figure reflects an annual increase by 68 percent, yet it is 31.8 percent less than the projected deficit in the state budget, according to a press release from the ministry. The oil revenues in the last fiscal year stood at KD 15.369 billion (\$49 billion), declining by 16.6 percent from the previous year, while the non-oil revenues declined by 13 percent to KD 1.851 billion (some \$5.8 billion). The aggregate revenues amount-



16.6% drop in oil revenue

ed to KD 17.220 billion (some \$55 billion), reflecting a 16 percent decline from the previous year.

The expenditure, on aggregate, topped KD 21.140 billion (\$68 billion), reflecting a 3.2 percent decrease from the previous year. The deductions for the future generations fund amounted to KD 1.722 billion (\$5.7 billion). The average oil price stood at \$61.12 per barrel. The expenditures on salaries and subsidies accounted for 76 percent of the aggregate expenditure, hitting KD 4.027 billion (some \$13 billion) or 17.5 percent less than the figures of the previous year. The capital expenditures amounted to KD 2.6 billion (nearly \$8.5 billion) representing 12 percent of the aggregate expenditure.

Commenting on the figures, Minister of Finance



KUWAIT: An archive photo showing buildings in Kuwait City along the Arabian Gulf coast. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

Barrak Al-Sheetan said, "The budget deficit KD 5.6 billion is a normal outcome of the decline of the oil prices between FY 2018-2019 and FY 2019-2020. The deficit was calculated after deducting the appropriations for the future generations fund amounting to 10 percent of the budget as per the

provisions of Act No 106/1976."

"The government has presented to the legislature draft amendments to the law, envisaging a halt to the 10 percent appropriations for the fund in case of budget deficit," the minister revealed. "If the amendments are passed and the final account of FY 2019-2020 is

revised, the budget deficit will be brought down to KD 3.9 billion (\$12 billion)," Sheetan added that the government has referred the final account to the National Assembly for endorsement and was ready any discussion with the MPs with a view to reaching practical solutions and adjusting the state budget. — KUNA

Kuwait's flow of relief supplies to Lebanon proceeds

KUWAIT/BEIRUT: Kuwait's airborne relief supplies for Lebanon proceeded for the 11th day in a row yesterday, as two planes carrying 66 tons of medical and food aid left to Beirut. On Friday, a pair of Kuwait Air Force aircraft touched down at Beirut airport, carrying 100 tons of medical equipment and food supplies. Adviser at Kuwait Embassy Abdullah Al-Shahin affirmed in remarks that part of the supplies were handed over to the Lebanese Army and the remaining amount to the Kuwait Red Crescent Society. With the arrival of the four planes, the number of the aircraft carrying relief supplies for the Lebanese reached 18, with a cargo estimated at more than 819 tons of supplies mainly destined for those affected by the recent huge blast. Kuwait had scrambled to relieve the Lebanese people, namely in Beirut, immediately after a huge bomb explosion rocked the capital, on August 4, leaving at least 170 people dead and around 6,000 wounded. The explosion that happened at Beirut Port left heavy destruction in nearby districts and extensive damage in almost half of the city. Meanwhile, Dr Musaed Al-

Enezi, the head of the KRCS mission in Lebanon, affirmed that the batch included medical equipment and supplies that would be delivered to damaged hospitals.

Meanwhile, KRCS announced donating 10 generators to support emergency centers and field blood banks to the Lebanese Red Cross (LRC). Enezi reiterated the importance of strengthening the LRC's field efforts after the Beirut port explosion, to help it in rescue operations and treating the injured. The field team of KRCS was informed of the needs of the emergency centers and blood banks run by LRC, he pointed out. Enezi said that KRCS immediately took the initiative to provide supplies and immediate needs to Lebanon under the directives of His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, which confirms Kuwait's keenness to help in difficult circumstances.

In the meantime, the Secretary General of the LRC George Kettaneh sincerely thanked KRCS for this donation, which supports the capabilities of health centers and blood bank centers that need to secure electricity at present. There has been cooperation between LRC and KRCS for many years, he said, explaining that they formed a vital partner and support for the LRC in its various humanitarian and relief efforts. He underlined that the Lebanese people always remember the humanitarian stances of Kuwait, pointing to the KRCS' great humanitarian role in many affected



KUWAIT: This photo released by the Defense Ministry shows relief aid being loaded into a Kuwait Air Force plane before it took off to Lebanon yesterday.

countries, especially Lebanon. Through its field team, which has been in Beirut since the beginning days of the Beirut explosion, KRCS is active in

providing direct support to the affected hospitals with medical equipment and supplies, as well as distributing aid to impacted families. — KUNA

Trump fans false birther theory...

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Eastman was also an unsuccessful Republican challenger, losing in the primary for the 2010 California attorney general's election won by Harris, who served in that post before becoming a US senator.

Harris, 55, was born in Oakland, California to a mother from India and a father from Jamaica. She is the first black woman and woman of South Asian heritage to be granted the honor of a place on the ticket of a major US party. Democratic presidential hopeful Joe Biden, 77, who on Tuesday named Harris as his running mate, blasted Trump's rhetoric Friday, with his campaign calling the false claim "abhorrent".

Eastman's article followed claims shared thousands of times on Facebook that Harris could not become president because her parents hailed from abroad. — AFP

UAE-Israel deal met with dismay...

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Palestine Liberation Organization Secretary General Saeb Erekat spelled out the potential consequences for his people if a united Arab front splintered. "The whole thing that we based our strategy on as Arabs is that the (2002) Arab peace initiative specified that once Israel withdraws, there will be peace between Arabs and Israelis. "Netanyahu came determined, with Kushner, Trump... to change the formula, that they want Arab recognition of Israel while they continue with the occupation, and the United Arab Emirates yesterday stamped the green light for this," Erekat said.

Turkey, a powerful regional rival of the UAE, said history would not forgive the Gulf country for making a deal which undercut the 2002 Arab peace plan, which had proposed peace in return for Israeli withdrawal from all occupied territory. "We may also take a step in the direction of suspending diplomatic ties with the Abu Dhabi leadership or pulling back our ambassador," President Tayyip Erdogan said after Friday prayers, adding that he could close Turkey's embassy.

Egypt and Jordan, which signed peace deals with Israel in 1979 and 1994 respectively and enjoy close ties with the UAE, both welcomed the agreement.

Jordan said the pact could make a beneficial impact if it spurred Israel to accept a Palestinian state on land it took in the 1967 Middle East war. "If Israel deals with it as an incentive to end occupation... it will move the region towards a just peace," Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi said.

Oman and Bahrain praised the accord but Saudi Arabia, which has in the past led Arab policy towards Israel and hosts Islam's two holiest sites, has remained silent, as have Kuwait and Qatar. Jordan's former foreign minister, Marwan Al-Muasher, said it was possible other Gulf states could follow Abu Dhabi's lead. But none of those could address the root problem. "In the end it's not the Gulf states who are living under occupation, it's the Palestinians. And until you reach a solution with the Palestinians, it does not matter how many peace deals you make with Arab states," he told Reuters.

Under the deal, Israel and the UAE "agreed to the full normalization of relations between Israel and Crown Prince Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan. They added that Israel would "suspend declaring sovereignty" over occupied Palestinian West Bank areas an idea proposed in Trump's controversial peace plan unveiled earlier this year.

Sheikh Mohamed stressed in a tweet that an agreement has been "reached to stop further Israeli annexation of Palestinian territories". But Netanyahu insisted afterwards that he had only agreed to delay, not cancel, the annexations. The plans remained "on the table", he said. On Friday, the prime minister appointed his national security advisor Meir Ben-Shabbat to lead the negotiations with the Emiratis. — Agencies

Europe faces second wave...

Continued from Page 1

the Canary Islands to its list of regions where incoming travellers must show a negative test for COVID-19 or quarantine for 14 days. Austria urged its citizens to return from popular Mediterranean destination Croatia before similar rules come into effect on Monday, while Serbia introduced mandatory testing for travellers from four neighboring countries.

And thousands of Albanians queued in their cars

UN rejects bid to extend Iran...

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Since Trump pulled out of the JCPOA and slapped unilateral sanctions on Iran under a campaign of "maximum pressure", Tehran has since taken small but escalating steps away from compliance with the nuclear accord as it presses for sanctions relief. European allies of the United States - who, along with Russia and China, signed the deal with Iran - have voiced support for extending the 13-year-long conventional arms embargo, saying an expiry threatens stability in the Middle East.

However, their priority is to preserve the JCPOA. The US text, seen by AFP, effectively called for an indefinite extension of the embargo on Iran, which diplomats said would threaten the nuclear agreement. Iran says it has the right to self-defense and that a continuation of the ban would mean an end to the nuclear deal.

Pompeo announced that members had failed to back the proposal around 30 minutes before Indonesia, the current president of the Security Council, announced that the official results included two votes against and 11 abstentions. Russia and China opposed the resolution. "The result shows again that unilateralism enjoys no support, and bul-

at the Greek border, hoping to squeeze across and return to work before tougher entry requirements designed to brake mounting infections come into effect. Some people had been waiting for three days in the 20-km, 4,000-car jam, an Albanian police source said. The US Department of Homeland Security also said it was extending a ban on non-essential travel through border crossings with Canada and Mexico throughout most of September "to slow the spread" of the disease.

French student Antoine, 23, had to rush back to Bristol, in southwestern England where he is at university, cutting short his summer holidays. "I'm a waiter in a small cafe near college, I can't afford to spend 14 days in the house," he said at London's St Pancras railway station. — AFP

lying will fail," China's UN mission tweeted.

Ambassador Gunter Sautter of Germany, which abstained, said "more consultations are needed" to find a solution that is acceptable to all council members. During a call between Trump and French President Emmanuel Macron, the leaders "discussed the urgent need for UN action to extend the arms embargo on Iran". Hours earlier, Russian President Vladimir Putin called on China, France, Russia, Britain, the US, Germany and Iran to convene an emergency video summit to avoid an escalation of tensions in the Gulf.

Washington has threatened to try to force a return of UN sanctions if it is not extended by using a controversial technique called "snapback". Pompeo has offered the contested argument that the US remains a "participant" in the nuclear accord as it was listed in the 2015 resolution - and therefore can force a return to sanctions if it sees Iran as being in violation of its terms.

European allies have been skeptical on whether Washington can force sanctions and warn that the attempt may delegitimize the Security Council. Nevertheless, the US is expected to deliver the snapback letter next week, AFP understands. Analysts suspect that Washington purposefully put forward a hardline draft that it knew Council members would not be able to accept. "The fact is that everybody at the UN believes this (resolution) is just a prelude to a US effort to trigger snapback and sink the Iranian nuclear deal," said Richard Gowan, a UN expert at the International Crisis Group. — AFP

Local

Kuwait Cabinet to make decision on curfew Thursday

Gyms, salons, tailor shops to open as part of phase four



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



Minister of Health Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah attends the meeting.



Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Anas Al-Saleh attends the meeting.

KUWAIT: Kuwait will make a decision on Thursday on whether to keep, reduce or end the partial curfew currently imposed as part of the government's efforts to curb the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). The Cabinet made this announcement during a virtual extraordinary meeting on Thursday, in which it also announced transitioning into stage four of the plan to gradually return to normal life.

The Cabinet's decision to allow the resumption of some businesses amid phase four of the coronavirus restart plan, due on Tuesday, comes after pandemic numbers stabilized, a health official said. These businesses, which were originally scheduled for phase five, include sports gyms and stadia, barbershops, beauty salons, health resorts and tailors, Health Ministry Acting Undersecretary Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi told a press conference. The move will be governed by measures, which are to be announced soon, aimed at compelling adherence to health guide-

lines, he underlined. Separately, he said the following phase will allow for public bodies and privately-owned establishments to allow the atten-



Govt ready to face potential second wave

dance of over 50 percent of their workforce. It would also allow customers to be seated at restaurants and cafes and the use of public transport while committing to social distancing rules. Asked about the reasons behind daily case num-

bers remaining between 600-700, he said this was a result of non-compliance with health guidelines. The ministry has also made contingency plans, monitoring the situation, and will be ready to take action in the event of a second wave of the virus. Kuwait expects to receive vaccinations in the coming months, he added, saying he was confident that "if guidelines are met, there will not be a second wave."

COVID-19 update

During the Cabinet's meeting chaired by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Minister of Health Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah updated the ministers on the public health situation and the latest developments related to the novel coronavirus, including the figures of recoveries, infections and deaths. The ministers discussed the responses to the pandemic, including the preventive measures and the logistic services, Deputy Prime Minister

and Interior Minister Anas Al-Saleh said following the meeting.

After reviewing the recommendations of the ministerial committee on coronavirus, the ministers decided the following: First, maintain the ban on issuance of all kinds of visa for all nationalities unless there is approval from the ministerial committee on coronavirus. Second, resume the football activities as of August 15, 2020, in the framework of preparations for the continental and world events, provided that the activities take place without fans and in keeping with the health precautions. Third, approve the guidelines set by the cabinet secretariat regarding phases four and five of the gradual easing of the coronavirus lockdowns. Fourth, mandate each minister to implement the measures of phase four relating to their respective ministries starting from Tuesday, August 18, 2020. The ministerial committee is mandated to oversee the commitment of all sectors to the health precautions. — KUNA

In my view

Our children

By Abdellatif Sharaa

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Let me begin with an appeal to every parent and guardian to keep a close eye on their children in this era of free, open and unlimited communications and it is always advised we must learn about their friends and how they behave, because their influence is very great. Yet while being vigilant, we must have an approach that gives our children absolute confidence to come to us and inform us about whatever they face without fear.

We as a society must shed the stigma our youth fear from once they face a certain situation, as this will allow and help them to stay out of harm's way, or get out of it before it is too late. A social consultant said that a mother told him her house was turned into something like hell, as her 15-year-old daughter kept screaming and crying because her family refused to give her a phone.

Meanwhile, another mother complained to him that she found many groups on her daughter's mobile that include youths of both genders who are older than her, adding that most of them were attempting to lead her the wrong way. He added that the mother said the 13-year-old was being added to the groups without knowing who is behind them, and as a result found herself in many suspicious conversations.

When we blame parents alone for what is happening with our children, we actually hide a large portion of the problem, as there are some parents who do not neglect their children, yet they get in trouble. Now that we have realized that the problem is in the pressure of the society and friends, in addition to communications tools, shall we remain idle?

The advisor said the problem is that we do not have the courage to take a decision, adding that for a girl who is x years of age, what is the need for her to have a phone with a SIM card in it? And if you review the phone, you will find gut-wrenching problems.

It is naive to enable our children to get phones and then blame them, for their experience does not allow them to distinguish and they need guidance and supervision. Do not give your young children phones - let them cry now before you cry over the ruins of their behaviors! I say it with confidence that the situation of our children with those devices needs decisiveness and follow up. Do not allow an evil-minded person destroy what you have built over several years with just one or two messages. Be strong, be tough, be loving.

Deputy Amir sees no need to dissolve parliament: Speaker

KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah stressed that there was no need to dissolve parliament at present. The speaker, however, said in a press statement Thursday that the decision to dissolve the National Assembly rests with His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The speaker made the remarks just one day after he had met with His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince. Ghanem quoted His Highness Sheikh Nawaf



Marzouq Al-Ghanem

as stating so clearly that he utterly believes in constitutional institutions and the role of the parliament, considering that this approach, established by His Highness the Amir, would remain unreversed. His Highness Sheikh Nawaf also cautioned that he would not condone any bid to undermine the country's stability amid the ongoing political, economic and health circumstances at both regional and international levels, the top Kuwaiti legislator said. However, he called on members of parliament to work together with the government

under these trying conditions, emphasizing that constitutional tools should be used in a wise mode. The speaker stated that he had also met with His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah on the country's current political scene.

In other news, His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah has addressed a cable of condolences to Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman Bin Abdulaziz of Saudi Arabia. In the cable, His Highness the Deputy Amir expressed, on behalf of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, heartfelt condolences and solace over the demise of Prince Abdulaziz Bin Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Bin Turki Al Saud. His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent a similar cable to the Saudi Monarch. — KUNA

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No more extensions for visit visas

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: All foreigners in Kuwait on visit visas should leave by August 31. Due to the closure of the airport in mid-March, the interior ministry extended the validity of visit visas first until May 31 and then again until August 31. But now with the airport reopened, it is unlikely there will be further extensions, a senior MoI official told Kuwait Times.

Brigadier Tawheed Al-Kandari, Director General for Public Relations and Security Media at the Ministry of Interior, said the government provided enough time for people on visit visas to leave the country through the automatic extension of their visas for a total of six months. "This period is enough for people to leave the country without facing legal sanctions. It's not clear yet if any other extension will be given after the latest extension expires on August 31," he told Kuwait Times. Currently, no visit visas are being issued. "The ministry is not issuing any kind of entrance visa. But the situation is being reassessed regularly, and this may change in the future," Kandari added.

Foreign Minister receives phone call from WFP chief

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah Thursday received an audiovisual call from Executive Director of the World Food Program (WFP) David Beasley. During the phone conversation, Beasley expressed appreciation and gratitude for Kuwait's humanitarian role in supporting Lebanon following the Beirut Port blast on August 4th. He also commended the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) for contributing to the rebuilding of Lebanon's grain silo as a sign of support for the Lebanese people under these difficult circumstances. —KUNA

Listing of Shamal Az-Zour signifies confidence in Boursa Kuwait: Osaimi

'Boursa Kuwait plays an important part in creating opportunities'

KUWAIT: Boursa Kuwait announced the listing of Shamal Az-Zour Al-Oula Power and Water Company KSPC in its 'Premier Market', and that trading of the company's stocks will commence from today's opening trading session under the ticker symbol 'AZNOULA'. The company is included in the Utilities sector, and its inclusion on the exchange brings the total number of listed companies to 173, while the "Premier Market" now includes 19 listed companies.

"The inclusion of Shamal Az-Zour Al-Oula Power and Water Company on the Kuwaiti stock exchange signifies the first fruitful cooperation with the Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects," said Mohammad Saud Al-Osaimi, Boursa Kuwait's Chief Executive Officer, adding that he hopes to see further significant listings including state-owned entities, after their initial public offerings to citizens in the coming years, and more specifically, those related to the oil and gas sector.

"Boursa Kuwait is committed to offering an efficient best-in-class listing platform that operates in line with international standards, and the exchange continuously develops its products and services for the benefit of issuers and investors alike. This listing reflects the confidence of market players in Boursa Kuwait, which in turn, will continue to work towards creating new opportunities and broadening horizons for all

its listed companies," he added.

Osaimi highlighted that the strategy adopted by the exchange is a flexible one that serves the public interest and aims to attract operational entities that will undoubtedly add value in the coming period. He also added that the exchange will spare no efforts in providing products and services that



Company listed on 'Premier Market'

keep pace with the aspirations of the local and foreign investment communities through its series of market development.

"Boursa Kuwait operates with the transparency and best-

authorities and in cooperation with Central Bank of Kuwait, in order to maintain a safe work environment.

He pointed out that the employees' Work Resumption Guide and Plan developed during the past months included detailed protocols for the measures taken by the bank, as well as a thorough sterilization process for different facilities, as well as applying health controls at all branches of the bank.

Ablani noted that social distancing and wearing masks always during official working hours are an essential part of the strict rules applied by the bank, since the early days of the pandemic. Additionally, the bank took precautionary actions by installing hand sanitization stations, frequent distribution of masks and sanitizers, measuring the temperature of employees, as well as sterilizing all floors on a daily and weekly basis, putting social distancing ground marks, and use of electronic forms and digital services to prevent any possible spreading of infection.

Ablani indicated that Human Resources Group is greatly intensifying awareness campaigns to keep employees continuously updated with all measures through the bank's social media platforms, which is witnessing noticeable interaction from employees.

On the other hand, Ablani stressed that the bank, in general, encourages its employees to lead a healthy life. To this end, the bank recently launched a 3-month



Emad Al-Ablani



special Health Care Program for its employees, as part of its continuous efforts to keep them in good mental and physical health during this exceptional period.

Ablani said that this pandemic demonstrated the bank's possession of highly professionally competent and responsible human cadre, as, despite these difficult circumstances, they were able to extend all kinds of support and assistance to the bank's customers to get through this crisis. Noting that the bank spares no effort to provide utmost support to and investment in its employees, which places it at the top of private sector institutions attracting talented, experienced and competent individuals.

NBK recognizes the importance of improving the health and safety of key stakeholders, including employees and customers, as an integral part of Sustainable Development Approach. Therefore, the bank works to update its Health and Safety Policy formalized according to the best regional and international practices related to health and safety issues.

Increase in NBK staff awareness of health measures

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) announced that the results of its recent employees' survey showed high levels of awareness and confidence of its employees in the health and safety measures taken by the bank during Work Resumption Plan.

The survey conducted during the period from the end of July until the first week of August showed a significant increase in the level of employees' awareness of the health and safety measures taken by the bank to about 96 percent, which is higher than the score registered in the May survey, as well as an increase in the level of employees' confidence in the measures taken under Work Resumption Plan to 87 percent.

Commenting on the results of the survey, General Manager - Head of Group Human Resources at National Bank of Kuwait, Emad Al-Ablani said that the bank conducts many surveys periodically to measure the level of employees' adherence to and confidence in the measures implemented to contain the spread of coronavirus pandemic, in order to ensure their safety, as well as ensure smooth work flow.

Ablani added that the bank's Human Resources Group have exerted diligent and great efforts since the early days of COVID-19 pandemic to ensure that preventive and precautionary measures are in place at all the bank's facilities, in line with the guidelines of health

Bohra community prays for Amir's health



KUWAIT: A supplication session was held after Juma'a Prayer on Friday at the Burhan Center of the Bohra Community in Ardiya, beseeching Allah Almighty for the speedy recovery of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait, praying for His safe return to Kuwait. The session was opened by reciting verses of the Holy Quran, and the Lauding Poem of the good traits of Our Prophet (PBUH). The worshippers then supplicated for the speedy recovery of His Highness the Amir. Representative of His Holiness Sultan of the Bohra Community, Sheikh Yahia Badri, gave a sermon started by praying for the blessings of Allah be upon Our Prophet, His Family, and All of His Companions. He reminded the Bohra Community of the necessity for taking all precautions to ward off the dangers of COVID-19, observing social distancing, and wearing facemasks.

He supplicated to Allah Almighty to bestow speedy recovery, long living, good health and safety from all evils on His Highness the Amir. Sheikh Yahia also expressed deep gratitude for the patronage of His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince, and the government for the Bohra Community, who lives in peace on this kind land. "As a token of gratitude, we should thank Allah for His graces we enjoy in Kuwait. It is indeed that speaking of such graces is a token of thanking to Allah, Who promised a great reward for those who thank Him. Allah, the Almighty, says in the Munificent Quran, 'If you give thanks, I will give you more,'" he said.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Youssef Badri recalled that His Holiness the Bohra Sultan always advises his followers to live peacefully in peace on this kind land, strictly complying with all regulations, rules and laws of Kuwait, as well as sharing the responsibility for developing this country through various services and trading. He expressed his highest considerations and gratitude to the government, represented by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, and his Cabinet members, for the relentless efforts they exert for containing COVID-19 and better protecting the health of locals



and expatriates on equal footing.

He also thanked the members of the National Assembly and the noble people of Kuwait, who are distinguished for their benevolence and good manners. "They also offer in-kind aids, exempting tenants of rentals, and paying salaries to their employees during the lockdown period," he said. He praised all societies and charitable organizations "for their huge efforts in helping people during such hard and harsh circumstances." The session ended by supplication for bestowing good health on His Highness the Amir and for his safe return to Kuwait sooner, and praying for His Highness the Crown Prince to enjoy permanent good health.

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Modi: Relations with neighbors depend on security and trust

Dems seek to elevate Biden, Harris at unique online confab

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TEL AVIV: The city hall in this coastal city is lit up in the colors of the United Arab Emirates national flag on August 13, 2020. — AFP

UAE defends deal with Israel

Move to establish ties 'shake-up' of tired diplomacy

DUBAI: The UAE on Friday offered a muscular defense of its bombshell move to establish ties with Israel, saying it was designed to "shake up" the Middle East impasse and serve Emirati interests. The historic deal, the first for a Gulf state, sees Israel pledge to suspend its planned annexation of Palestinian lands but has been condemned by the Palestinian leadership as a "betrayal" of their cause.

Omar Saif Ghobash, assistant Minister for Culture and Public Diplomacy, rejected the charge, insisting the agreement had made progress in the absence of any other workable proposal from the Arab world. "I think we've demonstrated that we are able to enter a very staid and tired situation and to shake things up, and we look forward to seeing positive developments coming out of this real engagement," he told AFP in an interview.

The deal, announced by US President Donald Trump on Thursday, is only the third such accord Israel has struck with an Arab country, and raises the prospect of similar deals with other pro-Western Gulf states. But regional power Saudi Arabia, whose own efforts to induce Israel to withdraw from occupied territories have been effectively sidelined by the United Arab Emirates move, has

remained conspicuously silent.

"We didn't consult with anybody, we didn't inform anybody, and as a sovereign state we don't feel that we have the obligation to do that," Ghobash said, asked if long-time ally Riyadh was consulted in advance. "We are in the process now of informing our friends and partners and others in the region as to why we took the step" but "it's to be expected that not everybody will ... applaud or comment". "We have taken the decision as a sovereign state with our own interests and our own calculations in mind."

'We are not a gift'

The establishment of ties with Israel comes after years of quiet rapprochement, including the hosting of athletes and ministers from the Jewish state. Apart from the diplomatic implications, there are obvious economic benefits. The UAE, rich in oil and with big ambitions in space and technology, will be able to do business openly with Israel, which will have access to the modern cities of Dubai and Abu Dhabi as they attract talent and investment.

"We as a country are very globally connected and we do find that the connections are incredibly

lucrative and contribute to our GDP," Ghobash said, in an unusually candid assessment. "We are driven by pragmatic considerations." The UAE, which has sent a probe to Mars and pressed the button on a nuclear power program in the past month, is growing in prominence on the world stage.

Ghobash, a former ambassador to Russia and France, said the Israel deal demonstrated its diplomatic independence. "We are not a gift to be awarded to the Israelis at some stage if they satisfy Palestinian demands," he said. "We are very clearly stating that it is in our sovereign interest to make this move and therefore that sovereign interest will be served," he said. "We have spent the last 20 years developing relationships with all kinds of countries across the globe. We have an active foreign policy and we will make our own sovereign decisions."

No back-stabbers

Oman and Bahrain have welcomed the announcement as advancing the prospects for peace in the Middle East. But Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stressed the deal did not mean Israel was abandoning its plans to one day annex

the Jordan Valley and Jewish settlements across the occupied West Bank. "The primary gain is to take annexation out of the equation for the time being," Ghobash said.

The minister rejected criticism from the Palestinians, saying there was "no other plan on the table from our Arab side to suggest that some solution might be forthcoming". "I am trying to understand in what sense this is a back stab given that what we have done is actually open the door for a rethink on the Israeli side about annexation," he said. "We strongly believe in the rights of the Palestinians' cause and the rights of the Palestinians," said Ghobash. "So we have taken the step in accordance with these deeply held beliefs but also in accordance with the new reading of the region."

In 2002, Saudi Arabia sponsored the Arab Peace Initiative which called for Israel's complete withdrawal from occupied territories in exchange for peace and full normalization of relations. "We are now in 2020, so 18 years have passed and we haven't seen any outcome from the Arab Peace Initiative. "We believe that the way in which we should approach these questions is by dialogue and communication," Ghobash said. — AFP

Israel-UAE deal a Trump coup, but sights are on Iran

WASHINGTON: The Israel-UAE agreement gives the United States a rare diplomatic success in the Middle East - but it is Iran which President Donald Trump has in his sights, with a strategy that has already hit roadblocks at the United Nations. The White House has lavished praise on a foreign policy coup which was sorely needed by a president seeking re-election in November who has little to show on the diplomatic front.

"This is a dramatic breakthrough that will make the Middle East safer," chief US negotiator Jared Kushner told CBS. "It means less American troops will have to be over there." Under the US-brokered agreement, the United Arab Emirates and Israel agreed on Thursday to establish full diplomatic ties, making the monarchy just the third Arab country to recognize the Jewish state, following Egypt in 1979 and Jordan in 1994.

"Assuming the deal works, it's the first time Israel has established normalized relations with any Gulf nation and for that reason it's significant," said Aaron David Miller, a former diplomat who served as Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiator in Democratic and Republican administrations. But, Miller cautioned, "don't blow this out of proportion. I don't buy that it's on the same level of magnitude or accomplishment as Egypt or Jordan," said Miller, now a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

"This is the UAE we're talking about. This is not the Arab world's most powerful nation like Egypt. This isn't even a country that has



WASHINGTON: (from left, rear) Senior Advisor Jared Kushner, US Secretary of the Treasury Steven Mnuchin and National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien clap for US President Donald Trump after he announced an agreement between UAE and Israel to normalize diplomatic ties at the White House on Thursday. — AFP

a contiguous border with Israel." Barbara Slavin of the Atlantic Council, another Washington think-tank, described the agreement as a "good move" but "not earth-shaking in view of the covert ties the two countries have had for a very long time."

'Vision for Peace'

Since taking office, Trump has pledged to apply his self-proclaimed deal-making skills to resolving the intractable Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He charged Kushner, his son-in-law, with the daunting task of hammering out Middle East peace. But the Palestinians have refused to play along with an administration seen as staunchly pro-Israel, and rejected the US president's "Vision for Peace" unveiled in January.

Miller said the Israel-UAE normalization agreement does little to advance Trump's "vision" of overall Middle East peace.

What's more, he added, "the administration's motivation has nothing to do with Israeli-Palestinian peace." "It's about domestic policy," Miller said. "This is about making the president look good, demonstrating some measure of competency and fulfilling at least some degree of what the administration claimed it would do from the beginning - which is to make peace between Israel and the Arab world." Above all, Miller said, "it helps give rise to the image that there is an anti-Iran coalition." "But I'm not sure that's going to get very far," he continued, unless Trump can get other Arab countries such as Morocco, Bahrain and Oman to sign on. Trump has made it clear that his main objective in the Middle East is neutralizing Iran. He has called on several occasions for the creation of a NATO of Middle East nations, an alliance which has failed to come together. — AFP

After UAE-Israel deal, all eyes on Saudi Arabia

DUBAI: The historic UAE-Israel diplomatic deal may prompt other Arab nations to follow suit, but heavyweight Saudi Arabia will be cautious, with more complex political calculations to make, analysts say. The United Arab Emirates is the first Gulf state to normalize relations with Israel, after years of quiet rapprochement including the hosting of athletes and ministers from the Jewish state. But the diplomatic flirtation has also reached Oman, which was visited by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in 2018 and Bahrain, which received Israeli journalists last year.

Both countries have welcomed Thursday's bombshell announcement as advancing the prospects for peace in the Middle East, while Riyadh has been conspicuously silent. Yoel Guzansky, a Gulf politics specialist at the Institute for National Security Studies at Tel Aviv University, said he expected Bahrain to be among the first to adopt the UAE's position, possibly along with some North African nations.

"I don't see Saudi Arabia jumping immediately. I think it will wait and see the reactions in the Gulf, the Arab world... and then they will decide how and when, and in what scope," said the former adviser to several Israeli prime ministers. "I don't think that they will go full ahead like the Emirates." — AFP

'A little annoyed'

In 2002 Saudi Arabia sponsored the Arab Peace Initiative which called for Israel's complete withdrawal from the Palestinian territories occupied after the Six-Day War of 1967, in exchange for peace and the full normalization of relations. But the kingdom, the Arab world's biggest economy and custodian of Islam's holiest sites, has also cultivated ties with Israel in recent years, in a shift spearheaded by de facto leader Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

In 2018 Riyadh quietly opened its airspace for the first time for an Israel-bound passenger plane. And it has pursued a bold outreach to Jewish figures in recent years, even as it appears wary of a public backlash. However it is unlikely it will take the monumental step of establishing official relations "at least not right away", said Hussein Ibish, an analyst at the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington. "My guess is that King Salman will be at least a little annoyed, since this breaks the Arab consensus that the Arab Peace Initiative is the guiding basis for all major diplomacy with Israel."

The specter of Iran plays a fundamental role in the rapprochement between Israel and the Gulf states, all staunch allies of the United States in its confrontation with the Islamic republic. But there are difference in the perception of threat among Gulf states. Iran's opponents accuse it of interfering in other nations' affairs by supporting, financing and mobilizing armed groups and parties across the region. Nevertheless, Kuwait, Qatar and Oman have relations with Iran, while hardliners Saudi Arabia and Bahrain maintain a total boycott. — AFP

International

Democrats seek to elevate Biden, Harris at unique online confab

Biden campaigning to unify a nation ravaged by political and racial turmoil

MILWAUKEE, United States: US Democrats kick off an unprecedented political experiment beginning tomorrow, an all-virtual national convention that nominates Joe Biden as their White House candidate to battle Donald Trump in the heat of a deadly pandemic.

With his vice presidential pick Kamala Harris, the first woman of color on a major US presidential ticket, Biden is campaigning to unify a nation ravaged by political and racial turmoil, voter suppression concerns and profound anxiety over the devastating coronavirus crisis. But the running mates will deliver their message, aiming to inspire the Democratic base while luring frustrated Republicans, under unique circumstances: a four-day Democratic National Convention conducted entirely online.

No huzzahs, backroom dealings or balloon drops on ecstatic crowds and candidates, hallmark elements of US political conventions. Instead, organizers are retooling to conduct business online, like drafting the party platform and coordinating scores of presentations and speeches from mid-day tomorrow.

Wednesday evening will spotlight Harris, a 55-year-old US senator and former prosecutor who is the daughter of Indian and Jamaican immigrants. Biden has promoted her story as the American Dream.

Online nomination

The four-day affair culminates Thursday night with political moderate Biden, a former vice president and three-decade Senate veteran, being nominated by state delegates casting their votes online.

Masks on street but not at work? Consistency urged

PARIS: Faced with an upsurge in coronavirus cases and alarm over images of summer crowds packing onto streets and beaches, some European governments have mandated masks even in open-air public places. But with many virus clusters sprouting behind closed doors in offices and other workplaces where face covering rules are less clear, experts have questioned if policies are focusing on the wrong target.

In recent days several European countries have toughened their advice on masks, with France and Belgium widening their regulations to include certain outdoor settings. Brussels residents are now required to wear masks in all public spaces, and all spaces to which the public has access.

In France, dozens of towns and cities-including Paris-have made face coverings mandatory in markets and busy streets. The country's Ministry of Health has said it was a "gesture of common sense" to wear one in crowded public places, while the head of France's science council, Jean-Francois Delfray, has said they should be "essential" on packed streets and at seaside resorts.

However with little evidence that there is a high risk of transmission in outdoor settings, some experts have questioned whether the measures are misplaced. "Outside, there is such a mixing of air that you do not have a sufficient viral concentration to be infectious," said Martin Blachier, of the consulting company Public Health Expertise.

He called the measure a "psychological gamble" that could push people to gather indoors, where he said the risk of contamination is far higher. — AFP

Trump visits ill brother at NY hospital

NEW YORK: US President Donald Trump on Friday visited his younger brother Robert at a hospital in New York, where he is being treated for an undisclosed illness. The US leader, who was wearing a face mask upon arriving at New York-Presbyterian Hospital, entered through a back door and stayed about 45 minutes, according to an AFP reporter covering the trip. US media reports say the president's brother is seriously ill, although there were no details. Trump, who was stopping in New York on the way to his golf club in nearby Bedminster, New Jersey for the weekend, told reporters only that "he's having a hard time."

While far less famous than his older brother, Robert Trump has long been an integral part of the family real estate empire and is fiercely loyal to the president. Robert Trump unsuccessfully went to court to try and get an injunction preventing publication of a book by his niece Mary Trump, called "Too Much and Never Enough: How My Family Created the World's Most Dangerous Man."

The book, which paints Donald Trump as the product of a "toxic" family was a "disgrace," Robert Trump said. Although a temporary restraining order was applied, a judge lifted this in July, allowing publication. At a press conference, President Trump called his brother "wonderful" and said they have "had a great relationship for a long time, from day one." — AFP

He then delivers his acceptance speech from his home state of Delaware. The convention had been scheduled for Milwaukee, in critical swing state Wisconsin, and the cancellation is a brutal blow for the Midwestern city which had spent millions of dollars preparing to host the high-profile event.

Downtown streets were largely empty on Friday, with residents lamenting what could have been.

"I thought it was good for the city, everybody did," Dan, who provided only his first name because he works in law enforcement, said of the convention plans. With the economy shedding millions of jobs during the pandemic, Biden will tout his \$700 billion "Build Back Better" plan that would invest in new technologies and create some five million new jobs, an aggressive challenge to Trump on economic policy.

Organizers have promised an energized "convention across America," despite the potential online awkwardness. "In just three days, we will kick off a Democratic National Convention that will look and feel very different than past conventions," acknowledged DNC program executive Stephanie Cutter.

Participants will highlight "Donald Trump's failed leadership and the promise of what we can and should be with Joe Biden as president."

Trump jets in

The party has invited its luminaries, from former president Barack Obama and wife Michelle, who earned keynote speaking slots on Wednesday and Monday respectively, to Hillary and Bill Clinton and New York Governor Andrew Cuomo.

Trump losing ground among retirees in must-win Florida

MIAMI: Jim Farr is a staunch 77-year-old Republican in the sunny southern state of Florida, which lures retirees from all over America—a powerful political bloc. As the country's presidential election draws nearer, Farr dislikes the idea of voting for a Democrat. But the idea of giving President Donald Trump another term irks him even more. Farr, who lives in Kissimmee in the central part of the state, is a devout Christian who considers abortion akin to "murdering babies" and believes in what he calls compassionate capitalism. He says it is not the Republican party that has lost a supporter—the president has.

"He does not seem to care for truth. Truth is very important to me. He does not check facts," said Farr, who is disappointed with the man he voted for in 2016. Add what Farr sees as Trump's me-first agenda, blinding pride that blocks him from listening to advisers and his awful handling of the coronavirus pandemic? The Floridian said those issues mean he will probably do the once-unthinkable: vote for Democrat Joe Biden in November.

"He seems to be an acceptable person," said Farr. Farr is not alone: There are signs that more and



WILMINGTON: Democratic presidential nominee, former US Vice President Joe Biden, and vice presidential running mate, US Senator Kamala Harris, sign required documents for receiving the Democratic nomination for President and Vice President, in Wilmington, Delaware, on Friday. — AFP

Several senators who challenged Biden for the nomination will also speak, including Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren. Keen to avoid the divisions that cuffed the party in 2016 when Hillary Clinton's supporters clashed with those backing Sanders, Team Biden has taken care to invite the progressive wing to help formulate the party plat-

form. Rising progressive stars will have their turn on the virtual stage, including popular 30-year-old congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. Speaking tomorrow will be former Ohio governor John Kasich—a Republican, representing those in his party who have abandoned the controversial president. — AFP



Elections in Florida are famously hard to predict and tend to be decided by very thin margins that keep the rest of the country on tenterhooks. — AFP

more retirees in this must-win state who voted for Trump in 2016 are considering dumping him in the upcoming election. Polls give Biden a slight edge over Trump among older voters, but that lead could be fragile—just three points in a Quinnipiac survey released on July 23.

"There is smoke that suggests some folks could turn to Biden. Particularly around his handling of COVID-19," said Michael Binder, a professor of political science at the University of North Florida.

That's a big problem for Trump—older voters are the demographic that gave him the win in Florida in the last election. In 2016, 57 percent of Florida voters over age 65 cast their ballots for Trump. The other snag for the president is that his staunchest followers in Florida are the ones hardest hit by the coronavirus pandemic.



Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro arrives during ceremonies to lay a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery during his visit to Washington in Arlington, Virginia, US in this file photo. — Reuters

Bolsonaro's popularity surges

RIO DE JANEIRO: Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro received the best approval rating of his term Friday, boosted by his popularity among recipients of coronavirus stimulus payments despite the carnage the pandemic has caused in Brazil. The far-right leader's approval rating surged five points from June, to 37 percent, while his disapproval rating plunged 10 points to 34 percent, the leading polling firm Datafolha reported. It was the first time since April 2019, four months into his presidency, that Bolsonaro's approval rating outstripped his disapproval rating in the Datafolha poll.

The strong numbers came despite the fact that the new coronavirus has killed more than 105,000 people in Brazil—the second-highest death toll worldwide, after the United States—and fueled the loss of 8.9 million jobs last quarter. Known as the "Tropical Trump," Bolsonaro is a divisive figure, condemned as racist, sexist, homophobic and dictatorial by his critics, but adored as a "Messiah"—his

middle name—by his base. His presidency has been marked by a constant string of controversies, most recently his handling of the pandemic. Even after catching the virus himself last month, putting him in quarantine for three weeks, Bolsonaro, 65, continues to downplay COVID-19.

He regularly rails against economically painful lockdown measures. Instead, he trumpets the unproven drug hydroxychloroquine as a treatment.

Other recent polls have also found Bolsonaro has rebounding popularity and a strong chance at re-election in 2022. Datafolha found he was performing well among poor Brazilians who have been receiving monthly stimulus payments of 600 reals (about \$110) to offset the economic pain of the pandemic. The former army captain had an approval rating of 42 percent among stimulus payment recipients. In Brazil's poorest region, the northeast, typically a bastion for the left-wing opposition, his disapproval rating fell 17 points from June, to 35 percent. His approval rating there rose six points, to 33 percent.

Datafolha carried out the poll on August 11 and 12 via phone interviews with 2,065 respondents. The margin of error was two percentage points. — AFP

Around 20.5 percent of Florida's 21 million people are age 65 or older. Historically, it has had a higher proportion of elderly residents than any other US state. In Florida, of the more than 8,700 people who have died of COVID-19, 83 percent were above age 65, according to the state health department. Farr said that when Trump gives himself sky-high grades for his handling of the once-in-a-century health crisis—which he is widely accused of botching—"it would be a joke if it were funny. But it isn't." "He does not give a feeling of having a coherent plan," said Farr.

The pandemic changed Florida

Randy Pestana, an expert in electoral politics at Florida International University, said of the turn toward Biden among older Floridians, "I genuinely do believe it's a trend." And he said the pandemic is a factor. "If you look at older voters who are most vulnerable to COVID impacts health-wise, they're starting to see that the response has not been good and now their economy is not doing good, their retirement is not doing good," said Pestana. "And oh, by the way, their health is really at risk," he added.

"A lot of Republicans that voted for Trump are just sick of it. They're tired. Every day is something new, every day is another tweet," said Pestana. US Congressman Ted Deutch, a Democrat who represents a Florida district with one of the heaviest concentrations of retirees, told AFP that "for every issue that seniors care about, Donald Trump's policies have been disastrous." — AFP

Scranton cheers hometown hero Biden on to the White House

SCRANTON, US: In a small sandwich shop in Scranton, Pennsylvania, customers crowd in with a life-size cardboard cut-out of Joe Biden, the Democratic presidential challenger who was born in the city and visited the shop as a child. "He used to come up here when he was a little kid," says Tom Owens, the owner of Hank's Hoagies. The place had a different name then—it was reportedly called Simmy's, and it sold penny candy to a young Biden and his friends—but decades later he has not forgotten his way there, as he proved with a visit in October last year.

"We love when he comes in. He's a great guy. When you meet him... it's kind of like you knew him all your life," says Owens. "He just makes you feel comfortable. Good man."

Hank's Hoagies is a bit like the Joe Biden Museum. Along with the cardboard effigy, a poster from his first presidential campaign—in 1988 — sits above the entrance to a spartan kitchen, while old photographs of him rest by the window.

The store is surfing on Biden's local popularity, in a city where residents plant his campaign signs proudly in their gardens.

And he, in turn, is banking on his hometown ties to help him add Pennsylvania to his tally on election night against Donald Trump. Born in 1942 in Scranton, Biden left at age 10 for Delaware, nearly seven decades ago. But on his visits back, he says, it "really is good to be home."

"It's presumptuous to me to say 'home', I know—but you know Scranton, when you're a kid, no matter how long you lived here, climbs in your heart and occupies you," he said at the rally in the city in October last year. His most recent pilgrimage to his childhood home, with its grey walls and black shutters, was crammed in during a campaign-trail visit last month. The 77-year-old, black mask on his face, came to greet the house's current owner. In front of Biden's old grade school, a photographer and two older men with grey hair and checkered shirts are chatting. — AFP

International

Relations with neighbors depend on security and trust, says India's PM

Modi addresses scaled-down Independence ceremony

NEW DELHI: India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi issued a new warning to China over deadly border tensions yesterday, using his most important speech of the year to promise to build a stronger military. With talks on easing a military build-up in their Himalayan border region at a stalemate, Modi told an Independence Day ceremony that India's sovereignty was "supreme" and that relations with neighbors depended on security and trust.

Attendance at the historic Red Fort in New Delhi for the speech was cut by more than half to 4,000 people, all of whom sat two meters (six feet) apart because of the coronavirus pandemic. The Hindu nationalist prime minister mentioned confrontations with Pakistan and China on their disputed borders, but without naming either country.

"Anyone who has cast an eye on the country's sovereignty, the country's army has answered them in their own language," he said. "India's integrity is supreme for us. What we can do, what our soldiers can do—everyone saw that in Ladakh," referring to a border clash with Chinese troops in the Ladakh region of the Himalayas on June 15.

Twenty Indian soldiers were killed in the clash, which saw the two sides fighting with batons, stones and bare fists. China has also acknowledged that it suffered casualties but without giving numbers. The two sides have blamed each other for the fighting and tens of thousands of Indian and Chinese troops, who also fought a border war in 1962, have since been sent to the region.

Modi has insisted that no land was lost in the battle but military experts have used satellite

images to counter that Chinese troops occupy frontier territory that India had claimed for decades. India has in turn used economic weapons against China. It has banned at least 59 apps, including the



PM promises to build a stronger military

major video-sharing platform TikTok, and taken other measures to freeze Chinese firms out of contracts and block its imports.

Modi said that relations with neighbours are now linked to "security, progress and trust".

"A neighbor isn't just someone who shares our geography but those who share our hearts. Where the relationship is respected, it becomes warmer," he said. The 1.4-million-strong military would be built up, he added. "India is just as committed to its security and strengthening its army as the attempts it has made for peace and harmony," he said, stressing efforts to make India "self-reliant" in defense production. Modi also said that his priority was getting India out of the crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic. India is expected to pass 50,000



NEW DELHI: India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi delivers a speech to the nation during a ceremony to celebrate India's 74th Independence Day, which marks the end of British colonial rule, at the Red Fort in New Delhi yesterday. — AFP

deaths in the coming days and three million cases within a week. It has the fastest-growing caseload in the world and is now only behind Brazil and the United States in terms of total case numbers. With

the economy expected to shrink this year, Modi reaffirmed an election promise to spend 1.3 trillion dollars on 7,000 infrastructure projects "to get us out of the pandemic situation". —AFP

Philippine security forces on 'alert' after militant held

MANILA: Philippine security forces were on alert yesterday for possible reprisal attacks after arresting a key leader of an Islamic State-linked militant group accused of kidnapping and beheading several foreigners. Abduljihad Susukan, a member of Abu Sayyaf, was detained in the southern city of Davao and flown to the capital Manila on Friday, where he was being held at the national police headquarters.

He has been charged with 23 murders, five kidnappings and six attempted murders, a police statement said. Listed by the United States as a terrorist organization, Abu Sayyaf is a loose network of Islamic militants blamed for the country's worst terror attacks as well as kidnappings of foreign tourists and Christian missionaries. "The Philippine National Police along with the Armed Forces of the Philippines remain alert and vigilant to prevent and respond to any reprisal attack," police spokesman Brigadier-General Bernard Banac said.

The Philippine military said Susukan was behind the April 2016 beheadings of Canadian tourists Robert Hall and John Ridsdel, after Manila and Ottawa rejected the kidnappers' ransom demands. In 2017 Susukan's group also beheaded Jurgen Kantner, who was abducted from his yacht off the southern Philippines the previous year, said military spokesman Brigadier-General Edgard Arevalo.

"There is a strong possibility" that Susukan was also behind the 2015 beheading of Malaysian hostage Bernard Then, who was abducted in Malaysia's Sabah state, Arevalo said. The authorities said Susukan had gone to Davao, near where the Canadians were abducted, to get a prosthetic arm after losing one in a clash with security forces. Police said they found him in the home of Muslim rebel leader Nur Misuari, who is awaiting trial for an attack carried out by hundreds of his armed followers on the southern city of Zamboanga in 2013 that left more than 200 people dead.

Despite the charges, Misuari has government permission to live at his home and travel. President Rodrigo Duterte enlisted Misuari's help last year to negotiate peace with various armed groups in the country's troubled south as well as to help negotiate the release of Abu Sayyaf hostages. — AFP



In this undated handout photo received yesterday by the Philippine National Police (PNP-PIO), Abu Sayyaf leader Abduljihad Susukan has his mug shot taken after his arrest in Davao City, in southern island of Mindanao. — AFP

Taliban prisoner release re-opens wounds for families

KABUL: The decision to release hundreds of the Taliban's most dangerous prisoners has stirred painful memories for the loved ones of those killed in Afghanistan's war, with many questioning whether the move will help bring peace. About 400 inmates are expected to be set free in the coming days, after which the Taliban have said they will sit for direct peace talks with the Afghan government.

President Ashraf Ghani has said the US-backed release is a necessary development highlighting the "cost" of making peace. But for some victims' families, it is a step too far.

"I felt like being stabbed in the heart with a knife," said Juma Khan, 77, as he recalled watching Afghan leaders gather to debate and eventually approve the release.

Khan's son, Aziz Ahmad Naween, an IT specialist, was killed in a massive truck bombing near the German embassy in May 2017 while heading to work. He was 24. "We all want peace, but they never asked for our opinion, the victims," Khan said. "That was the worst day of my life. I fell unconscious on seeing the body of my young son in a coffin," he told AFP at his home in Kabul.

"I don't believe that the decision to release them will lead to any peace in this country any time soon." The Afghan government has already freed about 5,000 Taliban prisoners under a swap fleshed out in a deal between the US and the insurgents in February. While the former inmates have pledged not to pick up arms, Ghani on Thursday acknowledged some of the 400 currently being released likely "pose a danger both to us and to (America) and to the world".

'How could they do that?'

In an op-ed in the Washington Post on Friday he also said that the families of those killed by the militants had paid a heavy price. "The cost of releasing these 5,000 prisoners meant, among other things, denying justice and healing for the families of those they murdered," Ghani wrote.

Japan ministers visit Yasukuni Shrine, first since 2016

TOKYO: Four Japanese cabinet ministers paid their respects yesterday at a war shrine seen by neighboring countries as a symbol of Tokyo's past militarism, in the first such visit since 2016.

Nationalist Prime Minister Shinzo Abe sent a ritual cash offering to the Yasukuni Shrine in central Tokyo to mark yesterday's 75th anniversary of Japan's surrender in World War II but was not expected to visit in person, local media said. Yasukuni honors 2.5 million war dead, mostly Japanese, who perished in the country's wars since the late 19th century.

But it also enshrines senior military and political figures convicted of war crimes by an international tribunal after the war. Education Minister Koichi Hagiuda, one of the four ministers to visit the shrine, said he did so to pay tribute to the war dead.

"I paid respects... to the souls of those who nobly sacrificed themselves during the war," Hagiuda told reporters. The three others were Environment Minister Shinjiro Koizumi, Internal Affairs Minister Sanae Takaichi, and Seiichi Eto, minister in charge of territorial issues.

Abe last visited the shrine in December 2013 to mark his first year in power, sparking fury in Beijing and Seoul and earning a rare diplomatic rebuke



Shahnaaz, 40, sits next to a picture of her husband Faiz Ali Ahmadi, 45, who died in a truck bomb attack in Kabul on May 31, 2017. — AFP

"We have paid with our lives - tens of thousands of Afghan lives, including even our tiniest, most precious and innocent lives." The truck bombing killed more than 150 people and wounded hundreds more in Kabul's highly fortified diplomatic quarter in the deadliest attack since 2001.

No group claimed the attack, but the government blamed the Taliban-allied Haqqani Network.

An official list of the 400 prisoners seen by AFP includes a militant involved in that attack, and the release has triggered international condemnation. Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said earlier this week he had lobbied for a former Afghan army soldier, who went rogue and killed three Australian colleagues, to stay in jail. The family of French woman Bettina Goislar, a United Nations refugee worker who was shot dead by Taliban militants in 2003, has opposed the release of her killers.

"Such a decision to free (them) made on the basis of horse-trading would be, to us, her family, inconceivable," Bettina's family told AFP. The decision also shocked Shahnaaz Ahmadi, 42, whose 45-year-old husband Faiz Ali Ahmadi was killed in the same truck bombing.

"It was unbelievable... and hard to watch what was happening," said Shahnaaz, who watched thousands of Afghan elders and stakeholders debate the release at last week's "loya jirga" meeting.

"How could they do that? We all cried that day," the mother of seven said.

Shahnaaz's husband was a security guard at a telecommunications company. Her teenage daughter, Gulbahar, still mourns his death. — AFP

'Destroyed': Virus ravages Peruvian family

LIMA: The coronavirus pandemic has been cruel to the Diaz family in Peru, killing five members of the tight-knit clan and leaving another four still hospitalized. But because Peru's healthcare system collapsed under the strain of the virus, the family has been hit by an additional tragedy: financial ruin.

Like many Peruvians, they had to raid their savings and take out loans from friends in order to cover the expense of mounting medical bills from private health clinics. "We've been completely destroyed. Now we need to rebuild the family with what we have left," Juan Diaz, a 58-year-old professor, told AFP.

"What's befallen us is like a nightmare, the truth is I wouldn't wish it on anyone," he said, tightly hugging a picture of his parents while lamenting the fact he was unable to attend his mother's funeral due to virus restrictions. Peru is one of worst hit countries in coronavirus-epicenter Latin America after Brazil and Mexico, with more than 25,000 reported deaths and over half a million cases.

Infections in Peru have been on the rise since a national lockdown was lifted on July 1, prompting the government on Wednesday to reinstate a Sunday curfew, ban social gatherings and enforce mandatory lockdown in more provinces.

Before the devastating pandemic struck, 17 members of the middle-class Diaz family shared a single four-storey brick house in the Chorrillos district of Lima. But on May 24 that happy life started to unravel with the death of Juan's brother Ernesto, a local tax collector.

"We don't know how the virus got into my house, but the first to fall victim to it was my father," said Ernesto's 32-year-old son, also called Ernesto.

Since then Juan has also lost his 80-year-old father Cecilio, his 77-year-old mother Edith Leyva, and siblings Willy, 42, and 53-year-old Maribel. "We were seven siblings, like the days of the week, but now we've lost three," said Juan, who also fell ill with coronavirus alongside his wife and daughter. — AFP



TOKYO: Japan's Emperor Naruhito (left) and Empress Masako (right) wearing face masks, depart after attending a memorial service marking the 75th anniversary of Japan's surrender in World War II at the Nippon Budokan hall in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

from close ally the United States. This year's visits come with tensions still high between Japan and South Korea—one of the countries that suffered most from Japan's wartime military atrocities. The two countries have issued reciprocal trade sanctions and threats as they battle over issues including wartime forced labour and sex slavery.

Seoul is "ready to sit face to face at any time" with Tokyo to discuss historical disputes. South Korean President Moon Jae-in said in an address commemorating the country's liberation from Japanese colonial rule in 1945. The issue of forced labor has been a thorny issue between the two

neighbors, with Tokyo saying all reparation claims were settled in a 1965 treaty that normalized relations with financial contributions.

But the South Korean Supreme Court ruled in 2018 that victims had a right to seek compensation. Moon's government has said it respects the ruling and will seek a "smooth resolution" with Japan.

"The door for consultations is still wide open," Moon said in his Saturday speech.

Later in the day, Emperor Naruhito and Empress Masako attended a national ceremony to mark the anniversary, which had been scaled back because of the coronavirus. — AFP

Business

SUNDAY, AUGUST 16, 2020

Gold rush at Turkish bazaar a test of lira

Currency touched record lows in three volatile weeks

ISTANBUL: Hasan Ayhan followed his wife's instructions last week and took their savings to buy gold at Istanbul's Grand Bazaar as Turks scooped up bullion worth \$7 billion in a just a fortnight.

With memories of a currency crisis which rocked Turkey's economy only two years ago fresh in his mind, the retired police officer was among those playing it safe as he queued in the city's sprawling covered market, where a screen showed the gold price rise by one Turkish lira (\$0.1366) in just 10 minutes. "I think it is the best investment right now so I converted my dollars to buy gold," the 57-year-old said, adding: "I might withdraw my lira and buy gold with it too, but I am scared to go to the bank right now because of coronavirus."

The day after Ayhan bought his gold on Aug 6, the lira hit a historic low and has remained skittish since, laying bare concerns that Turkey's reserves have been badly depleted by market interventions, which are showing signs of fizzling out.

Turks have traditionally used gold as savings and there may be as much as 5,000 tonnes of it "under mattresses", with more added after the recent buying spree, Mehmet Ali Yildirimturk, deputy head of an Istanbul gold shops association, said.

Although bullion has never been more expensive, vendors at the Grand Bazaar said almost no one is coming to sell their gold jewelry. There are only buyers. "I've been chatting with hundreds of people who are thinking about selling their cars or houses to invest in gold," Gunay Gunes, whose busy booth is near the market's entrance, said.

In the last three weeks, as selling gripped the lira,

local holdings of hard assets such as dollars and gold jumped \$15 billion to a record of nearly \$220 billion. There is no evidence suggesting people are about to pull savings from banks, and this week the lira has hovered around 7.3 versus the dollar, although it remains among the worst emerging-market performers this year.

Demand has eased since Turks withdrew some \$2 billion in hard foreign cash from their banks during a March-May period in which a lockdown was imposed and the lira hit its last low, according to central bank banknote data.

Golden era?

Analysts say that if Ankara cannot boost confidence in the currency, which has fallen almost 20 percent this year, import-heavy Turkey risks inflation and even a balance of payments crisis that will worsen fallout from the coronavirus crisis.

Given foreign investors now have only a small stake in Turkish assets, they say the key for President Tayyip Erdogan's government is convincing Turks and local businesses to stop turning to the perceived stability of dollars and gold. The central bank and the Treasury did not immediately comment on the dollarization trend or any policy response.

Meanwhile, Finance Minister Berat Albayrak, Erdogan's son-in-law, said on Wednesday the lira's competitiveness is more important than exchange rate volatility. The central bank has effectively borrowed on local dollar liquidity to fuel its foreign exchange market interventions, which are meant to stabilize the lira, according to data and the calculations of traders and economists.



ISTANBUL: Women stand in front of a gold shop at the Grand Bazaar in Istanbul, Turkey. —Reuters

All are buyers at Grand Bazaar despite high price



Trump targets TikTok again with new order

SAN FRANCISCO: US President Donald Trump late Friday lashed out anew at ByteDance, issuing a fresh executive order stating the Chinese internet giant must sell its interest in the Musical.ly app it bought and merged with TikTok. The order builds on sweeping restrictions issued last week by Trump that TikTok and WeChat end all operations in the US, his latest explosive moves aimed at countering China's rising global power.

ByteDance bought karaoke video app Musical.ly from a Chinese rival about three years ago in a deal valued at nearly a billion dollars. It was incorporated into TikTok, which became a global sensation.

Trump's order contends there is "credible evidence" leading him to believe that ByteDance's take-over of Musical.ly "threatens to impair the national security of the United States."

"As we've said previously, TikTok is loved by 100 million Americans because it is a home for entertainment, self-expression, and connection," ByteDance said in response to an AFP inquiry. "We're committed to continuing to bring joy to families and meaningful careers to those who create on our platform for many years to come."

The order set to take effect in 90 days retroactively prohibits the acquisition and bars ByteDance from having any interest



LOS ANGELES: The logo of Chinese video app TikTok is seen on the side of the company's new office space at the C3 campus in Culver City, in the west side of Los Angeles. —AFP

in Musical.ly. Trump ordered that any sale of interest in Musical.ly in the US had to be signed off on by the Committee on Foreign Investment, which is to be given access to ByteDance books. It also ordered that any saved user data be destroyed.

Trump last week made good on threats against WeChat and TikTok—two Chinese-owned apps with major audiences that US officials say pose a national security threat. Through an earlier executive order he gave Americans 45 days to stop doing business with the platforms, effectively setting a deadline for a potential, under-pressure sale of TikTok to Microsoft. Trump has also called for the US government to be cut in on the deal, a stance slammed by critics who said it appears unconstitutional and akin to extortion.

Last week's move also threw into doubt the US operations of WeChat's parent firm,

Tencent, a powerful player in the video game industry and one of the world's richest companies.

China condemned the move as "arbitrary political manipulation". Trump has claimed TikTok could be used by China to track the locations of federal employees, build dossiers on people for blackmail and conduct corporate espionage.

TikTok—used by as many as a billion people worldwide to make quirky, short-form videos on their cellphones—has repeatedly denied sharing data with Beijing. WeChat is a messaging, social media and electronic payment platform and is reported to have more than a billion users, with many preferring it to email. The latest US actions follow a protracted battle over Huawei, the Chinese network and smartphone giant accused by the Trump administration of being a tool for espionage. —AFP

One source familiar with the talks said the delay was related to a conference of senior Communist Party leaders at the seaside town of Beidaihe on China's northeast coast. The postponement did not reflect any substantive problem with the trade deal, the source said, adding: "The new date has not been finalized yet." US President Donald Trump on Friday repeated his view that the trade deal was "doing very well," but did not comment on the delayed meeting. The White House referred queries on the talks to Lighthizer's office, which did not respond to a Reuters query about plans for the review.

Another source familiar with the plans said that US officials wanted more time to allow China to increase purchases of US goods agreed in the deal, to improve the political optics of the review.

China's imports of US farm and manufactured goods, energy and services are well behind the pace needed to meet a first-year target increase of \$77 billion over 2017 purchases. But as China's economy has recovered from a coronavirus lockdown earlier this year, purchases have increased. On Friday, the U.S. Department of

Agriculture reported the sale of 126,000 tons of soybeans to China, marking the eighth consecutive weekday with large sales to Chinese buyers.

US oil traders, shipbrokers and Chinese importers also told Reuters that Chinese state-owned oil firms have tentatively booked tankers to carry at least 20 million barrels of US crude for August and September, indicating a ramp-up in energy purchases. Trump administration officials have signaled that they are satisfied with the pace of purchases in recent weeks and have no plans to abandon the trade deal, which also includes some increased access for US financial services firms in China, strengthened intellectual property protections and removal of some agricultural trade barriers.

Delaying the meeting, even briefly, could allow China to complete more purchases, which would help Lighthizer persuade Trump to stick to the deal. Signs of Chinese compliance could also help blunt criticism from Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden, who last week said the agreement that Trump has called a historic win is "failing." —Reuters

Facebook joins attack on Apple

SAN FRANCISCO: Facebook on Friday joined the attack on Apple's operation of its App Store after the iPhone maker refused to forgo its commission on live online events hosted on the social network that allow people to make money during the pandemic.

The comments from Facebook come in the wake of a blockbuster lawsuit from video game sensation Fortnite maker Epic Games on Thursday which accused Apple of abusing its monopoly position in its online marketplace. Facebook said it would not collect any fees from paid online events that educators, entertainers, or others can host due to a fresh addition to the platform, but that Apple declined to back off from its standard share of transactions which are handled through the App Store.

"We asked Apple to reduce its 30 percent App Store tax or allow us to offer Facebook Pay so we could absorb all costs for businesses struggling during COVID-19," Facebook vice president Fidji Simo said in a blog post.

"Unfortunately, they dismissed both our requests and (small- and medium-size businesses) will only be paid 70 percent of their hard-earned revenue." The new paid events feature was launched by Facebook in response to the global coronavirus pandemic which has forced the cancellation of many in-person gatherings.

The feature lets Facebook Live streaming service be used to create,

meeting foreign obligations.

These debt repayments are set to rise in October. "Locals don't want to keep Turkish lira, they've been dollarizing and buying gold. Turks have hardly ever done that historically," said Shamaila Khan, New York-based head of EM debt strategy at AllianceBernstein, which manages \$600 billion.

"That is why you need proactive policies because if you get to that stage where locals are unwilling to keep their money in the bank then you're heading to a balance of payments crisis. That's when the alarm bells will start ringing," she said. Some banks imposed fees on withdrawals this week, while the central bank has curbed cheap credit channels it had opened to ease the coronavirus fallout. — Reuters

promote and host paid events from concerts and theatrical performances to yoga classes and cooking lessons.

It is being tested for use with "more personal gatherings" at Messenger group video chat feature Rooms, according to Simo. "With social distancing mandates still in place, many businesses and creators are bringing their events and services online to connect with existing customers and reach new ones," Simo said. Facebook's criticism comes amid heightened scrutiny of Apple's policies for its online marketplace. Apple has defended the commission to cover the costs of managing the App Store and protecting users security, but critics say the commission is an abuse of its position.

The latest version of Fortnite contains a payment system that lets player transactions bypass Apple's App Store and Google's Play, preventing the firms from collecting their typical 30 percent cut.

Fortnite sought to direct users around the App Store and found itself booted off the platform, and Epic immediately filed an antitrust complaint. The game-maker called on a federal judge to order Apple to stop its "anti-competitive conduct" and invalidate the tech giant's rules requiring app developers to pay the company 30 percent of transactions. The suit said Epic is not seeking favorable treatment, but is asking the court to order Apple to change its commission structure for all developers. Apple said Fortnite was pulled after "Epic Games took the unfortunate step of violating the App Store guidelines that are applied equally to every developer and designed to keep the store safe for our users." —AFP

US-China trade deal review postponed

WASHINGTON: The United States and China have delayed a review of their Phase 1 trade deal initially slated for yesterday, sources familiar with the plans told Reuters, citing scheduling conflicts and the need to allow time for more Chinese purchases of US exports.

No new date for the initial six-month compliance review between US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer, US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and Chinese Vice Premier Liu He has been agreed, the sources said. The officials were expected to hold a videoconference yesterday, the six-month anniversary of the trade deal's Feb. 15 entry into force as the coronavirus pandemic began spreading globally.



This illustration picture shows a person logging into Epic Games' Fortnite on their smartphone in Los Angeles on Friday. —AFP

Business

US retail sales, industrial output post modest gains

Progress slowing and recovery is in doubt amid political stalemate

WASHINGTON: The US economy continues to regain ground as the coronavirus crisis drags on, with retailers and manufacturing posting gains, but new data Friday show progress is slowing and the recovery is in doubt amid a political stalemate over a new aid package.



Consumers become more cautious

"We're coming back very strong. We should have a very good third quarter" and an "unbelievably good" next year, President Donald Trump told reporters Friday when asked about the industrial production increase in July. But he remained steadfast in opposing a spending package that would include help for ailing cities and states.

"They want \$1 trillion to go to their friends doing a bad job running certain cities and states that are doing very badly," Trump said, adding that Democrats are to blame for the impasse. Economists warn that the massive aid deal approved by Congress in late March, including expanded federal unemployment benefits, has supported the economy in recent weeks but that could

change if the expiring programs are not replaced.

"Our 'friends' in Washington seem to be doing everything possible to kill the recovery," economist Joel Naroff said in an analysis. He said it was the government's "welfare programs that have supported household and business spending. With the Senate on vacation... the funds flowing to unemployed workers and supporting businesses are disappearing."

US retail sales increased 1.2 percent last month compared to June, a more modest rise than economists had been expecting, held down by a decline in auto sales, according to government data released Friday. It was the third straight increase after the 8.4 percent increase in June, and the gain puts sales 2.7 percent higher than the same month of 2019, the Commerce Department reported. But for the first seven months of the year, a large part of it spent under coronavirus lockdowns, sales were 2.1 percent lower as compared to the same period of last year. While the July data bode well for the third quarter, Diane Swonk, chief economist at Grant Thornton, warned that the final three months of the year could see a slowdown—especially if the fall brings a new wave of COVID-19 infections.

"Our greatest concern is the fourth quarter, the most important time of the year for retailers. Halloween is the second largest holiday next to Christmas for consumer spending," she said. Naroff warned, "Don't be surprised if there is a weakening not only in consumer demand but in hiring as well."



NEW YORK: Yudy Ramirez, 46, who got laid off from her job in March and is unable to pay rent stands outside her apartment complex in the Bronx borough of New York City. — AFP

Confidence in Trump policy low

Consumers are likely to become more cautious in the absence of a deal between Congress and Trump's economic team—and the recent rhetoric does not bode well for an agreement. The University of Michigan consumer sentiment index showed confidence was flat in early August compared to July. But the report said: "The overall confidence in economic policies fell to the lowest level since Trump first entered office. The policy gridlock has acted to increase uncertainty." Industrial production rose 3.0 percent in July, the third monthly increase but a

slower gain than in June, the Federal Reserve said Friday. Output rose in all major sectors, including a 3.4 percent increase in manufacturing. However, after dramatic declines in March and April as the coronavirus crisis took hold in the US, total output remains more than eight percent below July 2019, while manufacturing is down by 7.7 percent. The largest gain in July — 28.3 percent — was in motor vehicles and parts. In contrast, the retail sales report showed auto sales fell 1.3 percent compared to June. Excluding that decline, total retail sales rose 1.9 percent, according to the data. — AFP

Coronavirus shrinks Finland, Denmark economies

COPENHAGEN: The global coronavirus pandemic took its economic toll on Nordic countries in the second quarter, but the impact in Finland has been less severe, while Denmark suffered a "historic" contraction, data showed on Friday. Finland's gross domestic product contracted by 3.2 percent in the period from April to June compared with the preceding three months, the national statistics office calculated.

At the same time, Danish GDP shrank by 7.4 percent on a quarterly basis, "the steepest fall since the start of national quarterly accounts in the early 1990s," Statistics Denmark said.

The shutdown of societies and economic activity across the globe, as governments scrambled to rein in the spread of COVID-19, has pushed many countries into deep recession. Britain, for example, saw its economy contract by a staggering 20.4 percent. But Nordic countries, where the lockdowns were less strict, appear to be faring better than many of their European neighbours.

Finland's headline number was better than many analysts had predicted.

Danske Bank economist Jukka Appelqvist said Finland's modest lockdown, as well as its reliance on exports of goods such as heavy machinery or cruise ships, helped shield it from the worst of the economic fallout. Allan Sorensen, chief economist at the Confederation of Danish Industry, said the deep contraction of Denmark's economy was "not surprising".

"Fortunately, the crisis is not due to fundamental problems in the Danish economy, so we can hopefully get it back on track quickly," he said. Netherlands economy sees unprecedented drop due to coronavirus

Meanwhile, the Dutch economy took its biggest-ever hit from the global coronavirus pandemic as lockdowns brought activity in the country to a standstill, data showed on Friday. The EU's fifth-biggest economy shrank by 8.5 percent in the period from April to June compared with the preceding three months, the central statistics office CBS said. "Never before has such a shrinkage been measured," CBS said in a statement.

More than half of the contraction was due to a sharp fall in household consumption, the statisticians explained.

But falling investment and a sharp decline in the trade balance also played a role. The Dutch government has taken measures to cushion the impact of the coronavirus pandemic with almost three million people receiving income support. — AFP

Pandemic to hit Japan's economy more than expected

TOKYO: Japan's economy will contract more than previously expected and suffer mild deflation during the current fiscal year, analysts predict, underscoring the fragile nature of the recovery from the devastating coronavirus pandemic. Analysts also see renewed, escalating tensions between the United States and China as an additional source of concern for the world's third-largest economy, which is heavily reliant on exports, a Reuters poll showed on Friday.

"Economic activity will continue to face restrictions from social distancing measures" needed to prevent the spread of the virus, said Taro Saito, executive research fellow at NLI Research Institute.

"Japan's economy will likely rebound next fiscal year but won't recoup the huge losses incurred this year," he said. The economy is forecast to shrink 5.6 percent in the current fiscal year to next March, the poll of 32 economists showed, more than a 5.3 percent contraction projected last month. In a worst case scenario it will shrink 8.0 percent. The downgrade came as many analysts revised their forecasts for April-June gross domestic product (GDP) to a 27 percent contraction — last month's worst case forecast — from a nearly 24 percent drop projected in July.

The government will publish April-June GDP data tomorrow. Japan's economy will grow just 3.3 percent

in the following year beginning in April 2021, the Aug. 4-13 poll showed, unchanged from the previous poll in July. Core consumer prices, which exclude volatile fresh food but includes energy costs, will fall 0.3 percent this fiscal year and rebound just 0.2 percent next year, according to the poll.

With the economy in deflation and its 2 percent inflation target proving increasingly elusive, the Bank of Japan's next move will be an expansion of stimulus, said a majority of those polled.

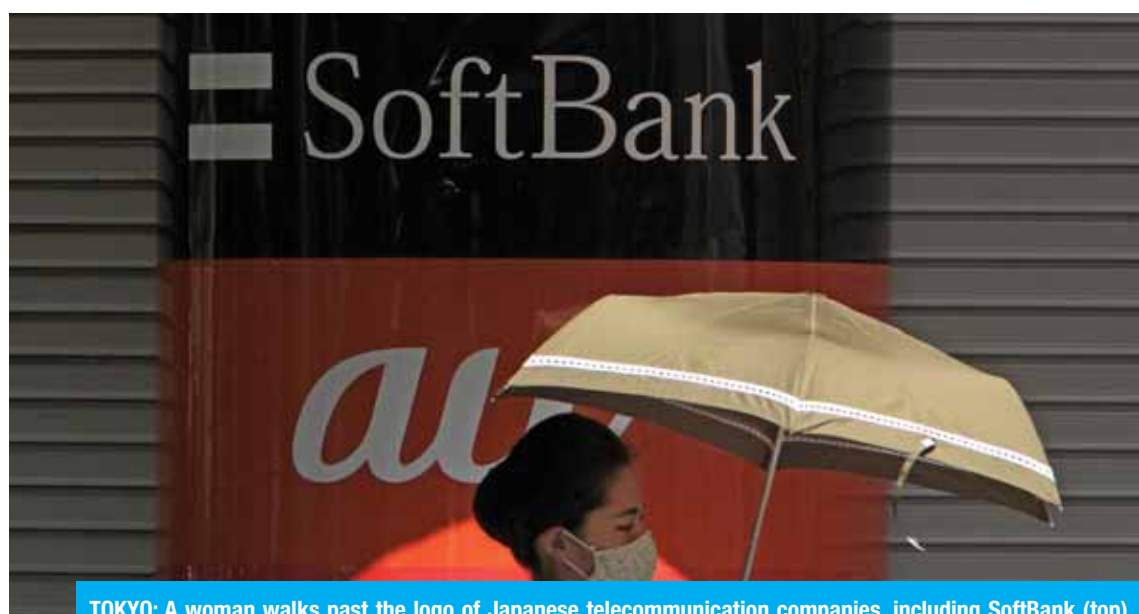
"The battle against the coronavirus will be a long one. Governments and central banks can't end steps to combat the pandemic until an effective vaccine becomes available," said Mari Iwashita, chief market economist at Daiwa securities.

Japan facing US-China feud

A recent sharp deterioration in US-China relations could complicate the outlook, as the world's two largest economies disagree on issues such as trade, technology and the pandemic.

Asked how the conflict between the two nations will affect Japan's economy, about 90 percent of economists surveyed said it would have a negative impact. Over 80 percent of respondents also said Japanese companies would face adverse effects if Washington and Beijing move toward creating their own economic zones, which would mark a retreat of globalisation.

"Economic blocs led by two countries, or de-globalization, would lower global productivity growth. That would have a negative impact on Japan's potential growth and Japanese firms' productivity growth," said Hiroshi Ugai, chief economist at JPMorgan Securities Japan. — Reuters



TOKYO: A woman walks past the logo of Japanese telecommunication companies, including SoftBank (top), in Tokyo. — AFP

"Although there could be a modest rebound in some investment activities if the floods subside in coming months, we expect sequential recovery momentum to get weaker in H2," Nomura analysts said in a note, citing factors such as receding pent-up demand, diminished chances of more policy easing and rising US-China tensions. Industrial output grew 4.8 percent in July from a year earlier, in line with June's growth but less than a forecast 5.1 percent rise.

Retail sales dropped 1.1 percent on year, missing predictions for a 0.1 percent rise and following June's 1.8 percent fall. The decline in retail sales was broad based with garments, cosmetics, home appliances and furniture all worsening from June.

A key exception was auto sales, which surged 12.3 percent, turning around from a 8.2 percent fall in June. "Despite narrowing declines in investment, consumption remained weak, highlighting the lasting economic shock from the coronavirus pandemic," said Zhang Yi, chief economist at Zhonghai Shengrong Capital Management.

"Given we are likely to see a resurgence of COVID in the autumn and winter, it is not recommended that monetary policy be tightened too prematurely and fiscal policy stay insufficient."

China's July nationwide survey-based jobless rate remained elevated at 5.7 percent, the same as June.

Investment bright spot

Helping carry the recovery, however, was investment, which was driven by the fast expansion in the

property sector, with analysts expecting infrastructure spending to accelerate in coming months on the back of government support. China's economy returned to growth in the second quarter after a deep slump at the start of the year, but unexpected weakness in domestic consumption has slowed the momentum.

Fixed-asset investment fell 1.6 percent in January-July from the same period last year, in line with expectations but slower than a 3.1 percent decline in the first half of the year. July property investment grew at the quickest clip since April last year, underpinned by solid construction activity and easier lending. New home prices rose at a slightly slower pace in July from a month earlier. Infrastructure investment, a powerful driver of growth, fell 1.0 percent year-on-year, easing from a decline of 2.7 percent in the first half.

"After the floods are over, I believe the reconstruction work for affected areas will boost fixed-asset investment and industrial production," said Iris Pang, chief economist for Greater China at ING.

Another major risk is the increasingly tense US-China relationship ahead of the US presidential elections in November, which analysts say has prompted Beijing to focus on domestically driven growth. "Changes in US-China relations definitely have an impact on China, as well as the United States," statistics bureau spokesman Fu Linghui told a press conference. "We still hope to maintain the equal and mutually beneficial development (in relations)." — Reuters

AUB reports net profit of \$293.4m for H1 2020

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank B.S.C. (AUB) reported a net profit attributable to its equity shareholders of \$293.4 million for the six months ended 30 June 2020, a decrease of 22.3 percent as compared to \$377.5 million achieved in H1/2019. Basic Earnings per Share in H1/2020 fell to US 2.9 cents as compared to US 3.7 cents in H1/2019.

The first half of 2020 was defined by the onset of the Covid-19 outbreak and by the collapse in oil prices. These events triggered global recessionary conditions which have hit energy producing countries hard due to the close correlation of their economic cycles to oil prices which fell sharply in the second quarter of the year. Health imposed lockdowns of extended durations exacerbated the economic fallout as retail and corporate activities were deeply impacted.

As a result, Net Interest Income (NII) was lower by 17.0 percent to \$406.7 million in H1/2020 as compared to \$490.2 million in H1/2019. The drop in NII and Fees & Commission income resulted in a drop in Operating Income to US\$ 575.6 million during the first six months of 2020 as compared to \$630.1 million in H1/2019. The cost to income ratio stood at 27.4 percent (H1/2019: 26.5 percent) reflecting AUB's structured cost discipline.

To adjust for the heightened levels of macro-economic and sectoral risks, total provision charges (net) for H1/2020 increased by 140.0 percent from \$34.3 million to \$ 82.4 million. As a result, Net Operating Income decreased by 17.2 percent from \$595.8 million in H1/2019 to \$493.2 million in H1/2020. Comprehensive income attributable to the owners of the bank for H1/2020 reduced by 60.5 percent to \$157.3 million as compared to \$398.0 million for H1/2019 due to unrealized financial adjustments related to market fluctuations.

The Group's equity attributable to owners at 30 June 2020 decreased by 9.5 percent to \$3.9 billion (31 December 2019: \$4.3 billion). The AUB Group's total assets at 30 June 2020 marginally decreased (-0.5 percent) to \$40.1 billion (31 December 2019: \$40.3 billion) due to tighter asset-liability cost management. Return on Average Assets was at 1.6 percent for H1/2020 (H1/2019: 2.2 percent). Return on Average Equity for H1/2020 was 13.6 percent (H1/2019: 18.4 percent). AUB reported a non-performing loans ratio of 2.1 percent (31 December 2019: 1.9 percent) with specific provision coverage of 81.8 percent (31 December 2019: 85.9 percent). Provision coverage levels are calculated on a cash provision basis excluding the value of the additional significant non-cash (real estate and securities) collaterals available against non-performing loans.

AUB Chairman Meshal Al-Othman commented "The first half of 2020 was an unprecedented experience of two halves. An excellent start in January and February was followed by the Covid-19 pandemic and oil prices meltdown, extreme market volatility and a transformed operating and business reality imposed by lockdown conditions." He added "AUB's response was rapid and adaptive to this new and evolving situation which we expect to continue into the future. Our priorities were and will continue to be ensuring a safe operating environment for all staff, clients and counterparties, a seamless remote capability to transact business and support our clients in a very difficult and challenging environment and maintaining our earnings capacity in a prudent manner to be able to meet shareholders' expectations".



Meshal Al-Othman

China's economic recovery underwhelms

BEIJING: China's retail sales slipped in July, dashing expectations for a modest rise, as consumers in the world's second-largest economy failed to shake off wariness about the coronavirus, while the factory sector's recovery struggled to pick up pace. Asian markets pulled back on Friday following the disappointing set of economic indicators, which raised concerns about the fragility of China's emergence from coronavirus.

China's recovery had been gaining momentum after the pandemic paralyzed huge swathes of the economy as pent-up demand, government stimulus and surprisingly resilient exports revived activity. However, July data from the National Bureau of Statistics on Friday showed weaker-than-expected year-on-year industrial output growth and retail sales extending declines into a seventh straight month. That was slightly offset by firmer property investment, which showed recent stimulus was supporting construction.

Some analysts attributed the loss of momentum in the economy to the torrential rains that have flooded Southern China since June and several fresh COVID-19 outbreaks that led to partial lockdowns.

Business

MoF releases Kuwait's closing accounts for fiscal year ending March 31, 2020

Fiscal deficit up by 68.6% compared to last year's closing accounts

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Ministry of Finance (MoF) yesterday announced the State of Kuwait's closing accounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2020. The State's accounts recorded KD 17,220 billion in revenue, KD 21.140 billion in expenditure, and closed with a fiscal deficit of KD 5.643 billion after accounting the transfer of 10 percent of total revenue to the State's Future Generations Fund (FGF) as mandated by law. The State of Kuwait's fiscal year starts on April 1st and ends on March 31st.

The Kuwait Minister of Finance Barrak Al-Sheatan said, "The State of Kuwait has posted a deficit of KD5.643 billion for the fiscal year 2019/2020 post FGF transfer. The deficit is attributed to the sharp decline in oil prices and the shutdown of government operations as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. Earlier this month, the cabinet submitted a proposal to parliament to cease the 10 percent transfer of all States revenues to the Future Generations Fund (FGF) as part of several measures underway to prop up liquidity in the general reserve."



Oil revenue down 16.6% compared to last year

Revenue Highlights:

- Oil revenue: KD15.4 billion, down 16.6 percent from last year
- Non-oil revenue: KD1.9 billion, down 13.1 percent from last year
- Total Revenue: KD17.2 billion down 16.2 percent from last year
- Average Kuwaiti crude selling price for the fiscal year: USD 61.12 per barrel

Expenditure Highlights:

- Wages and subsidies: KD15.992, constituting 76 percent of all expenditure.
- Capital Expenditures: KD2.634 billion, constituting 12 percent of all expenditure.
- Total Expenditures: KD21.1 billion down 3.2 percent from last year's closing accounts.

Balance Highlights:

- The recorded fiscal deficit for the year pre-FGF transfer is KD3.921 billion. The recorded fiscal deficit post-FGF transfer is KD5.643 billion, up 68.6 percent from last year. This is the sixth consecutive year of deficits for the State of Kuwait.

● By law, the State transfers 10 percent of total annual revenue to the Future Generations Fund (also known as Kuwait's Sovereign Wealth Fund) managed by the Kuwait Investment Authority. This year's transfer total was KD1.72 Billion.

● The actual deficit for the year ending on March 31, 2020 will be covered by withdrawals from the General Reserve Fund (GRF, the State's treasury) in the absence of a law governing the issuance of sovereign bonds. The last active debt law expired in October 2017. In Kuwait, all laws must pass through its freely-elected parliament.

* By law, the Closing Accounts do not include revenue from the FGF, which is managed by the Kuwait Investment Authority. All investment revenue from FGF activities are reinvested by the Fund.

State of Kuwait Closing Accounts

	Fiscal year ending in 31 March 2020	Fiscal year ending in 31 March 2019	%	% Compared to Budget
Revenue				
Oil	15,369	18,428	(16.6)%	10.9%
Non-Oil	1,851	2,130	(13.1)%	-5.1%
Total Revenue	17,220	20,558	(16.2)%	8.9%
Expenditures				
Salaries and Wages	(11,966)	(11,452)	4.5%	(0.4)%
Subsidies	(4,027)	(4,882)	(17.5)%	8%
Capex	(2,634)	(3,032)	(13.1)%	(29.5)%
Other	(2,514)	(2,482)	1.3%	(16.9)%
Total Expenditures	(21,140)	(21,849)	(3.2)%	(6)%
FGF Transfer	(1,722)	(2,056)	(16.2)%	8.9%
Fiscal Balance				
Pre-FGF Transfer	(3,921)	(1,291)	203.9%	(41.4)%
Post-FGF Transfer	(5,643)	(3,346)	68.6%	(31.8)%

Belarus factory workers hold mass walkouts

MINSK: Crowds of workers walked off the job on Friday at several factories in Belarus's capital Minsk in support of the opposition calling for leader Alexander Lukashenko to step down. Hundreds of workers marched from the Minsk Automobile Plant (MAZ) and the Minsk Tractor Works (MTZ) after the opposition called for strikes against Lukashenko's disputed claim to have won re-election today.

Opposition candidate Svetlana Tikhanovskaya has claimed victory in the polls after raising up a nationwide protest movement. She left for Lithuania after allies said she came under official pressure.

The walkouts were highly unusual in a country where Lukashenko has retained a Soviet-style command economy and the tractor factory is seen as a national symbol. Workers downed tools to condemn presidential elections where Lukashenko claimed a landslide victory against a popular opposition candidate and police violently cracked down on protesters.

The Belarusian Prime Minister Roman Golovchenko, appointed in June, came to visit the tractor plant but the striking workers left before he arrived. On Friday afternoon they marched out of the factory into the city centre, shouting "Long live Belarus" and "Leave!" directed at Lukashenko.

One of the strikers, a middle-aged man with a tattoo on his arm denoting support for the opposition, said that he wanted "to bring back Tikhanovskaya, she is our president, we voted for her."

On the streets outside the factory, members of the public waved flowers and honked horns in support of the strikers. Tractor plant workers held banners responding to Lukashenko's disparaging comments on the protest movement.

"We're not sheep, we're not a herd, we're not little people" and "There's not 20 of us but 16,000," they said. Lukashenko earlier Friday dismissed the walkouts at the tractor and auto plants, saying that "20 people decided to express their opinion, ditched work and went off."

He also warned that foreign competitors would benefit from strikes and suggested that workers were being paid to protest. Belarus is regionally famous as a producer of tractors and they take part in a parade on its national independence day.

Workers at a major fertilizer plant, Grodno Azot, also protested in the city of Grodno, local media reported. Belarus last saw such large-scale workers' protests and strikes ahead of the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991. Lukashenko has been in power since 1994. —AFP

KIPCO announces net profit of KD 11m for first half of 2020

KUWAIT: KIPCO - the Kuwait Projects Company (Holding) - has announced a net profit of KD 11 million (\$35.7 million) for the first six months of 2020, a drop of 19 per cent compared to the KD 13.58 million (\$44 million) originally reported for the same period last year.

The company's 2019 financials were restated due to a change in the classification of OSN after an increase in ownership. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Group's core businesses was evident during the second quarter, due to the effect of

Stc: High demand for Samsung Galaxy Note20, Note20 Ultra pre-orders

KUWAIT: Kuwait Telecommunications Company - stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announced that the Company is witnessing a high surge in pre-order demand for the all-new Samsung Galaxy Note20 and Galaxy Note20 Ultra, which began August 5th, 2020. At the same time, stc is also providing exclusive offers on the Samsung Note20 and Note20 Ultra with complimentary pairs of Galaxy Buds+ and Buds Live, respectively.

The Galaxy Note20 and Galaxy Note20 Ultra's next-generation design and sophisticated appearance are perfectly complimented by the mystic color options. Together, these factors combine to provide consumers with a device perfect for their dynamic lifestyles. What's more, the screen, which is also the largest to date for a Galaxy Note model, is the driving force behind outstanding immersive experiences and unrivalled performance. The world-class S Pen offers ease, simplicity, and conviction on every occasion to elevate standards of working, while watching videos

For China's landlords, rent-to-riches dreams fade

BEIJING: Not yet 30, Beijing office worker Li thought she was already on her way up China's private property ladder with two apartments bought and rented out. Then came the new coronavirus, jobless tenants leaving town and a rent falloff. She's one of millions of Chinese landlords who have bought apartments to let in a highway to the country's growing middle class, many now facing a first slump in rental income.

Analysts say there's little prospect of widespread mortgage defaults for now, and property prices continue to grow, albeit more slowly. But the rental woes underline China's economic fragility, with the landlord legions already cutting back on spending amid their gloom. Li, who declined to give her full name, said she had to almost halve the rent at one of her apartments between February and May to hang on to a tenant, while her own salary

the lockdown on operations. KIPCO reported a loss of KD 17.8 million (\$57.8 million) in the second quarter (the three months ended June 30, 2020), as a consequence of the situation that the local and international business communities are facing.

The company's consolidated assets stood at KD 10.3 billion (\$33.5 billion), which is equal to the reported balance at year-end 2019.

Stock markets around the world suffered from the negative impact of the pandemic, together with the sharp drop in oil prices due to lack of demand and high levels of uncertainty. With lockdown procedures and stay at home rules, the supply chain was hit hard by low consumption levels. COVID-19 heavily affected sectors like hospitality, real estate and banking. Other Group companies operating in the insurance, food and media sectors showed more resilience to the pandemic.

Faisal Al-Ayyar, KIPCO's Vice Chairman

(Executive), said:

"Nobody could have foreseen the circumstances we witnessed during the past six months. We continue to assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on our different business sectors and how this will reflect on our operations for the remainder of the year and beyond. We expect our core companies to rebound once people get accustomed to the new circumstances. However, we remain cautious given market volatility, lack of clarity regarding regulatory directives, restrictions on travel and mobility and the fluctuating price of oil."



Faisal Al-Ayyar

and playing games has never been easier thanks to the design the fits perfectly into one's hand.

"The highly anticipated release of the Samsung Galaxy Note20 and Galaxy Note20 Ultra in the region is nearing closer and we are delighted that operators throughout Kuwait will again feature prominently in the build-up of our latest flagship devices," said Osman Alhora, Head of Mobile Division, Samsung Gulf Electronics. The Galaxy Note20 and Galaxy Note20 Ultra promise to represent another proactivity and productivity chapter concerning working remotely. Thanks to the new and improved capabilities of the Samsung Notes app, all who purchase either device can take advantage of both auto-save and syncing capabilities to ensure all workpieces are seamlessly saved on every occasion. A contributing factor behind this is the long-term partnership between Samsung and Microsoft, which has been fundamental in guaranteeing Windows PC is compatible with both of the latest releases.

In a statement issued by stc, the Company said that it is continuously in pursuit of innovative methods to elevate the customer experience and journey. The Company enjoys a rich selection of smartphone devices offered to customers through unique promotions, as well as internet routers and entertainment devices. Placing customer convenience at heart, the Company offers all its products and services through stc branches, its website (www.stc.com.kw) and mystc App.

At the same time, the stage is also set for gaming experiences to be significantly elevated to newfound heights. This will ensure immersive gaming supported through 5G, a next-generation AI game booster, Bluetooth audio response optimization, and 240 Hz



touch response in the Galaxy Note20 Ultra's case to offer outstanding visual and audio capabilities.

The long-lasting battery can last an entire day having been charged for 30 minutes, bringing an end to the days of running out a vital moments, whether in personal or professional life.

The Galaxy Note20 and Galaxy Note20 Ultra has also been engineered with a pro-grade multi-camera setup comprising Wide, Telephoto, and Ultra wide lenses, along with a high-resolution sensor for shots, to bring new meaning to creativity. As for the Galaxy Note20 Ultra, the device's 120 Hz display refresh rate is a critical factor behind elegant gaming encounters that provide ultimate satisfaction. Those who purchase the Galaxy Note20 and Galaxy Note20 Ultra can link with their PC, reply to messages received via their phones, and transfer and edit files involving multiple devices to reap the rewards of frictionless multitasking.

stc customers pre-ordering the Samsung Galaxy Note20 will get the Buds+, and those pre-ordering the

was slashed 25 percent as her employer made coronavirus cutbacks. "I must pay the rent of my room in Beijing, and monthly mortgages for the two apartments," she said.

Rents in 20 major cities fell 2.33 percent in July from the same month year earlier, according to property data provider Zhuge House Hunter - the fourth consecutive month of decline in a market that's been buoyant for years. The sector remains opaque with no national database setting out who owns which buildings and limited historical tracking data.

Consumption deferred

Amid the strain wrought on China's services and manufacturing sectors by the spread of COVID-19 earlier this year, first to be laid off were migrant laborers, prime takers of small rental apartments. White-collar workers followed, while fresh college graduates from the provinces who would normally flood into cities have struggled to find jobs. All that has weighed on consumption by both tenants and deeper-pocketed landlords.

Even demand for short-term accommodation has waned, depriving landlords of one alternative. In June, the number of Chinese properties

that had at least one booked night fell 29 percent from a year earlier, according to data from analytics firm AirDNA, which tracks bookings on Airbnb and Vrbo.

"Two groups ... suffer the most," said Yuan Chengjian, vice president of Zhuge House Hunter. "One is long-term rental firms ... the other is investors who buy properties through high leverage financing, because they pay off part of their mortgages with rent."

Luo Shuzhen, 50, with 80 rooms to sublet in two buildings in the southern industrial city of Dongguan, said tenant numbers have dropped 30 percent this year. She's now postponing plans to furnish an apartment she bought last year.

"It's hard to say how long the epidemic would last, so I'm not sure whether I can maintain the rental business in the second half," said Luo, who runs a convenience store.

Like Luo, other landlords that Reuters spoke to were looking at reducing spending. China's retail sales fell for the seventh month in July, official data on Friday showed. But mortgage defaults remain rare for now: China's overall non-performing loan ratio stood at just 2.1 percent on average as of end-June. —Reuters

Classifieds

Sunday, August 16, 2020

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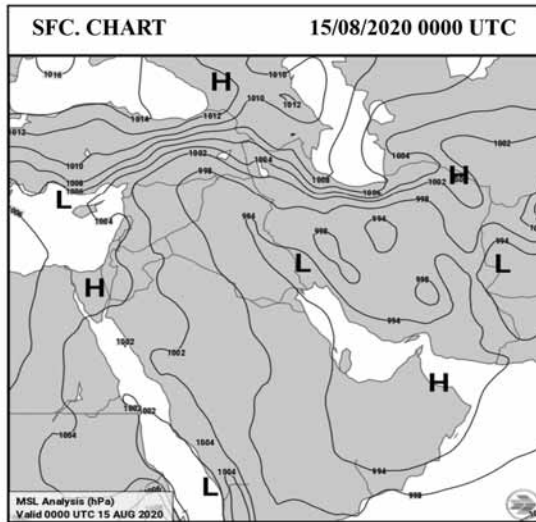
Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Hot with light to moderate freshening at times north westerly wind with speed of 15 - 45 km/h causing rising dust.

BY NIGHT: Hot to rather hot with light to moderate north westerly wind with speed of 12 - 35 km/h.

WEATHER WARNING: No Current Warnings

STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	45 °C	35 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	46 °C	30 °C
ABDALY	46 °C	30 °C
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C
JAHRA	47 °C	32 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	45 °C	34 °C
SALMIYAH	43 °C	36 °C
AHMADI	- °C	- °C
NUWAISIB	44 °C	31 °C
WAFRA	45 °C	31 °C
SALMY	46 °C	28 °C



DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Sunday	08/16	Very hot with a chance for rising dust over open areas	47 °C	31 °C	NW	12 - 42 km/h
Monday	08/17	Hot with a chance for rising dust	46 °C	30 °C	NW	15 - 42 km/h
Tuesday	08/18	Very hot with a chance for rising dust	47 °C	32 °C	NW	20 - 50 km/h
Wednesday	08/19	Very hot with a chance for rising dust	47 °C	32 °C	NW	20 - 50 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	03:51
Sunrise	05:16
Zuhr	11:54
Asr	15:28
Sunset	18:29
Isha	19:51

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	47 °C
MIN. Temp.	32 °C
MAX. RH	27 %
MIN. RH	09 %
MAX. Wind	NW 57 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

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

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. (C5755) 11-8-2020



Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is 1889988

EMBASSY OF INDIA
INVITES APPLICATIONS FOR THE POST OF : LOCAL CLERK
 Minimum Qualifications : Degree in Accountancy with proficiency in online accountancy. Knowledge of Government of India's Income Tax Laws, filing of returns etc. Proficiency in Arabic would be an advantage.
 Age limit : 35 years on 01.08.2020
 Valid residency (transferable) and driving license of Kuwait
 Interested candidates may send their applications by e-mail with bio-data by 3rd September 2020 to Second Secretary(HOC), Embassy of India, P.O. Box No.1450 Safat 13015, Kuwait.
E-mail: clerkrecruitment5@gmail.com

EMBASSY OF INDIA
INVITATION TO TENDER
 The Embassy of India, Kuwait invites bids by 07 September 2020 for awarding contract for maintenance of garden in the Embassy of India premises.
 2. All offers should be in two sealed covers marked " Technical Bid" To be opened by addressee only containing the company profile, clients & experience etc. and "Financial Bid" - To be opened by addressee only" and addressed to the "Head of Chancery", Embassy of India, Daeya, Diplomatic Enclave, Arabian Gulf Street, Safat 13015, Kuwait.
 3. The offer must be delivered at the Embassy on or before 1500 hrs on 07 September, 2020.
 For further details in the matter please visit our website:
www.indembkwt.gov.in

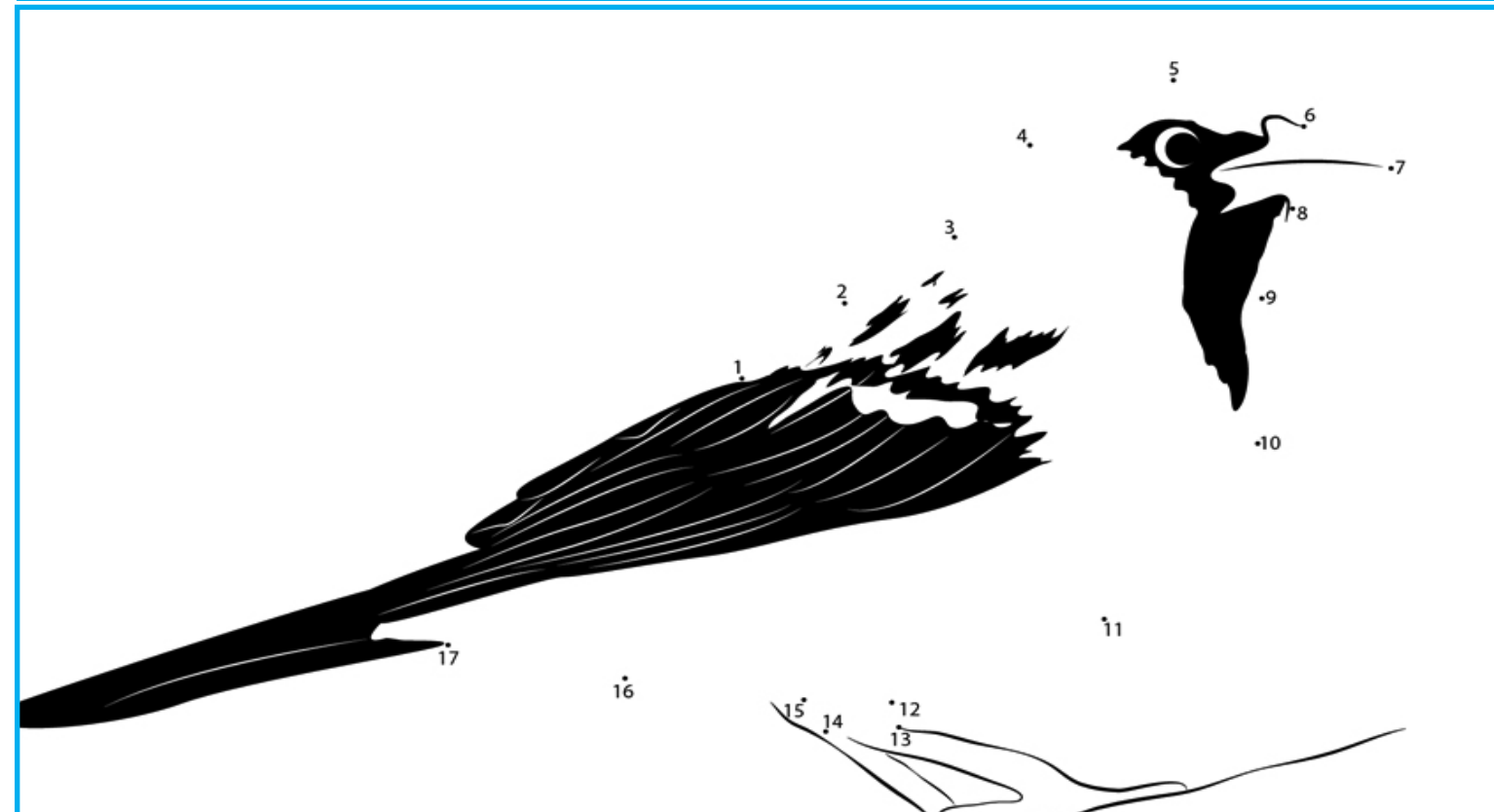
Word Search

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

SCRAMBLEDEEGGSPIOHBDLS
 NLUMHMLBFAAAATMXSABAA
 DFDSTUNODQONSWA PICJEN
 GIXICLAXYCCLG AJENQJMH
 IAFWXZSLQAEWYXKADANATC
 BCVBR EDCCKWSRTOKGDFAO
 HIAJYLBDEEGGSBENEDICTOL
 ENAFIRSRDAVKVARGVWESD
 JNFDXCAEZNMFLFOLYXICTP
 CAKWRWETFPPIASBXHRBII
 WMXADFALELEMOGKT XZUUZ
 YOSLFBTUZUMGXONNB J CZ
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 GRCNEGPPZJPSTMSMVVEGIP
 UORANEENGLISHMUFFINBL
 CLEROLCROISSANTAQHAWI
 P L P G H B I R T P T M A P L E S Y R U P
 S Y E T U T R J X O I Z Q Y B A G U O P I
 O S S I S I P E A P Y S I G I E Y N C E E
 S N W O R B H S A H S M N Q Z T U Z R C E
 S L H V A Q T E U D T T I U R F M G D X K

BACON BAGEL BISCUITS BREAD BUTTER CEREAL CINNAMON ROLL COCOA COFFEE COLD PIZZA CREPES
 CROISSANT DANISH DONUTS EGGS BENEDICT ENGLISH MUFFIN FRUIT GRANOLA GRITS HASH BROWNS HONEY JAM
 MAPLE SYRUP OATMEAL OMELET ORANGE JUICE PANCAKES SAUSAGE SCRAMBLED EGGS SMOOTHIE TEA TOAST WAFFLES

Join the Dots



STAR TRACK

Aries (March 21-April 19)
 Take charge of your health today, Aries. You'll likely wake up feeling energetic. Take advantage of the energy boost from the planetary movements to actively do things that maintain your sense of well-being. Consider emotional and spiritual aspects of your health. Sit outside in the fresh air. Take a walk, do some gardening, engage in something creative and physical.

Cancer (June 21-July 22)
 It won't be surprising if you're frustrated with a close friend or partner who's far less ambitious than you, Cancer. The energy in the air can emphasize your dynamic ways of reaching goals and achieving success. Others who are passive or fearful may be difficult for you to understand. Yet people have to do things in ways that are best for them. Try to be patient.

Libra (September 23-October 22)
 Put your ambition into action today, Libra. The day's planetary aspects should find you feeling energetic and positive, so take steps to achieve your goals. Nothing will happen if you don't actively pursue them. The years can pass quickly. You don't want to be sitting in a rocker wondering "what if." Trust yourself and do what it takes. Everything starts with that first step.

Capricorn (December 22-January 19)
 Today you may feel very creative and ambitious, Capricorn. You might want to use this energy to work on an artistic project, or you may choose to channel it into such activities as organizing your home or workspace. If you plan for it, there should be plenty of time to do both if you have a mind to. Make the most of the day.

Taurus (April 20-May 20)
 If you saw something in a craft shop or art studio that you'd like to buy but can't afford, consider making it, Taurus. Even if you don't think you're artistic, you could surprise yourself if you try. There are resources for novice crafters. They can give you the needed support and instructions. Don't dismiss your ability. Explore this avenue and see about finding a creative niche.

Leo (July 23-August 22)
 See about using your good relationships with friends and loved ones to get future group activities going, Leo. You're probably feeling great, and the idea of socializing appeals to you. See about inviting people over for supper or cards, when possible. If you're feeling especially lively, some sports may be just the ticket to get you moving. Do whatever it takes to have fun and get some fresh air safely.

Scorpio (October 23-November 21)
 Don't hesitate when it comes to taking on a project or making plans today, Scorpio. Extra energy will complement your organizational skills, making a perfect combination for handling almost anything. Write down your plans and goals to help stay focused. Get rid of things you never use. Consider donating these items, since there's probably someone who needs them.

Aquarius (January 20- February 18)
 Don't be surprised if you feel super today, Aquarius. Chances are good that you'll enjoy renewed physical strength, with energy to spare. It might be a good day to tackle any projects that require muscle. Perhaps there are household repairs that need tackling or furniture to move. You might want to go to the gym. Whatever the activity, this is a good day to go for it with gusto.

Gemini (May 21-June 20)
 It's the perfect day to head outside, Gemini. You'll likely be feeling positive and energetic, and the fresh air, sunshine, and physical activity may be long overdue. Even if you have to be inside for work, make the most of your breaks and lunch hour by walking. This evening could be the opportune time to get together with friends, if possible.

Virgo (August 23-September 22)
 If you lack a regular exercise routine, Virgo, today's a great day to remedy that. Exercise doesn't have to exhaust you or hurt. Even activities like walking or yoga are excellent ways to stay healthy. Play a sport that appeals to you and you combine fun with exercise. Even dancing is a fantastic means of exercise. Find something that works for you.

Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)
 Today should go well for you, Sagittarius. Expect to feel a renewed energy and fresher perspective, especially concerning anything work related. Make the most of this by finishing projects that have been stalled or organizing your desk or closets. Feel confident that you can handle any task quickly. When everything is taken care of, make plans for a little recreation. You deserve it.

Pisces (February 19-March 20)
 The influence of the planetary aspects will bring an end to any lethargy you've been feeling, Pisces. It's an excellent day to head outside and do something active. Gardening or landscaping can make great use of your energy and creativity. Fresh air and physical exertion will benefit your health. Even if you have to work today, there's always the evening to enjoy.

Lifestyle | Features



In this file photo The Air Ship, MJ Player Exclusive, Game-Worn Sneaker Nike, 1984, Left Shoe: Size 13.5, Right Shoe: Size 13, High-Top on display during a press preview at Christie's New York.



In this file photo The Air Jordan 1 High "Shattered Backboard" Origin Story, Game-Worn Signed Sneaker Nike, 1985 Size 13.5 High-Top on display during a press preview at Christie's New York. — AFP photos

Michael Jordan's sneakers sell for \$615,000, new record

A pair of Michael Jordan's game-worn sneakers sold for \$615,000, Christie's auction house said Thursday, shattering a record set just months ago by the sale of another pair of the basketball legend's shoes. The sneakers were a pair of Air Jordan 1 Highs that the NBA megastar wore during a 1985 exhibition match in Italy when he dunked the ball so hard it shattered the glass backboard. "This is the original shoe with an actual piece of the

backboard, a piece of glass, in the sole of the shoe," said Caitlin Donovan, head of handbag and sneaker sales at Christie's—which organized the auction with Stadium Goods.

Jordan racked up 30 points while wearing the size 13.5 shoes, which are in the red and black colors of his Chicago Bulls team. Though the sale broke the record set in May when a pair of Air Jordan 1's sold for \$560,000, the new auction landed below the estimated

range of \$650,000 and \$850,000. The record setting sales highlight the soaring market value of objects identified with the retired basketball superstar since the release of "The Last Dance," an ESPN/Netflix documentary that chronicles the saga of Jordan and his Chicago Bulls. It also confirms that the lowly sneaker now has a place of pride in the world of wealthy collectors alongside more traditional collectibles.— AFP

R. Kelly manager charged with threatening shooting against New York theater

Federal authorities have charged R. Kelly's manager with allegedly threatening a shooting at a Manhattan theater, by which he aimed to halt a docuseries screening about sex crime allegations against the disgraced singer. The charges announced Friday come just days after the self-described manager and friend of Kelly, Donnell Russell, was among three associates charged with allegedly harassing and intimidating women making accusations against the musician. New court filings say he threatened a shooting at the theater in Manhattan to prevent a December 2018 screening of the docuseries "Surviving R. Kelly," according to court documents.

His call led to an evacuation of the theater, which ultimately did not screen the series exploring accusations that the singer known for hits like "I Believe I Can Fly" engaged in decades of abusive sexual relationships with women and minor girls. "The violence Mr. Russell allegedly threatened succeeded in shutting down one airing of the documentary, but he was unable to



In this file photo singer R. Kelly leaves the Leighton Criminal Court Building after a hearing on sexual abuse charges, in Chicago, Illinois. — AFP

silence the women featured in the film," said FBI Assistant Director William Sweeney in a statement. Earlier this week prosecutors accused Russell of threatening to release sexually explicit photos of a woman in a bid to bully her into withdrawing her claims against Kelly, prosecutors said.

The new filing sees Russell, 45, charged with one count of conspiracy to threaten physical harm by interstate communication and one count of

threatening physical harm by interstate communication. Each count carries a maximum penalty of five years in prison. He is expected to make an initial appearance before a US judge in New York later Friday. For more than a year the artist born Robert Sylvester Kelly has been incarcerated and awaiting trial in several states for alleged wrongdoings including sex crimes against minors and child pornography. He has pleaded not guilty to all charges, which range across the states of Illinois, Minnesota and New York.

The artist is set for trial first in New York, where the case against him includes racketeering accusations that he systematically recruited girls for sex while touring, later coercing them into sexual activity. Jury selection for those proceedings are currently set to begin September 29, but restrictions preventing in-person trials due to the coronavirus pandemic will likely see that date postponed.— AFP



Phil Collins 'In the Air Tonight' back in charts after twins' viral video

Phil Collins' "In the Air Tonight" has made a huge comeback in the music charts nearly 40 years after its release, thanks to a viral video of young American brothers reacting to his 1981 hit. Twins Tim and Fred Williams posted a video of themselves listening to the British singer's debut solo single for the first time on YouTube in July. The brothers seem to enjoy nodding along to Collins' ambient sounds, when suddenly the two fall back in their chairs—jaws dropped—as the drum beats drop in the middle of the song. "This is unique," says one of the twins on the video after being blown away by the drumming on the track. "I've never seen anyone drop

a beat at the end of a song."

The video on the twins' YouTube channel "TwinsthenewTrend" has racked up more than five million views. As of Friday, "In the Air Tonight" was No.2 in the US iTunes charts, behind Darius Rucker's "Beer and Sunshine", according to itopchart.com. The hit launched Collins' solo career back in 1981, after he left British rock group "Genesis" as its frontman and drummer. Collins, 69, has sold more than 100 million albums during his solo career and 150 million with Genesis.— AFP

French director breaking the barriers for young black women

Just like the heroine of her acclaimed debut film, "Cuties", Maimouna Doucoure knows what it feels like not to be taken seriously. Her remarkable portrait of an 11-year-old French girl and her friends coming of age caught between traditionalist immigrant families and hyper-sexualised pop culture, won a best director award at the Sundance film festival earlier this year. Yet even after her short "Maman(s)-Mother(s)" — a semi-autobiographical tale of growing up in a polygamous Senegalese family in Paris—was garlanded with awards, some in the French film establishment were jaw-droppingly condescending about the unapologetically glamorous 35-year-old. "You made it for her, didn't you?" her producer was asked by one mover and shaker, before being told very firmly that it was all her own work. "I can't believe this girl made this film, she is so feminine," the sexist sceptic repeated. When Doucoure won at Sundance with "Cuties"—which has since been snapped up by Netflix—she called out the doubters publicly.

has proved her mother and a lot of others wrong since. And she has a sense of herself opening the way for others, helping to "knock down the mental barriers" that have held black women back.

'Things are moving'

Indeed, in her rousing Sundance acceptance speech she quoted Oprah Winfrey's maxim that "You become what you believe." "Believe ladies!" Doucoure declared. With both the #MeToo and Black Lives Matters movements causing earthquakes within the entertainment industry, she believes the times are changing. Doucoure proudly recounts marching alongside French actress Adele Haenel and "Girlhood" and "Portrait of a Lady on Fire" director Celine Sciamma at a protest in the Paris suburbs over the death in police custody of Adama Traore, the black young man who is seen by many as the French George Floyd. "Things are moving, I have the feeling that I am coming through at the right moment," said Doucoure. Nor does she feel like she is on her own.

New black wave

The black British writer-director Michaela Coel—whose parents come from Ghana—has won huge plaudits for her hard-hitting date-rape series "I May Destroy You", while Issa Rae—who like Doucoure has Senegalese roots—has become a small-screen phenomenon for her series "Insecure" and "Awkward Black Girl", in which, like Coel, she also plays the lead. And another Parisian Mati Diop won the grand jury prize at the Cannes film festival last year for "Atlantics", which she shot in Senegal, where her musician father Wasis Diop was born.

Doucoure also points to the unexpected success of Jean-Pascal Zadi's clever comedy "Tout simplement noir" ("Very Simply Black") — one of the biggest hits of the summer in French cinemas—as another sign of progress. But there is still much to do. "We need different models altogether, to blow up the barriers with fiction," said Doucoure. "From the moment when we open imaginations, all will become possible." Having written and prepared "Cuties" while she was pregnant, and cast it carrying her daughter in a sling, Doucoure said she is an example of what is possible. "Coming from nowhere" she is proud to be a symbol of the opening up of France's often cliquish cinema culture which she said "is above all a sport of the rich". The director is currently working on two new films, one of which, centred on social media, will start shooting soon—coronavirus permitting. "When young girls can get 400,000 likes by doing a sexy selfie... we have to offer them another way of being. To dream of being female astronauts, engineers or presidents..." Or even film directors.— AFP



In this file photo French-Senegalese film director Maimouna Doucoure poses during a photo session in Paris. — AFP

'Forbidden from dreaming'

"I want to say to this guy and everyone who thinks that femininity means you don't have the power to think, to write, lead and create, women are capable of doing everything," she declared to deafening cheers. But young black women artists do not only have to climb a wall of prejudice from the outside, Doucoure told AFP as "Cuties" was released in France. They also have to face down sabotage from their own communities and even their families, she said. "When I was small, I was forbidden from dreaming," said the director. Her mother, a cleaner, told her that making films was not for "the likes of her"—that people who made films didn't look like her. In other words, black women.

"I lacked role models so badly when I was growing up," Doucoure said of her childhood in a large polygamous family in northern Paris presided over by her binman father. "Television is a sort of mirror of society, but for me, I never saw my reflection in it. Which makes it quite difficult afterwards to open up all the imaginative possibilities," she added. But Doucoure

World's oldest captive alligator marks 83 years in Belgrade zoo

Muja has lived through multiple bombing campaigns and several countries—all while never leaving a tiny pool in Belgrade's zoo for 83 years, making him the world's oldest captive alligator. While zookeepers don't know his exact hatch day, the reptile arrived in Belgrade this week in August of 1937 from a German zoo. "He's an older gentleman and we respect his age," Jozef Edvedj, the zoo's veterinarian, told AFP with a smile after handlers helped guide a dead rat to the jaws of the slow-moving reptile. He officially became the world's oldest captive alligator when Moscow zoo's famous Saturn, born in 1936, died in May.

According to news reports from 1937, Muja was two years old when arrived in Belgrade, a year after the zoo opened. But in photos from the reports he appears older, leading zookeepers to believe is over 90 now. While Muja has not seen much outside his shallow and spartan 12x7-meter pool, he survived bombings during World War II that killed many animals in the zoo, along with six zookeepers. The gator arrived in Belgrade when it was still the capital of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, lived through the country's socialist era and



For the last 83 years, Muja, world's oldest captive alligator, swims in a tiny pool in Belgrade's zoo, due to his advanced age, Muja doesn't move much but becomes snappy during feeding time, which comes only once or twice a month.—AFP photos

the bloody breakup of Yugoslavia which ended in yet another bombing campaign, carried out by NATO in 1999. Muja is still in "good health for his age", and the only time the veterinarians were seriously concerned was in 2012, when he had to have a right claw amputated due to gangrene.

"The surgery was very difficult, but successful. Muja recovered and adjusted to a new lifestyle," Edvedj said. Due to his advanced age, Muja doesn't move much but becomes snappy during feeding time, which comes only once or twice a month. These days, he often needs a bit of help finding his "prey",

which zookeepers place right in front of his jaws. His diet consists of skinned rats, rabbits, birds, horse meat and beef, Edvedj told AFP. "We call it a 'buffet'", he said, adding that the old-timer is also receiving mineral and vitamin supplements. Being cold-blooded works in Muja's favour, giving him a slow metabolism that impedes cell deterioration and thus prolongs his life, Edvedj explained. "I genuinely hope that we could celebrate his 100th birthday, as I believe he could live comfortably for another 15-20 years", the veterinarian said.—AFP



Elephant calves are seen with their mothers in the Africam Safari park in Puebla, Mexico. — AFP

Mexican zoo live-streams birth of elephant named 'Zoom'

A baby African elephant whose birth was live-streamed by a safari park in Mexico has been named Zoom after the video chat app made popular by the coronavirus pandemic. The calf is the sixth born at the park in Puebla, southeast of the capital, to a herd of elephants rescued eight years ago in Namibia, where they were threatened by

poachers. "The birth of an elephant is difficult to see," said Frank Carlos Camacho, director of Africam Safari, where the baby elephant was seen Friday playing between its mother's legs.

"It's very useful for science, measuring times, fluid volumes, among other factors," he told AFP. The park said its goal is for the elephants to eventually return to

Africa. "They're not ours. They belong to the world," Camacho said. "We want them to be in Africa, but the current conditions are difficult. "People working in tourism were left without jobs due to the pandemic and they're looking for alternatives. The outlook is terrible." — AFP

Lifestyle | Features

Beirutis find comfort in reuniting with pets lost in blast

A tearful young Lebanese woman clutches her cat to her chest-like many Beirutis, she was relieved at being reunited with her pet after the blast that ravaged the capital. Pets have been a source of solace for many of the hundreds of thousands of people affected by the August 4 explosion that ripped through Beirut. The monster



blast at the port shattered glass and sent debris flying, killing over 170 people and injuring at least 6,500 others across the Mediterranean city. In the chaos that ensued, many pets, some of them also hurt, bolted from their homes. Yandi Sfeir, a 38-year-old lawyer, was injured and had to rush to hospital, where she received six stitches in the arm.

When she returned home, her cat Lucky had disappeared. He was found seven days later, three meters (10 feet) underground without food

or water. Volunteers with an animal rights groups, Animals Lebanon, which has led efforts to reunite pets with their owners, helped retrieve Lucky. "I hoped that someone had found him and was taking care of him. But the joy I felt when I saw him... it was like a weight had been lifted," Sfeir told AFP. His presence has brought comfort as she struggles to process the trauma of the disaster, she said. "I still feel the vibrations that preceded the explosions. I'm always worried that something is going to happen." In the days since the blast, Sfeir said she struggled to sleep at home alone, asking her mother or friends to keep her company. Lucky "will help me sleep at home again", she said, adding that the cat too had changed-jumping at the slightest noise.

Lucky was one of over 100 pets reunited with their families, according to Animals Lebanon, thanks to the efforts of charities and hundreds of volunteers. "Animals have this beautiful effect on people, a therapeutic effect, and these people are so happy when they see that their animal is still alive, it's as if they forget that they have lost everything," Maggie Shaarawi, vice-president of Animals Lebanon, told AFP. Dodo the cat, now in the care of Animals Lebanon, "was so traumatized when we found him the first time that he jumped off the balcony again", Shaarawi said. The white-and-ginger cat "still isn't eating, he's very upset", she added.



The catastrophe "brought out everyone's compassion for all living beings and it's something really beautiful, people are united on so many fronts." For the hundreds of thousands of Lebanese whose homes were damaged, many to them left unlivable, pets are a "last link to their home", said Kamal Khatib, a volunteer. The group

has already reunited dozens of owners with their dogs and cats, he said. "It's an amazing feeling to watch them meet again." — AFP



File photo shows a combination of pictures (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 handout 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

UNESCO to protect Lebanon as 60 historic buildings 'risk collapse'

The UN's cultural agency UNESCO vowed Thursday to lead efforts to protect vulnerable heritage in Lebanon after last week's gigantic Beirut port blast, warning that 60 historic buildings were at risk of collapse. The effects of the blast were felt all over the Lebanese capital but some of the worst damage was in the Gemmayzeh and Mar-Mikhael neighbourhoods a short distance from the port. Both are home to a large concentration of historic buildings. "The international community has sent a strong signal of support to Lebanon following this tragedy," said Ernesto Ottone, assistant UNESCO Director-General for Culture.

"UNESCO is committed to leading the response in the field of culture, which must form a key part of

wider reconstruction and recovery efforts." Sarkis Khoury, head of antiquities at the ministry of culture in Lebanon, reported at an online meeting this week to coordinate the response that at least 8,000 buildings were affected, said the Paris-based organization. "Among them are some 640 historic buildings, approximately 60 of which are at risk of collapse," UNESCO said in a statement. "He (Khoury) also spoke of the impact of the explosion on major museums, such as the National Museum of Beirut, the Sursock Museum and the Archaeological Museum of the American University of Beirut, as well as cultural spaces, galleries and religious sites."

Even before the explosion, there had been growing concern in Lebanon about the condition of her-

itage in Beirut due to rampant construction and a lack of preservation for historic buildings in the densely-packed city. UNESCO said Khoury "stressed the need for urgent structural consolidation and waterproofing interventions to prevent further damage from approaching autumn rains." The explosion on August 4, which left 171 people dead, has been blamed on a vast stock of ammonium nitrate left in a warehouse at the port for years despite repeated warnings. Lebanon's government under Prime Minister Hassan Diab resigned this week following days of demonstrations demanding accountability for the disaster. — AFP

'Gladiator' star pitches in to rescue blast-hit Beirut eatery

Hollywood star Russell Crowe said Thursday that he donated funds to help rebuild a blast-hit Beirut restaurant on behalf of late food icon Anthony Bourdain, who loved its traditional dishes. The decades-old Le Chef restaurant, located in the heart of a trendy Beirut district, is a beloved neighbourhood place renowned for its home-style cooking. It was blown to pieces by the August 4 explosion that killed 171 people, wounded at least 6,500 and ravaged swathes of Beirut. The Oscar-winning Crowe, best known for his role in the 2000 action film Gladiator, said on Twitter that he made the donation "on behalf of Anthony Bourdain". "I thought that he would have probably done so if he was still around," Crowe said of the celebrity chef and travel journalist who committed suicide in 2018. "Hope things can be put back together soon."



Crowe's \$5,000 donation was made on a GoFundMe page set up by fans of Le Chef, a restaurant popular with tourists as well as locals in the Gemmayzeh neighbourhood that was among the hardest-hit by the explosion. The online fundraiser raised nearly \$11,000 in less than 24 hours, just \$2,000 short of its target. Le Chef is where Bourdain had his first meal when he and his crew were trapped in Lebanon for a week in 2006 because of a month-long war with Israel. It is featured in the highly-praised Lebanon episode of his 'No Reservations' series. "Really good food, very traditional," Bourdain says of the restaurant in the show, calling it a "nice mix" of old and new. It's a "good first meal in Beirut." — AFP

A SON OF A SLAVE REFLECTS ON HIS AMERICAN STORY

At 88, Dan Smith has witnessed some of the defining moments in America's fraught battle for racial equality. He protested in Alabama, marched on Washington with Martin Luther King Jr, and attended the inauguration of the first black president, Barack Obama. He also represents a living link to the nation's dark past: his father Abram was born a slave, 157 years ago. As a boy, his elderly father told chilling stories: about the "hanging tree" where slaves were lynched, and the master who forced a slave to lick a wagon wheel. The man lost part of his tongue when it froze to the steel. Though America has seen much progress, Smith feels that under President Donald Trump, some of it is being lost. "I'm petrified," he tells AFP in an interview at his home in Washington. "Everything we did in the civil rights movement... in terms of voting, and fairness and equality, he's trying to undo it."

Humble beginnings

Smith's father was born in Virginia in 1863, but eventually settled in Connecticut, where he had six children with his second wife Clara and worked as a janitor. Dan, the fifth, came along in 1932. Disaster struck when Abram was struck by a car and killed six years later, leaving Clara to provide for the family. She struggled to make ends meet on her housekeeping wages. Smith chipped in from a young age, working as an assistant to a veterinarian.

He recalls experiencing plenty of discrimination at school. But he was popular and handsome, and found surreptitious ways to date white girls — much to the horror of his mother, who feared the worst if their families found out. "I'd wait for a young lady to call me. She'd say 'Danny, can you give me a ride to the Glee Club?' and that was my cue," he said.

Heroic rescues and tragedy

After high school, he was drafted into the army. As a medic in Korea, he saw up close the horrors of war. He became a hometown hero when he dove into a hurricane-swollen river to rescue a truck driver. Thanks to the military, he put himself through col-

lege, joining the wrestling team and the glee club. He was even elected student body president. During this period, he also endured one of the worst tragedies of his life while working at a summer camp. One day, Smith took his young charges to see an old reservoir where he noticed a commotion: a girl had drifted too far and couldn't be found.

She was eventually pulled ashore, and Smith found a clear pulse. But when he went to begin mouth-to-mouth resuscitation on the girl, who was white, he heard a policeman cry out: "She's already dead!" Smith instantly realized the cop would rather see her die than be saved by a black man, and so he stopped. Decades on, the episode still makes his stomach turn. "It's very emotional," he says. "You talk about things people have to carry throughout their life. And that bugs me, that bugs me."

'I have a dream'

After graduating, Smith became a hospital social worker, sharing a dorm with Barry Fritz, a young Jewish man studying to be a psychologist. The pair



This undated image courtesy of Dan Smith and Loretta Neumann, shows Dan Smith's father, Abram Smith, born the property of a white man in Massies Mill, Virginia in 1863.



This 1936 image courtesy of Dan Smith and Loretta Neumann, shows Dan Smith at the age of 4.

would debate the issues of the day, and Fritz persuaded Smith to attend a civil rights march in Washington, despite his misgivings. After getting lost on the drive, they were pleasantly surprised when a policeman pulled them over-and led them to a house where other marchers were staying.

The next morning, they found themselves standing on steps of the Lincoln Memorial, where they witnessed King's iconic "I have a dream" speech. "It was emotional... there were black and white... everyone in America was there," said Smith. Though the march awakened his sense of activism, he headed to Alabama as planned to pursue a graduate education and his dreams of becoming a veterinarian.

'Pull over!'

He tried to settle down to his studies-but by the mid-1960s, the southern state had become the epicenter of the growing US civil rights movement, and people were pouring in to join the fight. The college's president approached him and urged him to put his scholarly pursuits on hold, saying Smith's leadership skills from his undergraduate days could help the movement. Smith started working on a literacy program for poor black people, and was later placed in charge of a civil rights project in Lowndes County, where 80 percent of residents were black and weren't registered to vote. Smith almost became a martyr for the cause.

First, white supremacists burned his office building to the ground. Undeterred, Smith then worked from a trailer. One evening as he drove home, he noticed he was being tailed by a car full of youths. The vehicle eventually pulled up next to him and they screamed racial slurs, demanding he pull off the highway. The chase went on for 25 miles. Smith finally saw a gas station on the outskirts of Montgomery-full of black customers. He swerved in, and his assailants drove on.

Marching on

In 1968, Smith moved to Washington, where he bought a house and raised two children with his first wife. He also began a career as a federal worker. He founded a national training program for primary

care physicians that runs to this day, which he considers his crowning achievement. His boss took a chance on putting a black man in charge of such a major project in 1972 — but unlike other officials at his level, he wasn't even assigned his own secretary. Smith retired in the 1990s. He served as an usher at the Washington National Cathedral, where he met presidents Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Obama.

He was also deeply involved in the creation of the Korean War Memorial in 1995. In 2006, the cathedral hosted his own wedding to Loretta Neumann, an environmental activist and longtime federal worker who is white. This summer, as Black Lives Matter protests rocked the country, the couple joined in. For a moment, Smith is overcome with emotion, dabbing his eye with a tissue. Then he regains the old fire. "You can write a little check, you can send a nickel, but everyone in this country should be concerned and should be involved," he says. — AFP



This 1965 image courtesy of Dan Smith and Loretta Neumann, shows Dan Smith and his mother, Clara Wheeler Smith, at his wedding. — AFP photos

Sports

Photo of the Day



David Plese, professional triathlete, is seen training in Hawaii. — Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

India's Olympic hopeful trio to train in Dubai

NEW DELHI: Three of India's top swimmers will begin two months of training in Dubai next month, sports officials said yesterday, ending an agonising wait that drove one of them to the verge of retirement ahead of next year's Tokyo Olympics.

Six Indian swimmers had achieved the lower, or B, Olympic qualification for the Tokyo Games before the COVID-19 pandemic forced them out of the pool in March. India has since allowed some sports facilities to reopen for training, but pools remain closed, prompting freestyle swimmer Viradhwal Khade to announce in June that he was considering retirement.

That now looks unlikely after the Sports Authority of India (SAI) announced Khade (50-metre freestyle), Srihari Nataraj (100-metre backstroke) and Kushagra Rawat (400-metre freestyle) will train at Dubai's Aqua Nation Swimming Academy from the first week of September.

"This decision was taken ... as swimming pools in India are not yet accessible as a safety measure due to the COVID-19 pandemic," it said in a statement. Among other B qualifiers, Sajan Prakash (200-metre butterfly) has been training in Thailand, while the 800-metre freestyle duo of Aryan Makhija and Advait Page began practice in the United States earlier this month.

"The Dubai camp is for Olympic B qualifiers who are in India and currently unable to train," Swimming Federation of India secretary-general Monal Chokshi told Reuters. "It will be a 60-day camp in Dubai, but if pools in India don't open in 60 days, SAI might extend it." — Reuters

Yankees' Cole posts 20th straight win

Bichette, Blue Jays bomb Rays with six home runs

NEW YORK: Gerrit Cole pitched seven strong innings to win his 20th straight decision and the New York Yankees remained unbeaten in games played at Yankee Stadium with a 10-3 rout of the slumping Boston Red Sox Friday night. Cole (4-0) became the sixth pitcher to win 20 consecutive decisions in baseball history and the first since Jake Arrieta did it for the Chicago Cubs from Aug. 4, 2015-May 25, 2016. The all-time record is 24 straight decisions by Hall of Famer Carl Hubbell from July 17, 1936-May 27, 1937 with the New York Giants. Cole allowed one run on four hits. He struck out eight, walked none in a 95-pitch outing. Cole's latest win helped the Yankees improve to 7-0 to start the abbreviated season at Yankee Stadium. It is the fourth time they have begun 7-0 or better in the Bronx since 1959 (also 2017, 1998 and 1987). Alex Verdugo homered and drove in two runs for the Red Sox, who lost their fifth straight and continued to struggle against the Yankees. Rafael Devers added an RBI single in the eighth.

BLUE JAYS 12, RAYS 4

Bo Bichette hit one of six Toronto home runs, a three-run tiebreaking home run in a five-run bottom of the sixth inning, and Teoscar Hernandez added two more as Toronto beat Tampa Bay in Buffalo. The homer extended Bichette's hitting streak to eight games, and extended his streak of games with a home run to four. The Blue Jays snapped the Rays' six-game winning streak. Hernandez hit a three-run homer and a solo shot for four total RBIs. Rowdy Tellez added a two-run blast, and Cavan Biggio and Randal Grichuk hit solo homers. Brandon Lowe hit a two-run homer for Tampa Bay.

PHILLIES 6, METS 5

Bryce Harper hit a walk-off RBI single in the bottom of the ninth inning to score Roman Quinn from second base as host Philadelphia defeated New York. J.T. Realmuto homered and drove in three runs while Quinn and Andrew McCutchen had two hits each for the Phillies, who snapped a three-game losing streak. Dominic Smith homered in a third consecutive game, singled and knocked in two runs while Robinson Cano hit a solo home run, singled and had two RBIs for the Mets. Phillies starter Spencer Howard lasted 3 1/3 in-

nings and left with an apparent blister on a finger of his pitching hand. In his second career start, Howard allowed seven hits and four runs, three earned.

REDS 8, PIRATES 1

Jesse Winker homered twice and right-hander Sonny Gray struck out 10, while pitching into the seventh, as Cincinnati evened its four-game home series against Pittsburgh. Nick Castellanos' three-run homer highlighted a four-run seventh inning for the Reds. Gray (4-1, 2.05 ERA) allowed a Bryan Reynolds home run in the fourth, plus four other hits with one walk in 6 2/3 innings. Winker hit a solo shot in the second and added two-run blast in the fourth. Kuhl (0-1) took the



Winker hit a solo shot

loss after giving up the two home runs, three runs and five hits with six strikeouts over five innings. The Pirates have lost 14 of their first 18 games.

NATIONALS 15, ORIOLES 3

Despite seeing starting pitcher Stephen Strasburg exit in the first inning, Washington got 5 1/3 strong innings from Erick Fedde and ended host Baltimore's six-game winning streak. Strasburg, who started last weekend's game, did the same in Friday's nightcap, but lasted only 16 pitches after a rain delay of one hour, 57 minutes at the start. After Anthony Santander homered off Strasburg in the first, Washington took over against Tommy Milone (1-2), who allowed six runs (three earned) on nine hits with two strikeouts and no walks in four innings.

BREWERS 4, CUBS 3

Christian Yelich hit a go-ahead, three-run homer



NEW YORK: Gio Urshela #29 of the New York Yankees breaks his bat swinging at a pitch from Colten Brewer #48 of the Boston Red Sox during the third inning at Yankee Stadium in the Bronx borough of New York City. — AFP

in the sixth inning, and Milwaukee held on for a win over host Chicago. The 412-foot blast by Yelich was his fifth home run of the season, which leads the team. Milwaukee bounced back from a series-opening loss one night earlier and avoided its first three-game skid of the season. Jason Kipnis, Ian Happ and Anthony Rizzo drove in one run apiece for the Cubs, whose home winning streak was snapped at seven games. Chicago lost for only the second time since July 30.

INDIANS 10, TIGERS 5

Fransil Reyes scored three runs and drove in three more, Domingo Santana hit a three-run homer, and Cleveland continued its dominance of Detroit. The Indians have defeated Detroit 18 consecutive times, dating back to last season. It's the Tigers' longest losing streak to any team in franchise history. Indians

starter Aaron Civale (2-2) gave up four runs on eight hits in six innings. Tigers starter Ivan Nova (1-1) surrendered eight runs on five hits in 3 1/3 innings as Detroit lost its third straight.

DODGERS 7, ANGELS 4

Clayton Kershaw threw seven strong innings, Cody Bellinger hit two home runs and the Dodgers beat the Angels in Anaheim, Calif. Kershaw bounced back in a big way after losing his last start against the San Francisco Giants, giving up only one hit — a solo home run to Anthony Rendon — while walking two and striking out six. Bellinger had just two home runs all season before Friday, when he went deep against Angels starter Patrick Sandoval in the sixth inning and reliever Ryan Buchter in the eighth, both two-run homers. — Reuters

Hamilton predicts 'killer' Spanish Grand Prix

BARCELONA: Lewis Hamilton said he was ready for a "killer" race in today's Spanish Grand Prix after bouncing back to top the times ahead of his team-mate Valtteri Bottas as Mercedes dominated Friday's practice for the Spanish Grand Prix. The championship leader said the searing heat during the afternoon session had been tough to endure, but was happy his car had survived without any serious problems. "I don't think I've been to Spain when it's this hot," he said.

"We're here in February and March usually, or early May. It's beautiful weather, but it's a killer in the car and it's obviously very tough on tyres as well." The six-time world champion had been second behind Bottas after the morning's opening session, but re-established his supremacy on a hot afternoon at the Circuit de Catalunya.

Hamilton clocked a best lap in one minute and 16.883 seconds to outpace Bottas by 0.287 seconds with Max Verstappen, winner of last weekend's 70th Anniversary Grand Prix at Silverstone, third for Red Bull, eight-tenths adrift of the fastest lap. In much hotter conditions than those of the morning, with an air temperature of 30 degrees Celsius and the track at almost 50, the two Mercedes enjoyed a comfortable advantage over their rivals.

'HOTTEST HERE'

"It looks like things will be very exciting with Red Bull

over the long distance," said Hamilton, referring to the race. "It will therefore be a very exciting race, I think. "It's definitely quite tough out there. It's the hottest that it has been for us here."

Despite the heat, he said he was generally satisfied. "It's been a good day - the second session was better for me. The long runs we look very close with the Red Bulls so I think it's going to be a very close race.

"The tyres aren't happy in these conditions so you're just sliding around with overheated tyres. I didn't see any blistering, but we didn't see blistering last Friday either so I really can't say too much."

Bottas, keen to regain lost ground after slipping to third behind Verstappen in the title race last Sunday, was also ambiguous about his prospects. "I didn't have a bad feeling in the car," he said.

"I struggled with a bit of under-steer at the beginning of the session, but that's normally a quick fix with the car set-up, but it was quite a lot by the end." Verstappen was similarly unconvinced that anything meaningful had been revealed on Friday. "The car was ok on one lap," said the Dutchman. "We are using all of the hardest compounds and it is manageable. We would have liked to have a softer tyre, but they're not here this weekend.

"Mercedes are very fast on one lap in qualifying, but let's see what their race pace is like on Sunday. I think it's going to be very different to last week at Silverstone."

Daniel Ricciardo was fourth for Renault ahead of Roman Grosjean of Haas who outpaced Charles Leclerc, who was sixth for Ferrari. Carlos Sainz was seventh for McLaren ahead of Sergio Perez, returning to action for Racing Point after missing two races with coronavirus. Esteban Ocon in the second Renault and Pierre Gasly of Alpha Tauri filled out the top ten. — AFP

Harlequins shock Sale and Tuilagi

LONDON: Harlequins marked the return of the English Premiership after the coronavirus lockdown with a shock 16-10 win over Sale that ruined Manu Tuilagi's debut on Friday.

The Premiership has been in hibernation for five months due to the pandemic and the restart behind closed doors at The Stoop was a predictably scrappy affair.

Sale are expected to challenge league leaders Exeter for the title following Tuilagi's arrival from Leicester, but they were outclassed by Harlequins.

Harlequins head of rugby Paul Gustard said: "Start of the second half we gave Sale a sniff and they're a brilliant team.

"For us to fight back in that next 10-minute window was crucial for us. I was really pleased with the turnaround from that."

Sale director of rugby Steve Diamond added: "We gave a silly try away and we missed a kick before half-time. "That's a 10-point turnaround and we lost by six."

Harlequins, who gave Chris Ashton his first start, were sharper and smarter throughout and piled over for the decisive try through hooker Scott Baldwin in the third quarter.

Fly-half Marcus Smith kicked three penalties

and a conversion and Quins were rarely out of control, pierced only by Byron McGuigan's try as Sale exited half-time with a purpose that then deserted them.

It was a low-quality return to action for the competition, marred by 29 penalties and resembling a pre-season game.

The rivals showed their support for the Black Lives Matter movement in different ways. Sale's players wearing white T-shirts emblazoned with "Rugby against racism" while Quins took a knee as part of a circle.

Four of the Sharks also took a knee after the clubs were given free rein to mark the fight against racism in the way they saw fit.

For all the expectations of Sale's renewed challenge for the Premiership title, it was Quins who made the brighter start and within 20 minutes they had built a lead through two Smith penalties.

Smith's third penalty extended the lead, while Sale fly-half Robert du Preez could only pull a simple chance wide of the right post.

England prop Joe Marler was reprimanded by referee Luke Pearce for his trademark sledging, the official warning "enough commentary Joe, it's winding people up", and Sale took their revenge early in the second half. An attacking line-out saw Tuilagi act as a decoy and, with acres of space created on the right, wing McGuigan completed a routine finish.

But the comeback was stopped in its tracks in the 57th minute when Baldwin crossed over, with Smith adding the conversion. — AFP

Sports

Bo Horvat's overtime winner gives Canucks 2-0 lead in playoff series

Flames outlast Stars, take 2-1 series lead

EDMONTON: Bo Horvat's second goal of the game was the overtime winner as the Vancouver Canucks regrouped from blowing a third-period lead to beat the St. Louis Blues 4-3 on Friday in Edmonton and take a 2-0 lead in their opening-round Western Conference playoff series. The defending champion Blues, who sat atop the Western Conference when the league paused in March due to the COVID-19 pandemic, have yet to win a game since play resumed. Horvat took a breakaway feed from Quinn Hughes and buried a shot at 5:55 of the extra frame to stun the Blues. St. Louis' Jaden Schwartz collected the tying goal with 6.4 seconds remaining in regulation to force overtime when a point shot from David Perron went off his leg and into the net. Officials originally waved off the goal due to a high stick, but the call was overturned after a review.

York, which beat Washington in Toronto to take a two-games-to-none lead. The Islanders hold a 2-0 series edge in the first round for the second straight year. New York swept the Pittsburgh Penguins last spring. Nick Leddy and Matt Martin scored the first two goals in the second for the Islanders, who received insurance goals late in the third from Cal Clutterbuck and Anders Lee. New York goalie Semyon Varlamov made 23 saves. Alex Ovechkin scored twice while goalie Braden Holtby recorded 27 saves for the Capitals, who are down two games to none in a series for the first time since the first round of the 2018 playoffs. That time, Washington



Last hurrah

FLAMES 2, STARS 0

Mikael Backlund and T.J. Brodie both scored while goaltender Cam Talbot sparkled in net as Calgary beat Dallas in Edmonton to take a 2-1 advantage in their opening-round Stanley Cup playoff series. Talbot made 35 saves — 16 of them in the second period alone — to record his fourth career playoff shutout and second this postseason. Backlund opened the scoring for the Flames with a short-handed tally amidst a one-sided second period that was dominated by the Stars. It was the 10th consecutive game in which the Stars surrendered the first goal.

ISLANDERS 5, CAPITALS 2

Brock Nelson's breakaway go-ahead goal capped a frantic flurry early in the second period of Game 2 of the Eastern Conference quarterfinals for New

won the next four games against the Columbus Blue Jackets and went on to win the Stanley Cup.

AVALANCHE 3, COYOTES 2

Andre Burakovsky scored the go-ahead goal with 2:53 remaining in the third period to lift Colorado to a victory over Arizona in Game 2 of their Western Conference first-round series in Edmonton. Nathan MacKinnon and Tyson Jost also scored, and Philipp Grubauer made 30 saves for the Avalanche, who have secured a 2-0 lead in the best-



EDMONTON: Bo Horvat #53 of the Vancouver Canucks scores the game winner at 5:55 of overtime against Jordan Binnington #50 of the St. Louis Blues in Game Two of the Western Conference First Round during the 2020 NHL Stanley Cup Playoffs at Rogers Place. — AFP

of-seven series. Clayton Keller and Michael Grabner replied for the Coyotes. Darcy Kuemper turned aside 25 shots in the defeat.

CANADIENS 5, FLYERS 0

Tomas Tatar and Jesperi Kotkanen each scored twice and goaltender Carey Price stopped all 30 shots he faced Friday as Montreal blanked Philadelphia to even their Eastern Conference first-round series 1-1 in Toronto. The shutout was the

seventh of Price's playoff career, and his second of this postseason. He blanked Pittsburgh on 22 shots in a 2-0 win in the qualifying round. Joel Armia also scored and Max Domi had three assists for the Canadiens. The Flyers had won their first four games of the postseason before the shutout. Goaltender Carter Hart allowed four goals on 26 shots before leaving in the second period. Center Travis Konecny left the game in the third period after blocking a shot off his left foot. — Reuters

Miami's Jones stretchered off in NBA loss to Pacers

MIAMI: The Indiana Pacers beat Miami 109-92 on Friday in a preview of their upcoming NBA playoff clash that took a frightening turn when Heat forward Derrick Jones Jr. was stretchered off the court. With top players from both teams sitting out in anticipation of their already-booked first-round playoff series next week, Doug McDermott led the Pacers with 23 points in a victory that officially gave Indiana the Eastern Conference fourth seed to Miami's No. 5.

With all games being played in the NBA's quarantine bubble in Orlando, Florida, the higher seed and its "home court" advantage was of little import, making the injury to Jones much more of a concern for Miami.

"It just takes the air out of the building," Heat coach Erik Spoelstra said of seeing Jones go down hard in the third quarter after he crashed into Indiana's 2.1m, 113kg Georgian center Goga Bitadze as he tried to round a screen.

Jones was on the floor for several minutes before he was placed on a stretcher with a neck brace, the Heat saying later Friday that MRI and CT scans showed he had a neck strain. "He got jarred in the shoulder-neck area," Spoelstra said. "Obviously a little bit more than a stinger."

It was precisely the scenario all the teams wrapping up regular season action on Friday were trying to avoid, with the first-round playoff series matchups virtually set. The only thing left to be decided by this weekend's play-in series is whether Memphis or Portland will claim the final Western Conference berth and take on the West-leading



LAKE BUENA VISTA: Aaron Holiday #3 of the Indiana Pacers passes the ball against Kyle Alexander #17 and Kendrick Nunn #25 of the Miami Heat during the second half of a NBA basketball game at AdventHealth Arena at ESPN Wide World Of Sports Complex in Lake Buena Vista, Florida. — AFP

Los Angeles Lakers.

"Even as competitors, you don't want it on either side," Spoelstra said. "You just want to be able to have everybody available for the playoffs."

Spoelstra had held out Jimmy Butler, Bam Adebayo, Goran Dragic, Jae Crowder and Andre Iguodala. The Pacers, who were without T.J. Warren, Victor Oladipo and Myles Turner, led much of the game, buoyed by 23 points from Doug McDermott.

Six Pacers players scored in double-figures. That included Malcolm Brogdon, the only regular Pacers starter in the lineup, who scored 16. Second-year forward Alize Johnson got his first career start and produced a double-double of 11 points and 17 rebounds.

Pakistan were in danger of being dismissed for under 200 at 176-8. But Mohammad Abbas gave Rizwan staunch support with two off 20 balls during a stand of 39 before he was lbw to Stuart Broad. Fortunately for the umpires, in a series being played behind closed doors because of the coronavirus, there were no angry spectators present when they decided it was unsafe to continue.

"We're a little bit frustrated we didn't get a chance to finish them off," said England great James Anderson, whose return of 3-48 left him just seven shy of becoming the first paceman to take 600 wickets in Tests.

"The light has been gloomy all day but it's one of those when it didn't seem like the batsmen were struggling too much." Anderson was sceptical about using a different coloured ball to keep Test-match play going under floodlights, suggesting instead that officials be given a "bit more leeway" in their use of light meters.

'RIGHT TO GO OFF'

Meanwhile new-ball colleague Broad sympathised with umpires Michael Gough and Richard Kettleborough. "It's a tricky one because player safety is very important," said Broad after a return of 3-56 in 25 overs saw him become the seventh England bowler to take three wickets in seven consecutive Test innings.

"As bowlers you're keen to bowl all the time," especially in conditions like today. "The officials were right to bring us off...all of our fielders were saying we wouldn't want to bat in this, this is quite dark," he added.

In overcast conditions ideally suited to England's four-man pace attack, Pakistan creditably did not lose a wicket in the hour's play that was possible in a morning session curtailed by rain to be 155-5 at lunch. — AFP

RAPTORS BEAT NUGGETS

Reigning champions Toronto, the second seeds in the East, closed out the regular season with a 117-109 victory over the Denver Nuggets. Norman Powell led the Raptors with 15 points and Spanish big man Marc Gasol added two points for Toronto, who opted to rest stars Kyle Lowry, Pascal Siakam and Fred VanVleet. Serge Ibaka and OG Anunoby also missed the game, with Raptors coach Nick Nurse saying both were still battling knee injuries. Nuggets stars Nikola Jokic and Jamal Murray played just 10 minutes apiece, Jokic scoring two points and Murray 11 with reserve point guard Monte Morris scoring 16. — AFP

Serena falls to Rogers at US Open tuneup

WASHINGTON: Serena Williams suffered her first loss since 2012 to a rival outside the WTA's top 100, falling to fellow American Shelby Rogers in a Friday quarter-final at the Top Seed Open.

Rogers, ranked 116th, outlasted ninth-ranked Williams 1-6, 6-4, 7-6 (7/5) after two hours and seven minutes, finishing the 23-time Grand Slam champion with a service winner.

"It's every kid's dream growing up to be able to do something like that," Rogers said. "Weird circumstances. Weird surroundings. But a win is a win." The US Open hardcourt tuneup event at Lexington, Kentucky, is being staged in a quarantine bubble due to the COVID-19 pandemic that had kept Williams idle since a February Fed Cup appearance.

Top seed Williams had not lost to a player outside the top 100 since falling to France's Virginie Razzano in the first round of the 2012 French Open.

Williams, who ousted sister Venus on Thursday, was playing matches to prepare for the US Open, which starts August 31. She will seek a seventh title on the New York hardcourts to match Margaret Court's all-time record of 24 Grand Slam crowns.

"I have only good things to take," Williams said. "I can play a lot better."

Rogers reached her first WTA semi-final since Rio in 2016. She'll face 63rd-ranked Swiss left-hander Jil Teichmann, who ousted American Catherine Bellis 6-2, 6-4. —AFP

Europa League no longer a consolation prize for European giants

COLOGNE: The Europa League may not be able to match the riches and glamour of the Champions League, but the presence of Manchester United and Inter Milan in the semi-finals is further evidence that Europe's giants are increasingly taking the competition seriously.

United and Sevilla, who face off in Sunday's first semi-final, have already benefited from the introduction of a place in the Champions League for the Europa League winners in 2015, but with Ukrainian champions Shakhtar Donetsk facing Inter in the other semi-final tomorrow, all four sides remaining have already secured their places in the Champions League next season.

Instead, it is the prestige of a European trophy and prize money that is driving the ambitions of the semi-finalists despite the eerie atmosphere with all games behind closed doors in northern Germany.

"I think it's so important to win because every player needs to understand how it is to win a trophy for Manchester United," said Bruno Fernandes, whose extra-time penalty saw the English giants squeeze past FC Copenhagen in the quarter-finals.

"I think if we finish with a trophy, it will not be perfect, but it will be a good year for us because Manchester United needs to come back again to win some trophies and fight for the European competitions." United have not won a trophy since they lifted the Europa League for the first time in 2017.

Sevilla are the kings of this competition, winning it five times since 2006, but have not claimed any silverware since they last lifted the Europa League in 2016.

Inter have made giant strides towards closing the gap to Juventus in Antonio Conte's first season in charge, but are also seeking their first trophy since 2011.

PRIZE MONEY PEAKS INTEREST

The presence of United and Inter means there will be more previous Champions League winners in the Europa League semi-finals than UEFA's premier club competition in Lisbon. But European football's governing body has peaked the interest of the continent's biggest clubs with increased prize money in the Europa League in recent seasons.

Spanish and English clubs have combined to win the competition for the past eight years. The 560 million euros (\$660 million) distributed among clubs in the Europa League is still just a quarter of the 2 billion euro pot for the Champions League, but provides a significant financial boost, particularly with the coronavirus pandemic squeezing clubs' finances on matchday income.

Chelsea pocketed 46 million euros for winning the competition last season, whilst those dropping into the Europa League from the Champions League as Inter and Shakhtar did this season stand to win even more. — AFP

Pakistan's Rizwan shines on frustrating day against England

SOUTHAMPTON: Mohammad Rizwan was left frustrated when having shone for Pakistan with a fine unbeaten fifty in the second Test against England at Southampton on Friday, he was forced to leave the field for bad light.

Pakistan were 223-9 at stumps on the second day, with Rizwan 60 not out just as he started to up the tempo of his innings with only last man Naseem Shah for company. Even though the Ageas Bowl floodlights were on, the umpires took the players off the field 10 minutes after tea with bad weather, as it did on Thursday, causing several interruptions.

This was the latest example of bad light stopping play in a Test even when floodlights are in use. Whereas batsmen could once stay on even if 'offered' the light by the umpires, since 2010 the match officials alone decide to halt a Test should they deem the conditions too dark.

'READY TO PLAY'

"I was ready to play but the decision rests with the umpires, and they have the responsibility to ensure no one gets injured," Rizwan told reporters after marking Pakistan's Independence Day with a second fifty in eight career Tests following his 95 against Australia in Brisbane in November. "They have to go by the light meter. It's the same for both teams," added the wicketkeeper, who impressed behind the stumps during Pakistan's three-wicket defeat in last week's first Test at Old Trafford.

14 Yankees' Cole posts 20th straight win



15 Bo Horvat's overtime winner gives Canucks 2-0 lead in playoff series



15 Miami's Jones stretched off in NBA loss to Pacers



LISBON: Bayern Munich's Brazilian midfielder Philippe Coutinho (C) scores his team's eighth goal during the UEFA Champions League quarter-final football match between Barcelona and Bayern Munich at the Luz stadium in Lisbon. —AFP

Bayern humiliate Messi's Barcelona 8-2

End of an era as Barca humiliation makes revolution the only option

MADRID: Barcelona's worst ever defeat in Europe, an 8-2 mauling at the hands of Bayern Munich, will signal the end of Quique Setien as coach but it feels like the end of more than that. Setien may not even survive the weekend but the fact a second sacking in eight months would be the least of Barca's worries says it all.

"It's too soon to say if I will continue or not and it doesn't depend on me," said Setien. "The club needs changes," said Gerard Pique. "Nobody is untouchable, least of all me. Fresh blood is needed to change this. We've hit rock bottom."

Lionel Messi was supposed to win it alone, the Argentinian charged with somehow masking the failings of an entire club against the most formidable team in Europe. It was a desperate hope, swiftly dashed by a ruthless Bayern side, whose demolition exposed Barcelona's ageing team for what Messi has been saying all along: they are simply not good enough.

He said it in February and again in July, when a rant in the aftermath of handing Real Madrid the title turned into a brutal, but honest, assessment of their

season. Messi saw the fall coming but it was too late to do anything about it and the question now is whether he wants to be part of the process of recovery and renewal.

Most have assumed it would take something cataclysmic for Messi to leave but at an elite football club, what could be worse than this? This was more painful than the capitulations against Roma and Liverpool, when carelessness and fragility deprived Barcelona of a genuine chance to lift the Champions League trophy.

But they were shocks because Barca were contenders. This time, nobody expected them to beat Bayern. Many expected a thrashing but few could have predicted the severity of it. The humiliations started in the fourth minute and kept coming until the 89th.

They began even before kick-off when the starting line-ups were announced, with three Barca signings bought for more than 100 million euros each all sitting on the bench. One of them, Philippe Coutinho, was on Bayern's bench and he came on to score twice against his parent club, the first even seemingly with reluctance.

Doha in September. "It took a lot of mind setting to keep being motivated this year because so many people are staying at home, but you have to stay motivated."

The Ugandan added: "I pushed myself, I had the right staff with me, the right coach. I'm also usually based in Europe, but being based in Uganda with my family was actually great." Following exhibition events in Oslo and Zurich in June and July, the Diamond League meeting in Monaco marked the start of the competitive season.

Meetings in Eugene, London, Paris, Rabat, Gateshead and Shanghai have all cancelled because of coronavirus. Running in front of a reduced capacity of 5,000 masked spectators in line with COVID-19 restrictions, music blared out as World Athletics debuted a "bespoke atmosphere creation system" to enhance the experience for the athletes, the spectators and the broadcast audience in the absence of a full crowd.

Warholm showed no sign of coronavirus-induced rustiness as he led from gun to tape to clock a meet record of 47.10sec in the men's 400m hurdles, the first time he has run the event since he won his second world title in Doha. "It's a great start," said the Norwegian. "I'm happy to be back. It's great seeing some audience... competitors at my side."

BRAVE DECISIONS AWAIT

Messi, at 33, knows his end is near but he will choose when it comes. Others may not be so lucky, with Pique and Luis Suarez also 33 and Sergio Busquets and Jordi Alba 31.

All of them have played a part in Barca's golden era but that era feels a long time ago now and if this team is to regenerate, brave decisions will have to be made.

Frankie de Jong, Ansu Fati and Riqui Puig are the future, smothered this season by the failures of those ahead of them and perhaps ready to be trusted to lead.

If it's the end of an era for Barcelona, it is for Spain too. The national team may have long been overtaken but Messi kept Barca challenging while the Champions League became the kingdom of Real Madrid.

Not anymore, this the first year since 2007 that the semi-finals will be without a Spanish club, and the first since 2005 without either Messi or Cristiano Ronaldo.

Who will lead the Barca revolution remains to be seen, with Xavi Hernandez, Mauricio Pochettino and Ronald Koeman all sufficiently put off that they rejected the chance in January. Will

they be any keener now?

Barcelona will not have the money to make big additions, meaning they may have to look within.

But that would be a long-term project, which the club cannot guarantee either given their presidential elections are due in 2021. A new regime could well bring a new coach too.

A year might even feel like a long time for the current president Josep Maria Bartomeu, who would not rule out the elections being brought forward on Friday. "Today was a disaster," he said. "Some decisions we had already thought to take and others we will think about in the next few days."

Since 2014, his board have stumbled from blunder to blunder, all the while alienating the dressing room and driving this period of chaos and decline.

It began with Neymar leaving and never being replaced, the frantic attempts to bring him back then failing because the funds had been squandered elsewhere. And it ended with a public humiliation that Messi saw coming. It had been coming for a long time. —AFP

Cheptegei sets record, Lyles' raised fist protest

MONACO: Ugandan Joshua Cheptegei ensured a thrilling return for competitive athletics on Friday as he shattered the much-vaunted 16-year-old 5,000m world record at the Monaco Diamond League. Cheptegei's astonishing display capped a warm welcome back for track and field for a season almost wiped out by the coronavirus pandemic, with fellow world champions Noah Lyles and Karsten Warholm also shining on the track.

Lyles had worn a black glove on his right hand and raised his fist at the start of the 200m to show his support for recent anti-racism protests. In perfect conditions, with little wind and temperatures of 27 degrees Celsius (81F), Cheptegei clocked 12min 35.36sec to shatter Ethiopian legend Kenenisa Bekele's previous best of 12:37.35, set in 2004.

"I've tried to improve on my speed," smiled Cheptegei when asked what he had been working on since his world gold medal showing in the 10,000m in

LYLES RAISES BLACK-GLOVED FIST

World 200m champion Lyles also had no problems in his race, sweeping to a convincing victory in 19.76sec. Raising a black-gloved fist to the air when introduced to the crowd, the win was the perfect tonic for Lyles, who has admitted to psychological problems worsened by the "perfect storm" of the COVID-19 outbreak, the Black Lives Matter movement and the postponement of the Tokyo Olympics at which he was hotly tipped for success. "It's a lot better to be out here competing instead of being in your backyard," said Lyles. "I have high expectations for myself so I'd say the race got the Noah stamp of approval but not the Noah satisfaction stamp!"

A loaded women's 5,000m field witnessed a battle royale between Kenyan world champion Hellen Obiri and Ethiopian Letesenbet Gidey. After world 1,500m and 10,000m double gold medalist Sifan Hassan dropped out of the running, Gidey took up the fight, leading Obiri through the bell.

But the Kenyan responded magnificently, sprinting away for the win in a meet record of 14:22.12. Obiri's teammate and fellow world champion Timothy Cheruiyot also held off Norway's Jakob Ingebrigtsen for a thrilling win in the men's 1500m, taking the victory by 0.23sec in 3:28.45. American Donovan Brazier made no mistake in the men's 800m, bettering his world



MONACO: Uganda's Joshua Cheptegei, wearing an Uganda national flag on his shoulders, poses for pictures next to the timer screen after breaking the world record in the men's 5000metre event during the Diamond League Athletics Meeting at The Louis II Stadium in Monaco. —AFP

lead to 1:43.15. However, there was no such success for US compatriot and world 110m hurdles champion Grant Holloway, who could only finish fourth (13.19sec) in a race won by Cuban-born Spaniard Orlando Ortega (13.11). Earlier in the day, French pole vaulter Valentin Lavillenie was ruled out of competition after testing positive for COVID-19. —AFP