

3 Coronavirus crisis cost Kuwait govt KD 740 million: Lawmaker



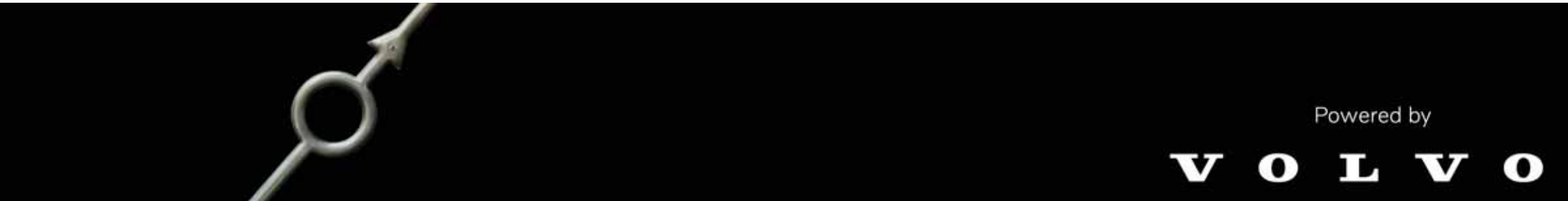
5 Beirut blast prompts new exodus from Lebanon



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Kushner: Kuwait taking ‘very radical’ pro-Palestinian view

Saudis urged to normalize ties with Israel • Oman, Israel discuss developments

More virus restrictions eased



KUWAIT: Salons and gyms reopened yesterday, while public buses were back on the streets as the country moved into the fourth phase of a return to normal life. Restaurants also began offering dine-in services and tailor shops reopened. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat (See Page 3)

JERUSALEM/DUBAI: The US is not pressuring Kuwait and other Gulf Arab states to establish diplomatic relations with Israel, senior White House adviser Jared Kushner said Monday. After US President Donald Trump announced last week that Israel and the United Arab Emirates had agreed to normalize ties, Kushner said he expected more Arab countries to follow suit.

But Kuwait, he said, was “out there taking a very radical view on the conflict to date in favor of the Palestinians and obviously that hasn’t been very constructive”. Following the accord with the UAE, Kuwait said it will be the last country to normalize relations with Israel, the Al-Qabas daily reported Sunday, citing Kuwaiti government sources.

“Countries will do things that are in their interest to do. Kuwait has a very spongy history with the Palestinians,” said Kushner, referring to Palestinian official support for Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait during the 1991 Gulf War, when more than 400,000 Palestinians in Kuwait were forced out of the country.

Eli Avidar, a former Israeli diplomatic emissary in the Gulf turned opposition lawmaker, invoked such a scenario for Palestinians in the UAE. “Emirati citizens are different to Israelis and Americans. They won’t forget,” he said in an Arabic speech. “Your brothers who reside in the UAE will be expelled due to your attitudes.”

More than 30 non-governmental organizations in Kuwait issued a joint statement Sunday condemning the agreement between the UAE and Israel. “We reject any kind of normalization with occupying

Israel. Normalization is a dagger stuck in the Palestinian cause and in the back of Arab society,” the NGOs, including the Kuwait Lawyers Association, Kuwait Media Association and Kuwait Economic Association, said in a joint statement.

The statement said the “occupying Zionist” country continues its violations against Palestinian brothers and sisters, adding the Palestinian cause is the priority of Arabs. The statement also emphasized that all kinds of rights of Palestinian people to resist the occupation are fully supported.

Kushner said it would be in Saudi Arabia’s interest to normalize ties with Israel as the UAE has agreed to do. It would also weaken their common foe Iran’s influence in the region and ultimately help the Palestinians, Kushner told reporters during the telephone briefing. “It would be very good for Saudi business, it would very good for Saudi’s defense, and, quite frankly, I think it would also help the Palestinian people,” Kushner said.

Saudi Arabia, the Arab world’s biggest economy, has been silent on Trump’s surprise announcement last Thursday that the UAE, a close US and Saudi ally, and Israel had decided to normalize relations. In return, Israel agreed to suspend the annexation of occupied West Bank territories, although Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the plan was not off the table in the long run.

“Israel has agreed with us that they will not move forward without our consent. We do not plan to give our consent for some time,” Kushner told reporters

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Hezb leadership ‘not involved’ in Hariri’s killing

LEIDSCHEMENDAM, Netherlands: There is no evidence that the leadership of the Iran-backed group Hezbollah, or the Syrian government, were involved in the 2005 bombing that killed former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Al-Hariri, a judge said yesterday. The Special Tribunal for Lebanon was reading the verdict in the trial of four Hezbollah members charged with conspiracy to kill

Hariri and 21 others.

“The trial chamber is of the view that Syria and Hezbollah may have had motives to eliminate Mr Hariri and his political allies, however there is no evidence that the Hezbollah leadership had any involvement in Mr Hariri’s murder and there is no direct evidence of Syrian involvement,” said Judge David Re, reading a summary of the court’s 2,600 page decision.

The four suspects are on trial in absentia at the court in the Netherlands over the suicide bombing in the Lebanese capital 15 years ago that killed billionaire Hariri and 21 other people. The judgment of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon was initially scheduled for Aug

7, but was postponed until Tuesday after a colossal fertilizer warehouse explosion in Beirut on Aug 4 that killed 177 people and deepened political tensions in the country.

Re called on the court to observe a “minute’s silence to remember the victims of this catastrophe, those who lost their lives, those who were maimed or injured, their families, those who were made homeless”. Hariri’s son Saad, himself a former Lebanese prime minister, was in the heavily-secured court for the reading out of the judgment, which was expected to take several hours.

Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah has refused to hand over the four defendants, and the case relies almost entirely on

mobile phone records with prosecutors allege prove the plot to kill Hariri. Salim Ayyash, 56, is accused of leading the team that carried out the bombing, which involved a truck packed full of explosives that detonated near Hariri’s motorcade. Assad Sabra, 43, and Hussein Oneissi, 46, allegedly sent a fake video to the Al-Jazeera news channel claiming responsibility on behalf of a made-up group. Hassan Habib Merhi, 54, is accused of general involvement in the plot.

The judgment harks back to an event that changed the face of the Middle East, with Hariri’s assassination triggering a wave of demonstrations that pushed Syrian forces out of Lebanon after 30 years.

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Rafiq Al-Hariri

Michelle Obama launches scathing attack on Trump

MILWAUKEE: US Democrats opened their nominating convention Monday with a show of unity behind Joe Biden and former first lady Michelle Obama delivering a scathing rebuke of Donald Trump as she urged voters to reject his politics of ‘division’. “Donald Trump is the wrong president for our country,” Barack Obama’s wife said in a keynote speech on the first night of a convention that has shifted entirely online due to the coronavirus pandemic.

“Whenever we look to this White House for some leadership, or consolation, or any semblance of steadiness, what we get instead is chaos, division and a total and utter lack of empathy.” The pre-taped remarks came as unprecedented criticism by a former first lady of a sitting US president, painting him as a man who lacks the competence, character or decency for the job. It was a potent message for voters who tuned in unsure of what to expect from a virtual convention that



LOS ANGELES: A person watches former First Lady Michelle Obama speak during the opening night of the Democratic National Convention on Monday. — AFP

lacked the show-stopping pizzazz and stagecraft of a live event.

With the Democratic Party poised to officially anoint the 77-year-old Biden as its nominee, Trump defied coronavirus concerns and staged a

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Temperature in Death Valley may be highest

WASHINGTON: A temperature of 54.4 degrees Celsius recorded in California’s Death Valley on Sunday by the US National Weather Service could be the hottest ever measured with modern instruments, officials say. The reading was registered at 3:41 pm at the Furnace Creek Visitor Center in the Death Valley national park by an automated observation system – an electronic thermometer encased inside a box in the shade.

In 1913, a weather station half an hour’s walk away recorded what officially remains the world record of 56.7 degrees Celsius. But its validity has been disputed for a number of reasons: Regional weather stations at the time didn’t report an exceptional heatwave, and there were questions around the researcher’s competence.

The next highest temperature was set in July 1931 in Kebili, Tunisia, at 55.0 degrees Celsius – but again, the accuracy of older instruments has been questioned. In 2016



DEATH VALLEY NATIONAL PARK, California: Visitors gather for a photo in front of an unofficial thermometer at Furnace Creek Visitor Center on Monday. — AFP

and 2017, weather stations in Mitribah, Kuwait and Turbat, Pakistan recorded temperatures of 54 degrees Celsius. After evaluation by the World Meteorological Organization, both were downgraded by a few fractions of a degree.

The Geneva-based World Meteorological Organization said Monday it would start

verifying the new US reading. “This observed high temperature is considered preliminary and not yet official,” said the US National Weather Service. Dan Berc, an official at the Las Vegas NWS office responsible for the site, told AFP that the sensor would be brought in for evaluation.

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Local

Coronavirus in Kuwait: What we know so far

KUWAIT: Kuwait has recorded 77,470 cases infected with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) as of yesterday, in addition to 505 deaths. With the exception of 101 cases in intensive care, all infected cases are in stable condition and are recovering in quarantined locations designated by the government for this purpose, while tens of thousands have been discharged from quarantine after exhibiting no symptoms during their 14-day quarantine period, the Ministry of Health confirmed. Meanwhile, 69,243 people have recovered completely after previously being infected with the virus, while there are 7,722 people receiving treatment.

Curfew

Kuwait moved to the fourth phase of a five-phase plan for a gradual return to normal life on August 18, 2020. Businesses allowed to resume include sports gyms and stadia, barbershops, beauty salons, health resorts and tailors. State departments and privately-owned establishments are allowed to have over 50 percent of their workforce in attendance. Meanwhile, customers are allowed to be seated at restaurants and cafes, and public transport is allowed to resume while committing to social distancing rules. The partial curfew, set in the third phase which started on June 28, 2020, remains from 9:00 pm to 3:00 am.

Commercial flights

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

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation presented a set of rules for the safe resumption of air travel. The new rules mandate all travelers to wear protective facemasks and keep a hand sanitizer in their possession, besides strictly abiding by social distancing guidelines and keeping hand luggage to a minimum. Departing passengers are required to register to the 'Kuwait Mosafer' app, and provide negative COVID-19 test results before boarding their flights to destinations where such tests are required. Citizens are also required to obtain travel insurance that covers COVID-19 treatment. Manual checks of tickets have now been scaled back as a result of the pandemic in favor of the more popular digital e-tickets, whose scanning requires no physical contact. Passengers must be present at the airport no less than four hours before departure to ensure a smooth and convenient journey.

Meanwhile, arriving passengers must register to the 'Shlonik' app before boarding, and obtain an accredited PCR certificate showing negative COVID-19 test results valid for 96 hours from the test's date. Passengers will have their temperatures checked

before boarding the plane and upon arrival, while a random PCR test will be conducted for 10 percent of passengers on each flight. All arriving passengers must home quarantine for 14 days upon arrival. Kuwait had earlier sent special flights to repatriate Kuwaitis back home from countries affected with the virus' spread. Meanwhile, the Cabinet announced on April 9 the operation of all airline flights for expats who are wishing to return back to their countries. Kuwait suspended issuing entry permits and visas unless those issued through diplomatic missions.

School year ended

The Ministry of Education announced on July 17 ending the 2019-2020 school year, with the remaining part of the curriculum of the year's second half will be integrated into the first chapter of the next academic year 2020-2021 virtually effective as of October 4, after modifying the curriculum. Pre-school pupils, students of elementary and intermediate levels will be promoted to the higher classes. As to the high school level, students who desire to improve their grades can re-enroll in the scholastic year. As to grade 12, the remaining period of the second semester of the 2019-2020 school year was set at six weeks, while curricula were amended in tandem with the complementary study period, due between August 9 and September 17, and that will be via electronic means. Students' assessment will be on weekly basis through interaction and virtual presence at the set educational website. The ministry is still expected to release regulations regarding the start of the 2020/2021 school year at foreign private schools. Earlier, the Ministry of Education had suspended classes at all public and private schools (for both students and teaching staffs); first from March 1 to March 12, and later extended it until March 29, before eventually suspending schools until August for grade 12 and October for other stages.

Hotlines

The Ministry of Health has set the following hotlines to receive inquiries about the coronavirus 24/7: 24970967 - 96049698 - 99048619. It also launched a medicine delivery service for people in Kuwait, which they can use to order medications to be delivered during curfew hours. The medications will be delivered within 72 hours after the order is submitted. To place an order, patients should send a WhatsApp to the numbers for the hospitals and medical centers as listed below. The patient should include their name, Civil ID number, hospital or clinic file number, mobile phone number and the medicine needed to the following numbers:

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

On the other hand, he said, a tropical storm off the coast of the Baja California Peninsula had left a deep plume of moisture over much of California, which has resulted in large thunderstorms and localized heat surges. "There was also a lot of convection in the mountains just west of Death Valley so there could have been some kind of effect downslope into Death Valley that really pushed up the temperatures," he added.

The southwestern United States is currently enduring an intense heat wave. Scientists say such waves are becoming more frequent and dangerous because of human-driven climate change. Worldwide, the five hottest years in history have occurred in the last five years. Under the 2015 Paris Agreement, nations committed to limit temperature rises to "well below" two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, mainly through sweeping emissions cuts.

These goals are seen as crucial to avoid triggering a series of tipping points that would cause irreversible global heating by the end of the century, making vast swaths of the planet inhospitable for life. Michael Mann, a climate science professor at Pennsylvania State University, said: "As the planet continues to warm, it is inevitable that we will continue to see records fall." If the new reading is confirmed, then "that record too shall fall soon enough", he added. — AFP

Iran, which most Gulf countries have accused of supporting militant groups in the region. "If you think about the people who don't want Saudi Arabia and Israel to make a peace agreement, the number one opponent for that is going to be Iran," said Kushner. "That shows that is probably the right thing to do." Last week, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said the UAE's decision to normalize ties with the Jewish state was a "big mistake" and warned "against opening the path of Israel to the region".

Oman's foreign minister spoke to his Israeli counterpart on Monday, Muscat said, the first contact since Israel normalized ties with the United Arab Emirates last week. Yusuf bin Alawi subsequently spoke with a top Palestinian official, Oman added. Bin Alawi and Israel's Gabi Ashkenazi spoke via telephone about "recent developments in the region," Oman's foreign ministry said on Twitter.

Muscat had already expressed its support for the deal, and bin Alawi told Ashkenazi that Oman "clearly reaffirms its position calling for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace" in the Middle East. Bin Alawi also called for a "resumption of the peace process in order to satisfy the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people who aspire to an independent state."

Also Monday, bin Alawi spoke with senior Fatah official Jibril Rajub, who expressed his "appreciation of the role of the sultanate and its balanced and wise policy towards Arab issues and, foremost, the Palestinian question," according to Oman's foreign ministry. The Palestinian Authority has voiced its "strong rejection and condemnation" of the Israeli-Emirati deal. — Agencies



Kuwait Cancer Control Center: 96735242
Psychiatric Hospital: 97350113
Physiotherapy Hospital: 99824037
Maternity Hospital: 98559531
As'ad Al-Hamad Dermatology Center: 98514508
Zain Hospital: 97552031
NBK Hospital: 96931761
Al-Rashed Allergy Hospital: 94162470
Infectious Diseases Hospital: 96989164
Palliative Care Hospital: 94024786
Sabah Al-Ahmad Urology Center: 90952469
KFH Addiction Treatment Center: 94169363

Meanwhile, all licensed pharmacies in Kuwait delivering medicine are allowed to continue their services 24 hours a day. The Ministry of Health is also asking doctors and nurses affiliated with the private medical sector to volunteer in order to contribute to the fight against the virus. Volunteering is available through the link: <http://volunteering.q8-ehealth.com>. The ministry had closed all private clinics and medical centers effective March 22, 2020 until further notice.

Mental health assistance

The Kuwait Center for Mental Health provides

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

Dr Rashed Al-Sahh: on Monday and Wednesday 10:00 am - 1:00 pm. Call 9797-6168.

Dr Fahad Al-Tasha: daily from 8:00 pm - 12:00 am. Call 9904-8258.

Dr Othman Al-Asfour: daily 5:00 pm - 8:00 pm. Call 9938-5350.

Dr Mohammed Al-Khalidi (head of this team): daily 9:00 am - 12:00 pm. Call 9903-6470.

Dr Ahmad Al-Khalidi: daily 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm. Call 9910-7965.

Dr Muneera Al-Qattan: Monday and Wednesday 9:00 am - 1:00 pm. Call 9953-3108.

Dr Zainab Al-Saffar: Sunday and Thursday 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm. Call 9954-9908.

Dr Sameera Al-Kandari: Tuesday 9:00 pm - 12:00 am. Call 6770-9434.

Dr Kawthar Al-Yaqout: Monday and Wednesday 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm. Call 5521-0088.

For information and other concerns, call 9401-4283.

Temperature in Death Valley...

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The investigation would take "at least a couple of months", he said, adding: "Growing up as a kid, I thought 130 degrees Fahrenheit was a really cool record."

Validation isn't a formality, and long-held records have been thrown out after modern evaluation. For decades, the heat record was officially the 58 degrees Celsius recorded in 1922 in El Azizia, now modern Libya. But a WMO panel that investigated it in detail between 2010 and 2012 stripped it of the title after finding multiple troubling aspects, including a potential problem with the thermometers and an inexperienced observer.

Weather historian Chris Burt, who conducted an analysis in 2016 that disputed the 1913 record, said the meteorological community was "on the fence" about whether the new record was real. "The suspicion about yesterday is that normally... all the stations are also reporting record high temperatures at the same time, and yesterday that wasn't the case," he told AFP. Las Vegas, for example, only recorded 45 degrees Celsius.

Kushner: Kuwait taking 'very...

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"Right now the focus has to be on, you know, getting this new peace agreement implemented. We really want to get as much interchange between Israel and the United Arab Emirates as possible and we want Israel to focus on creating new relationships and new alliances."

Saudi King Salman and his son, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, had repeatedly expressed their desire for an independent Palestinian state with economic opportunities, Kushner said. "What they basically said is that they ... want to see the Palestinian people have a state and economic opportunities," said Kushner, the architect of Trump's Middle East peace plan, which was wholly rejected by the Palestinians.

Home to Islam's holiest sites, Saudi Arabia would face sensitive political calculations before a formal recognition of the Jewish state. "It is in the interest of a lot of these countries from a security point of view and from an economic point of view to have relations with Israel," Kushner said. "A lot of GCC countries want to have breakthroughs. The more that countries come together like Israel and the UAE... the harder it will be for Iran to divide and conquer."

Saudi Arabia and Israel have a common enemy in

Michelle Obama launches scathing...

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competing event in Wisconsin, the state where Democrats were supposed to hold their in-person convention. The carefully choreographed opening for the four-day unifying gathering featured actress Eva Longoria as convention moderator. "Every four years we come together to reaffirm our democracy," she said. "This year we've come to save it."

Dozens of speakers, including a host of Republicans opposed to Trump, offered a similar message. In a poignant moment, everyday American Kristine Urquiza described how her father died from coronavirus after going out with friends when he believed the pandemic was not serious. "His only pre-existing condition was trusting Donald Trump, and for that he paid with his life," Urquiza said.

Obama also took pains to describe Biden as a "terrific vice president" she grew to know well during the eight years he served as her husband's number two. "He knows what it takes to rescue an economy, beat back a pandemic and lead our country," she added. Biden "will tell the truth, and trust science," she said in a jab at Trump, who has been accused of repeatedly ignoring the advice of his scientific advisors on how to respond to the pandemic.

Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders, who chal-

Hezb leadership 'not involved' in

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Billed as the world's first international tribunal set up to probe terrorist crimes, the UN Security Council agreed in 2007 to set up the court and it opened its doors in 2009, although the trial itself did not formally start until 2014. It has cost at least \$600 million to operate.

The four defendants face charges including the "intentional homicide" of Hariri and 21 others, attempted homicide of 226 people wounded in the bombing, and conspiracy to commit a terrorist act. "The attack was an act of terrorism that was designed to spread fear among the Lebanese population. It was committed for political and not personal reasons," judge Re said as he began reading out the judgment. "The successful attack was carefully planned and implemented."

Prosecutors said that in the months before the attack four networks of mobile phones - dubbed the yellow, red and blue networks - followed Hariri as he travelled around Lebanon. The judge said prosecu-

ledged Biden for the nomination from the progressive left, also addressed the convention by videolink, and warned that Trump is "leading us down the path of authoritarianism". "The future of our democracy is at stake," and electing Biden over Trump is an absolute necessity, he stressed. "My friends, the price of failure is just too great to imagine."

Trump flew on Air Force One meanwhile to Oshkosh, Wisconsin and delivered remarks to supporters gathered on the airport tarmac. He accused Biden and his running mate Kamala Harris of seeking to enact "crazy socialist policies" and warned the 2020 election will be "the most dangerous" ever. "The only way we're going to lose this election is if the election is rigged," added the president, who trails Biden in nearly all national polls as well as multiple battleground states.

The Democratic convention is taking place amid a furor over Trump's own efforts to limit mail-in voting. Insisting without proof that it fosters fraud, Trump has threatened to block extra funding that Democrats say is urgently needed to allow the US Postal Service to process millions of ballots. Obama addressed the controversy in her remarks, warning that Trump and Republicans were "lying about the security of our ballots".

Oshkosh, where Trump spoke, is about a 90-minute drive north of the Milwaukee arena where Democrats had intended to gather in a sign of eagerness to win back Wisconsin, one of multiple Democratic strongholds which flipped to Trump in 2016. But the coronavirus pandemic, which has killed some 170,000 people in the United States, upended election campaigning. — AFP

tors had presented a "vast quantity of evidence" including 269 prosecution witnesses. The four suspects face life imprisonment if convicted, although sentencing will be carried out at a later date. If the four are convicted and not present, the court will issue arrest warrants, a court spokesman said.

Both the prosecution and defense can appeal the judgment and sentence, while if a defendant is eventually arrested he can request a retrial. However Nasrallah last week warned the powerful movement would ignore the verdict by the court based in Leidschendam just outside The Hague, saying "we do not feel concerned by the STI's decisions". The alleged mastermind of the bombing, Hezbollah commander Mustafa Badreddine, was indicted by the court but is believed to have been killed in the Damascus area in May 2016.

Prosecutors said during the trial that Hariri was assassinated because he was perceived to be a "severe threat" to Syrian control of the country, allied to Saudi Arabia and the United States. Hariri was Lebanon's Sunni premier until his resignation in 2004 over Syria's role as power-broker in the country. Observers have voiced fears that the verdict, whichever way it goes, could spark violence on the streets in Lebanon when it is announced. — Agencies

Local

Coronavirus crisis cost Kuwait govt KD 740 million: Lawmaker

MP Adasani plans to grill finance minister for third time

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The coronavirus crisis has cost the government KD 740 million, including KD 240 million to support the wages of Kuwaitis in the private sector, head of the assembly budgets committee MP Adnan Abdulsamad said yesterday.

Abdulsamad said the assembly is expected to approve the 2020/2021 budget which has already started on April 1 following the government decision to reduce spending by at least 20 percent from the previous year's figure.

He said the draft law to stop deducting the 10 percent of revenues in favor of the future generations fund will support the state reserve fund. According to the draft law, expected to be approved by the assembly today, the deduction will be made only when the budget posts a surplus.

In the meantime, MP Riyadh Al-Adasani said yesterday he plans to file a third grilling against Finance Minister Barrak Al-Sheetan over his policies which he claims are against the people. Adasani said this time MP Rakan Al-Nasef will join him in the grilling. The first grilling ended after the debate and the second grilling ended with 10 MPs filing a no-confidence motion which the minister defeated comfortably.

He said on Twitter that the planned grilling

against the finance minister will focus on the minister's financial policy and the way he has been dealing with major and sensitive issues. He held him responsible for initiating an economic document stipulating a series of austerity measures and raises of public services' costs. The lawmaker also said



Premier's grilling submitted today

that his threat to file to grill His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah still stands and he will file the grilling later.

MP Abdulkarim Al-Kandari has already announced that he will file to grill His Highness the Prime Minister today over allegations that he was responsible for government plans to raise public charges and impose austerity measures affecting Kuwaiti citizens.



KUWAIT: The National Assembly's building in Kuwait City. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh



A man wearing a facemask reads health instructions at a gym yesterday.



People wearing masks and observing social distancing sit inside a public transportation bus yesterday.



Tables organized with at least a two-meter space between them inside a restaurant, following health guidelines to limit the spread of COVID-19. — Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh

Cabinet appeals to public to follow health measures

KUWAIT: The Cabinet called on the public to adhere to health measures, especially with the start of the fourth phase of the plan to return to normal life yesterday. The Cabinet made this appeal during its weekly meeting on Monday, during which Minister of Health Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah updated ministers on the public health

situation and the latest developments related to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), including the figures of recoveries, infections and deaths.

At the onset of the virtual meeting, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah briefed Cabinet members on the stable health condition of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, saying that it is improving. Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Anas Al-Saleh said after the meeting.

Furthermore, the Cabinet discussed recommendation of the Public Services' Committee regarding the periodic report submitted by the Public Authority for Housing Welfare on the

progress of work in light of the executive plan and the timetable for operating public services for the cities of Sabah Al-Ahmad and Al-Khairan residential cities.

It also reviewed recommendation of the Education, Health and Youth Committee on reports of the General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development regarding the follow-up to the construction plan of the Sabah Al-Salem University City project in Al-Shadadiya area. The Cabinet discussed the conclusion of the Finance Minister Barak Al-Sheetan grilling motion session, submitted by MP Riyadh Al-Adasani, held on August 12, 2020. The Minister of Finance

expressed appreciation for ministers and MPs for their confidence, which will be a great motive to serve the country and its citizens. On the other hand, the Cabinet listened to a detailed explanation from Minister of Interior Anas Al-Saleh on the merits of the grilling motion submitted by MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri, which was debated during the National Assembly's session yesterday. The Cabinet expressed its confidence in the Minister and his ability to clarify and refute the motion's contentions. Furthermore, it also discussed the grilling motion submitted by MPs Dr Ouda Al-Ruwaie and Dr Khalil Abul against the Minister of Education. — KUNA

News in brief

Companies penalized

KUWAIT: The department for combating money laundering and terrorism funding issued 91 penalties against companies that breached Law 106/2013 last month. The Ministry of Commerce and Industry said in a statement on Monday that the department personnel addressed written warnings to 16 really companies, 10 jewelry companies, a single insurance one, in addition to suspending two real-estate companies and a jewelry company. Up to 38 property companies, one money exchange agency, two insurance companies, 11 jewelry companies were compelled to abide by legal procedures.

More freedoms

KUWAIT: The National Assembly's educational committee discussed Monday a draft law to amend the audiovisual and press and publication laws, proposed to grant more public freedoms. The proposed amendments would eliminate jail term for offenders, except for the offense of insulting God, committee rapporteur MP Omar Al-Tabtabaei said in a statement published in Al-Anbaa daily yesterday.

Civil ID appointment

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) announced that citizens and residents can receive their civil IDs on weekdays from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm, by booking an appointment through its website www.paci.gov.kw.

Pandemic and environment

KUWAIT: The Environment Public Authority (EPA) participated yesterday in the first ministerial meeting concerning the COVID-19 pandemic and the environment in Bahrain, in line with the United Nations Environment Program in West Asia. "EPA is seeking to develop an action plan that includes specific procedures to make the recovery phase more sustainable and environmentally friendly," EPA Director General Sheikh Abdullah Ahmad Al-Hamoud Al-Sabah said before the meeting.

Stay safe. Stay home. Stay informed.

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Local

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Foreign minister receives calls

KUWAIT: Sheikh Dr Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, the foreign minister and acting minister of defense, received on Monday telephone calls from Geoffrey Jidefor Onyeama, Nigeria's Minister for Foreign Affairs, and Evarist Bartolo, the Minister of external and European affairs in the Republic of Malta. The phone calls addressed the close bilateral relations bonding Kuwait and the two friendly countries, means of boosting these ties and mutual cooperation for coping with repercussions of the COVID-19 crisis. Moreover, Sheikh Dr Nasser discussed with the two ministers regional, international topics and other issues of common concern. — KUNA

Kuwait condemns Houthi attacks

KUWAIT: The State of Kuwait on Monday strongly condemned Houthi militia for targeting civilians and civil regions in Saudi Arabia. An official source at the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed Kuwait's robust denunciation of the Houthi militia for targeting civilians and civil regions in the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The official source decried the militia's unleashing of ballistic missiles in violation of all international charters and covenants. These attacks pose a threat to security and stability of the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf region, the source added. The official source appealed to the international community to rapidly shoulder the responsibility and put an end to the targeting and threats to the security of the Kingdom and the Gulf. He further affirmed the State of Kuwait's full support for the "brothers in Saudi Arabia" and measures they may take to preserve their country's security and stability. — KUNA

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A Kuwaiti woman wearing a protective mask amid the COVID-19 pandemic feeds pigeons at a square in Kuwait City, on August 16, 2020. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Officials charged with embezzling KD 1 million

KUWAIT: The public prosecutor ordered detaining two managers working at the Public Authority for Housing Welfare over charges of embezzling KD 1 million from state funds and ordered summoning a third manager, who is in hiding, for involvement in the same case, Al-Rai reported yesterday. Informed sources said the public prosecution managed to reclaim KD 600,000 from the first and second suspects' bank accounts and ordered seizing the third suspect's bank accounts pending his arrest.

The three suspects are facing charges of money laundering, forgery and usurping public funds. Notably, Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Rana Al-Fares had referred the three managers to the public prosecutor with documents proving deposits of KD 1 million into their

bank accounts. The three suspects had been listing the names of citizens to receive rent allowances, which they collected and took for themselves without those citizens' knowledge after forging their signatures.

Meanwhile, well-informed sources told Kuwait local daily Al-Rai that the Ministry of Health has referred a health zone director to the public prosecution over suspicions of usurping public funds. The sources explained that the health zone director had exempted a company from paying an over KD 3 million in penalties for violating the provisions of its contract with the ministry.

Expats over 60

In other news, official sources at the Public Authority for Manpower explained the decision to ban issuance of work permits for expats aged 60 and above who hold high school degree or lower includes the transfer and renewal of work permits. The sources said according to official statistics, this category of expats number over 83,000 and they would have to leave the country when the decision goes into effect at the beginning of next year.

However, while the decision comes as part of the government's vision to resolve demographic imbal-

ances and their impact on the local labor market, many expats argue that the decision will have security, social and cultural impacts as it would increase the number of "bachelors" in Kuwait and deprive families of the presence of a senior member to tend to family matters and concerns. A number of expats expressed fears that the decision would break their families apart and force their children to leave the country, as they hold dependent visas sponsored by them.

Separately, Al-Rai reported that the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs is currently investigating several complaints filed by citizens concerning an imam in one of the Capital governorate mosques. The ministry's assistant undersecretary for mosques Mohammed Al-Mutairi said according to the complaints, the imam claimed that doomsday will be in 2024. He added the complaints were referred to relevant authorities.

Mutairi pointed out that the complaints mentioned that the imam had been terrifying worshippers by his sermons. "You will hear a deafening cry - when you do, kneel down and pray," the complaints claimed the imam told worshippers, adding that he had delivered many controversial sermons and demanded relieving him from his post.

Al-Sayer joins volunteers for beach cleaning

KUWAIT: As part of its corporate social responsibility to address environment preservation and protection as a key priority, Al-Sayer volunteering team 'Al-Sayer Always With You' conducted a beach cleaning campaign in cooperation with the Kuwaiti Support and Rescue Team, a non-profit organization who actively imprinted their role of community services across Kuwait at Anjafa beach.

More than two hundred volunteers including Al-Sayer volunteers, Kuwaiti Support and Rescue Team, Kuwait Municipality, and other leading Kuwait volunteering members participated to dedicate their efforts for a beautiful and safe Kuwait. All volunteers were committed with the COVID-19 protocols by wearing safety and prevention gears and managed social distancing while spreading awareness on the strong need of social actions against pollution of marine habitats.

It is highly important for us to create awareness and people's engagement to protect Kuwait's 325 plus kilometer long naturally habited coastline from solid and liquid manmade waste. It is a collaborative approach by government, society and organizations to join hands for pristine and clean beaches without hazardous trash and litters.

The event was attended by the Author - Iman Al-Khabbaz, Muhammad Al-Jabaa - Director of the Hawalli Cleaning Department of Kuwait Municipality, Khaled Al-Habban - Director of the People of Kuwait Account to support the volunteer teams in the media, the journalists Jassim Al-Shammari, and Nehad Al-Haj Ali General Manager Al-Sayer Corporate Excellence.

The campaign 'SeaNoMask' carried a message to the society on the impact of COVID-19 on the environment especially to our sea and beaches. To alarm the community to properly dispose face masks, gloves and other protective gears along with plastic trash which is scattered across after an outing. Large quantity of such hazardous waste is dumped at the beachside or the sea, where marine life can mistake them for food and led for many death cases worldwide yearly; a dangerous cycle for environment and for human life.


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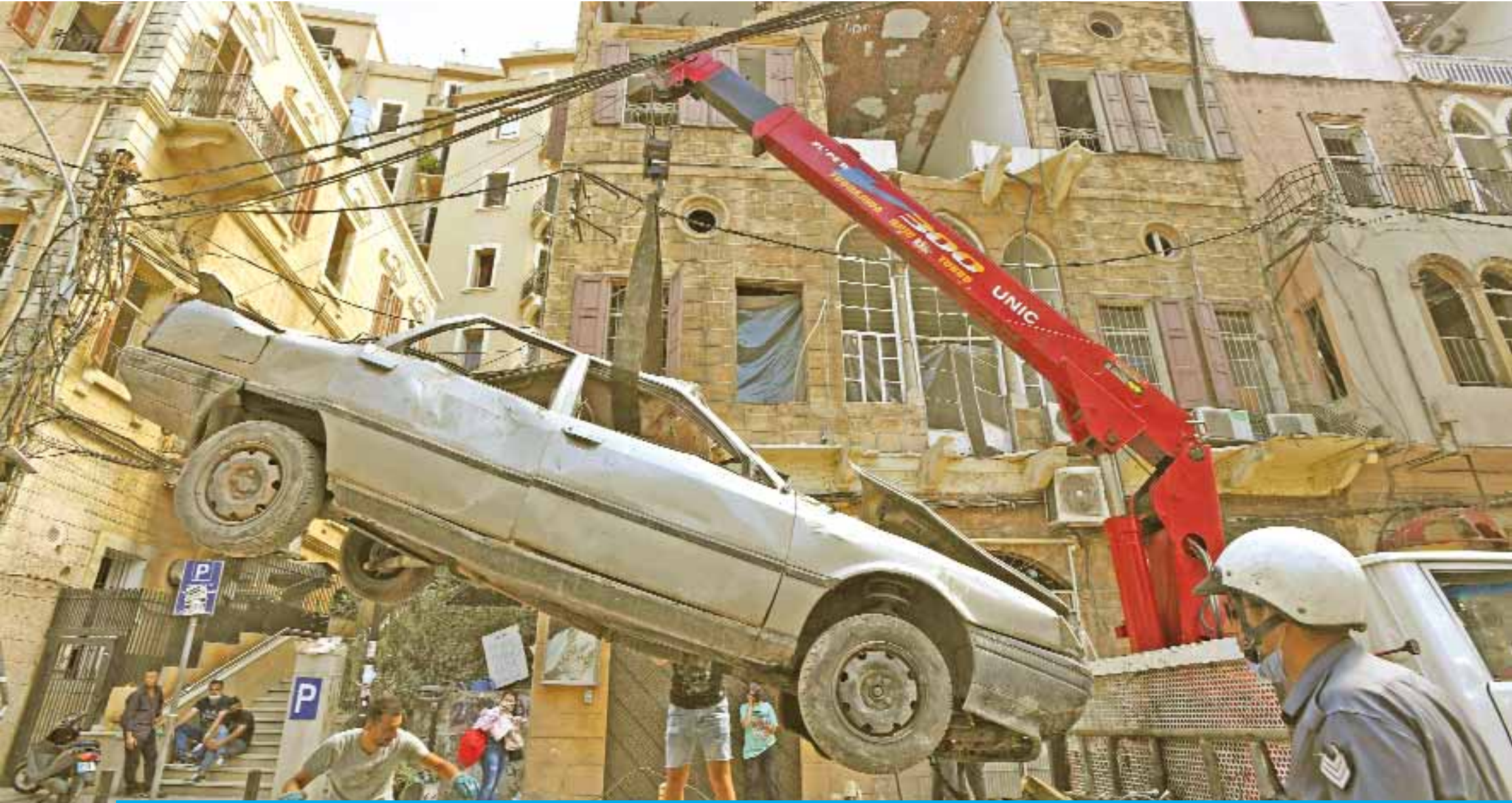
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Former Spanish king Carlos in exile in UAE

Quake hits central Philippines, leaving 1 dead, dozens injured



BEIRUT: The wreckage of a car is removed from Beirut's Gemmayzeh neighborhood, following a cataclysmic explosion that ripped through large parts of Lebanon's capital. — AFP

Beirut blast prompts new exodus

‘I do not feel safe here anymore’

BEIRUT: From his office in Beirut, Shady Rizk had a front-row view of the cataclysmic explosion at the Lebanese capital's port. Some 350 stitches later, he sees his survival as a miracle, a second chance at life that he is determined not to spend in Lebanon. The 36-year-old telecommunications engineer is one of many Lebanese who was already fed up with a prolonged economic crisis and moribund public services before the blast brought Beirut to its knees.

The August 4 explosion was caused by hazardous material left unsecured at the port for years, despite warnings over its danger, a fact that further enraged Lebanese who already saw the political class as incompetent and corrupt. The blast was one catastrophe too many for some-they now see no choice but to leave. “I do not feel safe here anymore,” Rizk said. “God gave me another life, a second chance, I don’t want to live it here.” Less than two weeks after the explosion that left his whole body flayed by flying glass, he said he is planning to move to Canada, where he hopes to make a new start with the help of relatives there. “Anywhere really, just not here. I’ve lost all hope,” he said.

‘Physical security’

Lebanon’s story has long been one of exodus. In a country hit by famines, economic crises and a 15-year civil war, no family is without at least one relative who has left for the Gulf, Europe or the Americas, adding to a diaspora estimated at nearly three times the size of Lebanon’s population of around four million. In recent months, as Lebanon has sunk deeper into its worst economic crisis since

the civil war, thousands of Lebanese have again bought one-way tickets out of the country, seeking work abroad to escape mass layoffs and wage cuts.

Their departures come as disillusionment spreads after an unprecedented protest movement sparked in October 2019 elicited hope for change,



Lebanon sinking deeper into crisis

but ultimately lost steam. Canada, one of the top immigration destinations for Lebanese, said on August 13 it was setting up a task force that will ensure “questions related to immigration can be quickly addressed”.

A few minutes after the explosion, a shocked Walid called his ex-wife in Paris to say their two children must leave Lebanon to join her. “She tried to calm me down. I said, ‘take them, take them,’” the doctor in his 40s said, his voice tight with emotion. “As a father, I have to put them in a situation where they will not be traumatized, or risk their lives.” Walid was at home with one of his two 17-year-old sons when he heard the rumbling that preceded the massive explosion, which sent a powerful shock-

wave across the city.

The childhood reflexes of someone who grew up during the 1975-1990 civil war kicked in and Walid pulled his son with him into the bathroom to shield him from the explosion, as his own father had done when he was young. “The fear I saw on (my son’s) face... it went right through me,” he said. Walid, who went to university in Canada and Paris, had planned to send his twins to France for their studies. The explosion has accelerated their departure. “I would have liked to not make this decision in a hurry,” he said.

‘Country without a state’

Like many Lebanese, he is furious at the government, which has acknowledged that 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate was left to rot in the heart of Beirut “without precautionary measures”. “It’s not unexpected, we live in a country that has not had a state for 40 years,” Walid said. Heiko Wimmen of the International Crisis Group also expects to see many departures abroad among Lebanon’s largely highly educated and multilingual middle class.

“It’s a very bleak and very realistic assessment,” he said. “People have education and degrees but, more importantly even than that, people have networks,” he added, noting that a large number of Lebanese have multiple passports and relatives abroad. “The country may very well lose a generation it needs to rebuild and to achieve the political change that is necessary,” he said. Sharbel Hasbany, a 29-year-old makeup artist, is now also determined to leave Lebanon, having resisted his mother’s pleas



QARTABA, Lebanon: Relatives react during the funeral of firefighters Charbel Hitti, Najib Hitti, and Charbel Karam in their hometown of Qartaba, north of the Lebanese capital Beirut. Three firefighters, all relatives, left together in one firetruck to douse a port blaze believed to have sparked the August 4 mega-blast in Beirut and never returned home. — AFP

to do so for years. He said he may need to ask for financial help from friends and family to emigrate through online crowdfunding, as his work dried up in the economic crisis and his savings are stuck in the banking system that has blocked dollar withdrawals. On the day of the explosion, he was in the hard-hit Gemmayzeh district-walking away with 64 stitches. He listed the names of the bars and restaurants he and his friends used to frequent in the popular nightlife areas just a stone’s throw from the port. “We were there all the time, not knowing we were sitting on a bomb.” — AFP

Post-blast Lebanon hospitals nearly at COVID-19 capacity

BEIRUT: Lebanon’s health minister warned Monday that hospitals are reaching maximum capacity to treat novel coronavirus patients after the deadly Beirut blast overwhelmed clinics and triggered a spike in COVID-19 cases. “Public and private hospitals in the capital in particular have a very limited capacity, whether in terms of beds in intensive care units or respirators,” the minister, Hamad Hassan, told a press conference. “We are on the brink, we don’t have the luxury to take our time,” he warned, urging authorities to take the “hard decision” to impose a new two-week lockdown to stem the spread of the virus.

Lebanon has seen a spike in coronavirus-related cases and deaths in recent weeks, and they have hit new records in the aftermath of the massive explosion that ripped through large parts of Beirut on August 4. The disaster killed 177 people and wounded more than 6,500, many hit by falling debris and flying glass as windows shattered. That sparked panic in the capital’s already pandemic-stricken hospitals.

Lebanon reported a one-day record of 456 new infections on Monday, bringing the total number of infections to 9,337, including 105 deaths since the start of the outbreak in February. A previously planned lockdown was scrapped in the wake of the explosion, which flattened neighborhoods near the port and left thousands homeless. “In the capital, the intensive care units and the departments set up for the coronavirus in public hospitals are full,” the minis-

ter told Voice of Lebanon radio. “In most private hospitals that receive coronavirus patients, intensive care unit beds are (already) occupied” by COVID-19 patients, he added.

‘Out of service’

The minister said the situation was exacerbated after several Beirut hospitals were hit by the colossal port explosion and left “out of service”. The World Health Organization on August 12 said more than half of 55 health-care facilities evaluated by the agency were “non-functional”, three major hospitals were out of operation and another three were running at well below normal capacity. The minister said chaos in Beirut after the blast, Lebanon’s worst peacetime disaster, made it difficult to enforce compliance with pandemic precautionary and preventive measures. “Our ability to control behavior in the face of the virus is more limited,” the minister said. He cited “families going to hospitals to look for the wounded or missing,” but also the mobilization of healthcare workers and citizens to seek or provide aid after the blast. The explosion was caused by a fire in a warehouse where, according to authorities, a huge amount of ammonium nitrate had been stored for years. A judge leading investigations into the blast issued a preliminary arrest warrant Monday against customs director-general Badri Daher, a judicial source told AFP.

Since the explosion, thousands of volunteers have helped clean up rubble-strewn streets and distribute aid, while protesters have taken to the streets against a government widely blamed for the negligence that led to the disaster. Health officials have warned that the chaos following the blast risked creating a further spike in infections. The head of a major public hospital, Firass Abiad, has cautioned that, as attention has shifted away from the pandemic after the explosion disaster, “we cannot afford to allow the virus to go unchecked”. — AFP

Ex-CIA and FBI officer ‘sold secrets’ to China

WASHINGTON: A former officer for the CIA and then the FBI was charged in federal court in Hawaii Monday with selling US secrets to China, including disclosing the identities of US informants in China. Andrew Yuk Ching Ma was tricked into admitting his activities last year by a US undercover agent who, posing as a Chinese intelligence officer, told Ma he had been underpaid for at least a decade of work, according to an indictment. He continued to meet with the undercover agent, accepting money and offering secrets until this month, when he said he was happy to keep working for Beijing but “would prefer to discuss opportunities after the COVID-19 pandemic has subsided,” the indictment said.

The Justice Department said Ma was arrested on August 14, but only unsealed the indictment on Monday. Ma, 67, a naturalized US citizen born in Hong Kong, worked for the Central Intelligence Agency with a high-level security clearance from 1982 to 1989. He had a relative, unnamed

and uncharged in the indictment due to his age, 85, and advanced cognitive disease, who also worked for the agency from 1967 to 1983.

The indictment says that at least as early as 2001, the two were already providing information to agents of Beijing’s Ministry of State Security. The indictment says FBI investigators gained video and audio recordings of their meetings with MSS agents in Hong Kong in March 2001 — though it does not explain how and when they obtained such evidence. At those meetings they provided details of CIA communications, field operations and informants, and the video shows them receiving \$50,000.

After them Ma applied for a position at the FBI in Hawaii that gave him access to classified information that, over the following decade at least, he downloaded and photographed documents to turn over to his Chinese handlers. He and his relative were also asked to identify from pictures possible US agents and informants in China during this period, according to the charges. The indictment gives no hint of what Ma may have done after 2010 or when US counterintelligence investigators first became suspicious of him before 2019.

The case though is the latest of several brought against US government employees who sold secrets to China. — AFP

International

In symbolic first, Israeli pilots train in Germany

Combat pilots honor Holocaust victims with a symbolic flyover

FRANKFURT AM MAIN: Israeli combat pilots and their German counterparts yesterday honored Holocaust victims with a symbolic flyover of Dachau concentration camp, as they carry out their first joint military exercises in Germany. A formation of fighter aircraft, including Israeli Air Force F-16s and Eurofighter jets from the German Luftwaffe, will also overfly the nearby Fuerstenfeldbruck airbase to commemorate the massacre at the 1972 Munich Olympics that left 11 Israelis dead.

The aerial tributes will be the highlight of two weeks of maneuvers that will see Israeli air forces train on German soil for the first time. Because of the coronavirus pandemic, it is the only training mission the Israeli Air Force (IAF) is conducting abroad this year. Luftwaffe chief Ingo Gerhartz in a statement called the joint exercise “a sign of our friendship today”. He said it was also a reminder that Germany has an enduring responsibility “to fight anti-Semitism with the utmost consistency”

because of its Nazi past.

‘Very moving’

The IAF said the mission, which runs until August 28, will give its pilots a chance to practice in unfamiliar surroundings and will include simulated dogfights, air-to-ground battles and missile threats. Israeli pilots will also take part in aerial manoeuvres with Germany and other NATO members during the deployment. Germany and Israel have stepped up their military cooperation in recent years, with the Luftwaffe taking part in joint exercises in the Israeli Negev desert in 2019. But the landmark Israeli visit to Germany is heavy with history.

Yesterday’s commemorations started with a joint

fly-past over the Fuerstenfeldbruck airbase outside Munich where nine members of the 1972 Israeli Olympic team were killed in a shootout after being taken hostage by Palestinian militants. The gunmen

had earlier already shot dead an Israeli coach and athlete at the Olympic Village. They were murdered “by a common enemy of Israel and Germany: terror”, an Israeli air force officer who asked to be identified only as “Major T” said. The German and Israeli jets will then continue on to nearby Dachau where they

will fly low over the Nazi death camp that was built in 1933 and served as a model for other concentration camps.

More than 40,000 Jews were killed at Dachau during World War II. It will be “a very moving event

First joint military exercises



Belarus engulfed in 9th night of protests; Lukashenko heckled

MINSK: Demonstrators descended on the Belarusian capital on Monday for a ninth night of protests against strongman leader Alexander Lukashenko, who was heckled by factory workers as pressure grows on him to step down. Several thousand protesters gathered at Independence Square in central Minsk, waving the red-and-white flag of the opposition, chanting “Leave” and calling on the ex-Soviet country’s authoritarian leader to resign.

Demonstrators also marched to detention centers demanding the release of opposition leaders and protesters arrested during rallies against the results of a presidential election on August 9 that Lukashenko claims to have won with 80 percent of the vote. Employees at several factories and state television earlier walked off the job after the biggest opposition rallies in Lukashenko’s 26 years in power on Sunday.

More than 100,000 people took part in a “March for Freedom” following calls for continued demonstrations from Svetlana Tikhonovskaya, a political novice who stood against Lukashenko on August 9 and claims she won the election. While European Union leaders are to hold an emergency video summit on Belarus on Wednesday, President Donald Trump said the United States was following events “very closely”, describing it as a “terrible situation”. However, Russia, the most powerful ally of Lukashenko, has said it is ready to step in if necessary.

A police crackdown that has seen thousands arrested and widespread allegations of brutality appears to have turned even Lukashenko’s support base at state-owned industries against him. In footage widely shared on social media, workers at the Minsk



SALYHORSK: Belarus miners and other protesters attend an opposition rally in Salyhorsk some 150 km south of Minsk after incumbent president rejected calls to step down in a defiant speech. — AFP

Wheel Tractor Plant (MZKT) interrupted Lukashenko with shouts of “Leave!” as he tried to give a speech on Monday. An angry Lukashenko, who had earlier told the workers he would not give in to calls for new elections, walked off the stage, saying: “Thank you, I have said everything. You can shout ‘Leave’.”

In a video recording of the speech, Lukashenko can be heard saying: “Until you kill me, there will be no elections.”

Yet later he suggested that he may be willing to hand over power following a referendum on the constitution. “You should get it approved in a referendum and then, using that new constitution, if

you want, hold both parliamentary or presidential elections,” he said. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) on Monday voiced its “concerns about the conduct” of the Belarus election... and the disproportionate use of force against peaceful protesters, widespread detentions and alleged torture and mistreatment by the security forces.”

The OSCE said in a statement it made “a formal offer” to the Belarus government to facilitate dialogue between both sides. “An open and constructive dialogue is needed to find a way forward in Belarus,” the statement said. —AFP



ABU DHABI: In this file photo, Spain’s King Juan Carlos (center) is welcomed by State Minister and chief executive officer of the Abu Dhabi Future Energy Company (Masdar), Sultan Ahmed Al-Jaber upon his arrival at the Emirates Palace hotel in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. — AFP

Former Spanish king Carlos in exile in UAE

MADRID: Spain’s former king Juan Carlos, who went into exile this month in the face of graft allegations, is in the United Arab Emirates, the royal palace said Monday, ending the mystery over his whereabouts. The 82-year-old, who has long had warm relations with the Gulf monarchies, “travelled to the United Arab Emirates on August 3 and he remains there,” a spokesman said without giving further details.

In a surprise move, Juan Carlos announced on August 3 that he was leaving Spain to prevent his personal affairs from undermining his son King Felipe VI’s reign, but did not say where he would be going. The royal palace had up until now refused to reveal where Juan Carlos is living, saying he would announce it himself if necessary.

It was first reported that he had travelled to the Dominican Republic or Portugal, where he spent part of his youth, but pro-monarchy Spanish daily ABC later said the former king had gone to Abu Dhabi, the capital of the UAE. While Juan Carlos is not under formal investigation, revelations by a former mistress,

German businesswoman Corinna Larsen, raise legal questions about his financial affairs which officials are looking into in Spain and Switzerland.

The daily Tribune de Geneve has reported that a Swiss prosecutor is focusing on \$100 million (85 million euros) which that late Saudi king Abdullah allegedly deposited in 2008 into a Swiss bank account to which Juan Carlos had access. In conversations which were apparently recorded without her knowledge that were leaked to the media, Larsen claimed Juan Carlos had collected a payoff relating to a 2011 high-speed rail contract in Saudi Arabia that was awarded to a consortium of Spanish firms. The 450-kilometre (280-mile) link between Mecca and Medina was inaugurated in 2018.

Spain’s Supreme Court in June announced an investigation to determine whether the contract had involved the “crime of corruption in international transactions” and whether Juan Carlos was legally responsible-but only for acts committed after his abdication in 2014, because of the immunity he enjoyed until then. —AFP

Pandemic now driven by 20s, 30s, 40s group, many asymptomatic

MANILA: The World Health Organization said yesterday it was concerned that the novel coronavirus spread was being driven by people in their 20s, 30s and 40s, many of which were unaware they were infected, posing a danger to vulnerable groups. WHO officials said this month the proportion of younger people among those infected had risen globally, putting at risk vulnerable sectors of the population worldwide, including the elderly and sick people in densely populated areas with weak health services.

“The epidemic is changing,” WHO Western Pacific regional director, Takeshi Kasai, told a virtual briefing. “People in their 20s, 30s and 40s are increasingly driving the spread. Many are unaware they are infected.” “This increases the risk of spillovers to the more vulnerable,” he added. A surge in new cases has prompted some countries to re-impose curbs as companies race to find a vaccine for a virus that has battered economies, killed more than 770,000 people and infected nearly 22 million, according to a Reuters tally.

Surges were reported in countries that had appeared to have the virus under control, including Vietnam, which until recently went three months without domestic transmission due to its aggressive mitigation efforts. “What we are observing is not simply a resurgence. We believe it’s a signal that we have entered a new phase of pandemic in the Asia-Pacific,” Kasai said. He said countries were better able to reduce disruption to lives and economies by combining early detection and response to manage infections.

While mutations had been observed, the WHO still saw the virus as “relatively stable”, Kasai said. WHO also reminded drugmakers to follow all necessary research and development steps when creating a vaccine. Socorro Escalante, its technical officer and medicines policy advisor, said the WHO was coordinating with Russia, which this month became the first country to grant regulatory approval for a COVID-19 vaccine. “We hope to get the response in terms of the evidence of this new vaccine,” Escalante said. — Reuters



MEDELLIN: Cemetery workers bury the coffin of a woman who allegedly died from COVID-19 at a cemetery in Medellin, Colombia. — AFP

News in brief

Eleven shot dead in PNG

PORT MORESBY: Eleven prisoners have been shot dead following a mass jailbreak in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and 36 others remain on the run, authorities said yesterday. The detainees escaped from Buimo prison in the Pacific nation’s second-biggest city Lae after rushing a gate when a sick prisoner was being moved for medical treatment. The group overwhelmed a duty officer and attacked him with a knife before running from the prison compound. Correctional Service Commissioner Stephen Pokanis said 11 prisoners were shot dead by guards and police during attempts to apprehend the group. “We have updated our statistics, actually there are 47 prisoners (involved) - 11 dead and are at the Lae morgue, and 36 still at large,” he said yesterday. It is at least the fourth mass prison break in Papua New Guinea this year. — AFP

Knife-wielding man shot

JERUSALEM: A knife-wielding man wounded an Israeli policeman in the Old City of Jerusalem and was shot dead by an officer on Monday, a police spokesman said. The slain man’s identity was not immediately clear, the spokesman said. The Old City and other parts of East Jerusalem, which Palestinians want for a future state, have seen sporadic Palestinian street attacks on Israelis since US-sponsored peace talks broke down in 2014. Video footage circulated on social media, and which Reuters could not immediately verify, showed a man who appeared to be in his 20s or 30s wearing a surgical mask and lying motionless in an alley as an Israeli policeman pointed a pistol at him. — Reuters

US hits Uganda adoption ring

WASHINGTON: The US government filed criminal charges and economic sanctions Monday against an adoption ring that placed Ugandan children who were not orphans with families in the United States. The US Justice department filed multiple fraud and money laundering charges against two Americans, Margaret Cole and Debra Parris, and a Ugandan lawyer, Dorah Mirembe, for conspiring to corruptly procure the children and transfer them to American adoptive parents, making hundreds of thousands of dollars in the process. Mirembe’s law firm allegedly “manipulated” the parents of “vulnerable families” in the Ugandan countryside to give up their children, claiming the children would be moved to Kamapala to be educated by missionaries, according to the allegations. —AFP

Nigeria to resume flights

LAGOS: Nigeria will resume international flights on August 29 as it eases restrictions over the novel coronavirus pandemic, the country’s aviation minister said Monday. Africa’s most populous country shut its airspace in March to contain the spread of the virus that has so far infected 49,068 and claimed 975 lives. “Glad to announce the resumption of international flights from August 29, 2020, beginning with Lagos and Abuja as we did with the domestic flight resumption,” Hadi Sirika said on Twitter, referring to the nation’s commercial hub and its administrative capital. “Protocols and procedures will be announced in due course,” he said, adding that the country’s other international airports would follow suit. The decision came barely six weeks after the West African economic powerhouse resumed domestic flights. — AFP

International

Quake hits central Philippines, leaving 1 dead, dozens injured

Residents flee; homes, buildings and roads damaged

CATAINGAN: At least one person was killed and 43 injured when a 6.6-magnitude earthquake shook the central Philippines yesterday, sending residents fleeing their homes and damaging buildings and roads. The shallow quake struck southeast of Masbate Island in the Bicol region at 8:03 am, the US Geological Survey said. "There are a lot of damaged houses," said Staff Sergeant Antonio Clemente in Cataingan, a town of about 50,000 people on the impoverished island several kilometers west of the epicentre in the Samar Sea. "It was really strong."



At least 24 aftershocks recorded

Local radio station reporter Christopher Decamon said he saw emergency workers pull the body of a man from the rubble of a three-storey house on the outskirts of Cataingan. The man's wife escaped unharmed. The earthquake "was really strong. Our people were broadcasting at the time but they just ran out of the building," Decamon told AFP by telephone. Police confirmed the man's death. Sixteen people were also injured in the town.

In nearby Palanas, at least 27 people were injured after being hit by falling objects or when their motorbikes crashed as the ground moved in the town, Chris Adique, a municipal disaster officer, told DZBB radio. None were in a critical condition, he added. Search and rescue efforts were still under way in the region. The quake struck as the archipelago battles surging numbers of coronavirus infections, with more than

164,000 cases and restrictions on movement that vary across the country. A lockdown affecting a quarter of the population, including the capital Manila, will be eased Wednesday.

"These natural disasters are a part of our lives and we always recover," said Harry Roque, spokesman for President Rodrigo Duterte. "People should not worry about getting relief assistance. They will be provided." Palanas police chief Captain Alvin Guerina told AFP that several patients, including a pregnant woman about to go into labor, were evacuated from a hospital as a precaution in case of aftershocks. So far, at least 24 aftershocks have been recorded by the Philippine seismology office, with the strongest registering at 3.8 magnitude.

'Dizzying'

A video posted on Facebook and verified by AFP showed light damage to a food market in Cataingan. Overturned buckets and small fish were scattered on the ground and chunks of cement had fallen from a pillar. People stood outside on the street. Philippine Red Cross chairman Richard Gordon tweeted photos taken by his colleagues showing buildings in Cataingan with corrugated iron roofs fallen in. Other photos taken in nearby Uson town show a sealed road with a large crack across it. The quake was felt hundreds of kilometers away.

In the city of Iloilo about 400 kilometers south-



CATAINGAN: Photo shows residents walking past debris on the ground after a 6.7-magnitude earthquake hit near the town of Cataingan in the central Philippine province of Masbate province. — AFP

west of Masbate in the neighboring Visayas region, residents ran out onto the streets. "It was strong, dizzying," police Colonel Eric Dampal said. "Almost everyone inside buildings rushed to the streets." The Philippines is situated on the Pacific "Ring of Fire", an arc of intense seismic activity that stretches from

Japan through Southeast Asia and across the Pacific basin. A 6.8-magnitude quake struck the southern island of Mindanao in December, killing at least three people, injuring dozens and damaging buildings. It hit as the island was still recovering from a string of deadly quakes in October.— AFP

Huawei's Meng seeks classified documents in extradition fight

VANCOUVER: Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou's lawyers went to court on Monday to press for the release of classified documents related to her arrest that they claim will show her rights were violated. Meng, the Chinese telecom giant's chief financial officer, was arrested on a US warrant in December 2018 during a stopover in Vancouver. She is charged with bank fraud related to violations of US sanctions against Iran, and has been fighting extradition ever since.

Appearing by teleconference at the British Columbia Supreme Court, defense lawyers said the Crown must not be allowed to shield authorities' misconduct by blocking the release of key documents. They pointed to "inconsistencies" in the reasons given by the attorney general for redacting or withholding them. Defense lawyer Mona Duckett said the documents in

question contain "important information that ought to have been provided at the get-go."

Instead, she said, the Crown has continually changed its justifications for keeping them secret. Canadian government lawyer John Gibb-Carsley retorted that all relevant documents were given to the defense. "The Attorney General of Canada cast the net very wide to capture all documents," said Gibb-Carsley.

Meng's defense team alleges that the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) conspired with Canadian authorities to collect evidence and interrogate her, in violation of her rights. Specifically, they point to her detention and questioning without a lawyer over the three hours after she disembarked a flight from Hong Kong, but before she was charged, as well as the illegal seizure of her electronic devices. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), the defense says, noted the serial numbers and technical specifications of her smartphones, tablet and laptop computer and improperly gave these details to the FBI. Most of the almost 400 documents sought concern communications between Canadian and US agencies prior to and after Meng's arrest.

The court previously ordered the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) to hand over a stash of files



VANCOUVER: In this file photo Huawei Chief Financial Officer, Meng Wanzhou, leaves British Columbia Supreme Court, after hearing the decision of Associate Chief Justice Heather Holmes on her double-criminality judgment in Vancouver.— AFP

to the defense, but they were mostly blacked out. The defense wants those redactions lifted. Meng's legal team is expected to argue that the extradition proceedings should be stayed as a result of the alleged abuse of process.—AFP

News in brief

Israeli planes bomb Gaza

GAZA CITY: Israeli warplanes pounded Hamas-ruled Gaza yesterday in response to Palestinian fire balloon attacks across the border, the Israeli army said. The strikes came as visiting Egyptian security officials strove to defuse the latest uptick in violence, a Hamas source said. "Fighter jets and (other) aircraft struck underground infrastructures belonging to the Hamas terror organization in the Gaza Strip," an Israeli military statement said. It linked the air strikes to "explosive and arson balloons launched from the Gaza Strip into Israel". The Hamas source said the Islamists had held talks with the Egyptian delegation in Gaza on Monday before it left the territory for meetings with the Israelis and the West Bank-based Palestinian Authority. It was expected to return to Gaza after those talks were concluded, the source added.— AFP

India minister back in hospital

MUMBAI: India's interior minister Amit Shah was hospitalized again yesterday after complaining of fatigue and body ache, four days after he said he had recovered from COVID-19, as cases in the country surged to more than 2.7 million. Shah, a close aide of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the virtual number-two in his cabinet, was admitted to the government-run All India Institute for Medical Sciences in the capital New Delhi, the hospital said in a statement. "He is comfortable and continuing his work from the hospital," it said, adding he had now tested negative for COVID-19. Shah is the highest-profile Indian politician to have been infected with the coronavirus. On Monday, Kiran Mazumdar Shaw, the head of pharmaceutical company Biocin Ltd that makes COVID-19 medicines, said she too had tested positive.— Reuters

A 'deceptive calm' in Libya

TRIPOLI: Libya faces a "deceptive calm" since fighting stalled around Sirte, the central hometown of fallen dictator Muammar Gaddafi, German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas warned during a surprise visit on Monday. Outside powers are "continuing to massively arm the country," said Maas, whose government has tried to broker peace in the war-torn North African nation. "In Libya at the moment we are observing a deceptive calm," he told journalists in Tripoli, seat of the UN-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA). Libya has been in chaos since a Western-backed uprising toppled Gaddafi in 2011, and has become a major departure point for desperate migrants trying to reach Europe with the help of traffickers. Eastern-based military commander Khalifa Haftar launched an offensive in April 2019 to seize Tripoli.—AFP

Sudan protests mark one year

KHARTOUM: Sudanese protestors in the capital Khartoum on Monday called for "justice" and "peace" as they marked the one-year anniversary of a transitional government following the ouster of long-time autocrat Omar Al-Bashir. Large crowds marched through the government district of the capital Khartoum, some burning tyres, before police fired tear gas to break them up, an AFP journalist said. Clashes erupted at the end of the rally when an adviser to Prime Minister Abdallah Hamdok came out to collect a letter written by the demonstrators, who demanded that the head of the government receive it personally. "We came to demonstrate to put pressure on the government to speed up the reforms, because after a year, we're not satisfied," said Mohammad Omar, a 20-year-old student. "The police use tear gas against us when it's our right to demonstrate. It's unacceptable."— AFP

Facebook in India storm after hate speech claims

NEW DELHI: Facebook is in the eye of a political storm in India after claims it failed to take action against hate speech posts by a Hindu nationalist lawmaker out of fear for its business interests. India is US-based Facebook and its messaging service WhatsApp's biggest market in terms of users, and the firm is under pressure worldwide about how to police hate speech.

But a huge row has now erupted in India after the Wall Street Journal reported that Facebook stopped short of banning a ruling party MP even after he posted comments and made speeches saying Rohingya Muslim immigrants should be shot, Muslims were traitors, and threatened to raze mosques. The lawmaker in question, T. Raja Singh, on Monday claimed his account had been hacked, the New Indian Express reported.

The Wall Street Journal report last week said Facebook's top public-policy executive in India had opposed applying hate-speech rules to the lawmaker and other Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) individuals and allied groups who had been flagged internally. The executive, Ankhi Das, told staff members that punishing violations by politicians from India's ruling party would damage the company's business prospects in India, the newspaper reported. This was even after employees concluded Singh had violated its rules, the Journal said, citing current and former Facebook staff.

The main opposition Congress party on Sunday claimed there was "bias and alignment" of the Facebook India team in favor of the BJP and its allies. "They spread fake news and hatred through it and use it to influence the electorate," tweeted senior party figure Rahul Gandhi. Without commenting directly on the Journal report, Facebook said Monday it would always prohibit "hate speech and content that incites violence", and would "enforce these policies globally without regard to anyone's political position or party affiliation".

"While we know there is more to do, we're making progress on enforcement and conduct regular audits of our process to ensure fairness and accuracy," a spokeswoman added. Lawmaker Raja Singh insisted Monday that his Facebook account had been hacked and someone was "deliberately trying to project me as a dangerous person all over the world." "Many pages and IDs are being run on my name on social media platforms without my consent," he told the New Indian Express.—AFP



BAGHDAD: File picture shows smoke billowing from a sentry box at an entrance of the embassy in the capital Baghdad, after supporters and members of the Hashed Al-Shaabi military network breached the outer wall of the diplomatic mission during a rally to vent anger over weekend air strikes that killed pro-Iran fighters in western Iraq.—AFP

As Iraq PM heads to US; pro-Iran groups step up attacks

BAGHDAD: As Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhemi prepares for his first meeting with US President Donald Trump this week, attacks on American targets by pro-Iranian fighters have been on the rise. With Tehran and Washington competing for influence in Iraq, the gulf between pro-Iranian factions and Baghdad's US-friendly premier is growing. When Kadhemi meets Trump on Thursday for the first time, the top agenda for the Iraqi leader is the presence of 5,000 US troops deployed in his country.

Kadhemi, who took office in May, faces challenges from factions of the Hashed Al-Shaabi, a coalition of Iraqi Shiite paramilitary groups with close ties to Iran. The Hashed Al-Shaabi is integrated into the Iraqi state, and its political representatives have called for the expulsion of US troops. Pro-Iranian factions were hit hard by Washington's assassination in January of one of their top chiefs, Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, in a strike that also killed top Iranian commander General Qasem Soleimani.

The Hashed denies any connection to a recent spate of anti-US attacks, but videos and claims on social media hint at its involvement, through groups operating under other names. "The personnel that make up the new militias are most likely pulled from the membership of pre-existing armed groups that make up the Hashed Al-Shaabi," said Ramzy Mardini, from The Pearson In-

stitute at the University of Chicago. Kadhemi-far closer to Washington than his predecessor Nuri Al-Maliki-has angered armed groups by seizing border posts where they ran lucrative smuggling networks and imposed taxes on traders.

'League of Revolutionaries'

Attacks have risen in recent weeks. From October to the end of July, Iraqi armed factions carried out 39 rocket attacks against American interests in the country. But after the White House earlier this month confirmed that Trump would meet Kadhemi tomorrow, the pace intensified. Between August 4 and August 16, 13 bomb and rocket attacks targeted Iraqi logistics convoys for the US military, bases housing US soldiers and the US embassy. While the impact has been limited, the attacks have served as a show of strength.

After an attack on a convoy in Iraq's south, a man was arrested in possession of bombs and a Hashed military ID card that allowed him to cross checkpoints without a search, an intelligence source told AFP. Some attacks have been carried out by groups with other names including the "League of Revolutionaries".

"They operate under new banners to mask and protect the established militia leadership from facing possible retaliation," Mardini said. "If these groups are operating outside the government, Baghdad is less likely to be held responsible and punished by Washington," he added. But by increasing the number of attacks, it also sends a signal to Kadhemi that he cannot prevent attacks simply by raids and arrests against the militias. At the end of June, 14 fighters from the Hezbollah Brigades, a Hashed faction, were arrested for attacks on Americans. Three days later, 13 were released on the decision of a Hashed military judge.—AFP

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 19, 2020

Business

Japan's jobless rate masks worker despair

Economy bottoming out, unemployment casts cloud over outlook

TOKYO: Japan's low unemployment rate on paper suggests an economy weathering the coronavirus reasonably well, but official figures belie worsening prospects for the country's army of temporary workers, who make up about 40 percent of the jobs market. A rise in job losses would undermine one of the few successes of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's "Abenomics" stimulus policies, aimed at reviving the economy.

Japan's jobless rate stood at 2.8 percent in June, much lower than 10.2 percent in the United States and 7.8 percent in the 19-member eurozone. But a close look at data shows a rising number of people dropping out of the jobs race. That prevents the official jobless rate - the ratio of job seekers who are yet to land work - from rising much. About 2.4 million furloughed workers are kept on payrolls backed by state subsidies, which the government is seeking to extend beyond its end-September expiration.

"The huge number of furloughed workers suggests companies are saddled with excess labour and are under pressure to cut jobs down the road," said Hisashi Yamada, senior economist at Japan Research Institute. "Job losses will hurt Japan's economic recovery as they spread to broader sectors in coming years, eroding households' purchasing power," he said.

Japan's economy plunged by a record pace in the second quarter as the pandemic hit consumption and exports. In the jobs market, the pain has been felt most by those categorized as "non-regular workers," including those with low-paying, part-time jobs, who make up 38 percent of all employees in Japan.

Non-regular workers account for roughly three

quarters of those employed by restaurants and hotels, many of which were hit hard by the pandemic, according to the labor ministry. A government survey showed more than 40,000 workers, about 15,000 of whom are non-regular workers, have been laid off since February.



**Jobless rate
may rise to
record levels**

One worker in her 20s, who was employed as temp staff at a call center in Kanagawa prefecture, quit her job in June. "My employer would not allow us non-regular workers to work from home," she told Reuters, on condition of anonymity. "I was told that I could take time off but would not be paid, so I quit, thinking it'd be better living on unemployment insurance."

Some economists estimate the jobless rate would be closer to 4 percent if furloughed workers were included in the official figures. More broadly, the downturn has affected both those at the start and end of their careers. Over 100 university and high-school students had their job offers cancelled, about



TOKYO: People commute early morning in Tokyo. Japan's low unemployment rate on paper suggests an economy weathering the coronavirus reasonably well, but official figures belie worsening prospects for the country's army of temporary workers, who make up about 40 percent of the jobs market. — AFP

triple the number for 2019. More than 50 listed firms offered early retirement to let go some 9,300 employees, the fastest pace in eight years, separate data found.

Some analysts expect Japan's official jobless rate to rise to a record 5.5 percent hit during the 2009 global financial crisis. That is a high level in Japan, where labor unions have historically accepted low

wage offers to protect jobs - keeping the jobless rate low compared with other countries.

However, Nobuyuki Sato, chairman of a Japanese-style hotel inn in Yamagata prefecture, said an end to government subsidies could force his company to start cutting jobs. "Labor costs are a major burden to Japanese-style inns like us, as they account for 30 percent of overall costs," he told Reuters. — Reuters

UK retailer M&S axes 7,000 jobs on virus fallout

LONDON: Marks and Spencer, the British retail chain selling clothes and food, is to cut around 7,000 jobs as the coronavirus pandemic increasingly pushes customers to shop online, it said yesterday. The job cuts, to be carried out over the next three months, include losses from its central support center, in regional management and in its UK stores, M&S said in a statement. Marks employs more than 80,000 staff, of whom the vast majority work in the UK. Chief executive Steve Rowe said the company would become a "leaner, faster business set up to serve changing customer needs".

Alongside the job cuts, M&S "expects to create a number" of positions to help the group meet a surge in online demand for its products. While total group sales slumped by around one fifth in the 19 weeks to August 8 — which included most of the period Britain was in lockdown—online revenue surged nearly 40 percent, Marks said yesterday. "It is clear that there has been a material shift in trade and whilst it is too early to predict with precision where a new post-COVID sales mix will settle, we must act now to reflect this change," Marks said. The company joins the likes of UK department store chains Debenhams and John Lewis, as well as pharmacy group Boots, in cutting thousands of jobs



LONDON: Pedestrians walk past an M&S (Marks and Spencer) store in central London. Marks and Spencer, the British retail chain selling clothing and food, is to cut around 7,000 jobs as the coronavirus pandemic keeps shoppers away from its stores, it announced yesterday. — AFP

owing to fallout from COVID-19.

Official data last week showed that Britain's economy shrank by one fifth in the second quarter, more than any European neighbor, as the lockdown plunged the country into its deepest recession on record. Even though the UK economy is beginning to rebound as the government eases strict confine-

ment measures—gross domestic product grew by 8.7 percent in June—analysts expect a surge in unemployment by the end of the year.

Finance minister Rishi Sunak plans to end in October the government's furlough scheme that is paying up to 80 percent of wages for around 10 million workers during the pandemic. — AFP

Canada finance minister resigns amid scandal

OTTAWA: Canada's finance minister Bill Morneau announced his resignation Monday, on the heels of an ethics scandal and amid a reported split with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau over pandemic spending. Morneau, who has held the post since 2015, told a news conference that he met with Trudeau to inform him that he would not run in the next election, and that a new finance minister with a long-term outlook was needed.

"As we move to the next phase of our fight against the pandemic and pave the road towards economic recovery, we must recognize that this process will take many years, it's the right time for a new finance minister to deliver on that plan for the long and challenging road ahead," Morneau said. "That's why I'll be stepping down as finance minister, and as member of Parliament," he stated. Morneau said he would now run for the job of secretary general of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). For the past week, Canadian media have reported on a purported rift emerging between Morneau and Trudeau on how to reboot the Canadian economy weakened by the new coronavirus pandemic, as the government budget deficit soared to more than Can\$340 billion (US\$257 billion).

Canada's ethics commissioner also launched an investigation into the minister's ties to a charity tapped by Ottawa to distribute pandemic aid to young Canadians.

Trudeau is also being probed over his family ties

to the WE Charity, which paid his wife, brother and mother nearly Can\$300,000 for speaking engagements in recent years.

The prime minister apologized last month for the affair, saying he made a mistake in not recusing himself from discussions about awarding the roughly Can\$500 million contract to distribute student scholarship funds to WE Charity. The program has been cancelled but the controversy remains.

Scapegoat

Opposition parties had called for Morneau to resign after he revealed that he had only recently paid back more than Can\$41,000 in travel expenses to the charity, and that one of his daughters works for WE Charity while a second daughter volunteered for the organization. The reimbursement check was meant to cover expenses incurred by the charity over two humanitarian trips he and his family took in 2017.

The scandal has damaged Trudeau's minority government in public opinion polls, but his Liberal party is still positioned well for an early election, according to recent polls. The Conservatives and New Democrats on Monday said Morneau's departure was a sign of a government "in chaos" and that the former businessman was being made a scapegoat. "At a time when Canadians are worried about their health and their finances, Justin Trudeau's government is so consumed by scandal that Trudeau has amputated his right hand to try and save himself," Tory leader Andrew Scheer said in a Twitter message. The finance post is one of the most important in government as the country goes through the most serious economic crisis since World War II.

In a statement, Trudeau thanked Morneau for his tireless work to "create a resilient, fair economy that benefits everyone."

He said Morneau had led the rollout of emergency benefits for millions of Canadians who lost



ONTARIO: Canada's Finance Minister Bill Morneau speaks during a news conference on Parliament Hill in Ottawa, Ontario. — AFP

their jobs and businesses that were forced to close temporarily due to a pandemic lockdown. And, he added, Canada will "vigorously support" Morneau's bid to lead the OECD, which "will play a critical role in the global economic recovery." Now the focus will shift to Morneau's successor.

Deputy prime minister Chrystia Freeland, Foreign Minister Francois-Philippe Champagne and Treasury Board President Jean-Yves Duclos have been mentioned in the local media as possible candidates. The job could also go to former Bank of Canada and Bank of England governor Mark Carney, who is currently living in Ottawa and has been informally providing policy advice to the government. — AFP

TikTok ramps up defense against US accusations

SAN FRANCISCO: TikTok has stepped up its defense against US accusations that the popular video app is a national security threat, denouncing what it called "rumors and misinformation" about its links to the Chinese government. The video-snippet sharing service launched an online information hub on Monday after President Donald Trump gave its Chinese parent firm a 90-day deadline to divest TikTok before the app is banned in the United States.

A previous executive order, prohibiting US entities from doing business with TikTok, will take effect 45 days after August 6. On a web page titled "The Last Sunny Corner of the Internet," TikTok maintained it was settling the record straight about the platform.

"TikTok has never provided any US user data to the Chinese government, nor would it do so if asked," the company said in the post. "Any insinuation to the contrary is unfounded and blatantly false."

US user data is stored here, with a backup in Singapore, according to TikTok.

The company, owned by China-based ByteDance, also launched a new @tiktok_comms Twitter account to address issues in real time. As tensions soar between the world's two biggest economies, 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.

The US leader early this month also ordered a ban on the messaging app WeChat, which is used extensively in China. On Friday, Trump signed a separate executive order for ByteDance to sell its interest in Musically, the app it bought and merged with TikTok in 2017, citing national security.

TikTok said the US action "risks undermining global businesses' trust in the United States' commitment to the rule of law, which has served as a magnet for investment and spurred decades of American economic growth." TikTok also repeated its intention to "pursue all remedies available to us in order to ensure that the rule of law is not discarded."

Software giant Oracle is weighing a bid to join Microsoft in the race to acquire part of TikTok, Bloomberg reported early yesterday, citing people familiar with the matter. It has preliminarily approached companies including Sequoia Capital to join a bid for the app's operations in the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, the report said. China meanwhile Monday slammed Washington for using "digital gunboat diplomacy" in the TikTok case.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian on Monday said TikTok had done everything required by the US, including hiring Americans as its top executives, hosting its servers in the US and making public its source code. —AFP

Business

NBK Economic Report

Kuwait's real estate sales at all-time lows amid lockdown

Real estate sales totaled a record low of KD 113 million in 2Q20

KUWAIT: After a solid first quarter for real estate sales (KD 668 million), sales were depressed in 2Q20 in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic and the national lockdown, which had a severely negative impact on most economic sectors. Sales totaled just KD 113 million in Q2 (down 83 percent q/q and 86 percent y/y), the lowest on record. Low sales were driven by thin volumes in all three sub-sectors, though it is worth noting that sales mostly stemmed from a pick-up in June coinciding with eased lockdown restrictions, in a promising sign that activity may improve as restrictions are further eased in the coming months. Given the thin volumes during Q2 and the limited availability of data, it would be premature to draw any reliable inferences about prices at this juncture.

However, it is reasonable to assume that prices were negatively affected in 2Q20 by the dual coronavirus/oil price shocks and their negative implications on the expat population and business conditions. These implications may be long-term in nature, and thus we expect the real estate market to take some time to fully recover, especially with the commercial and investment sectors which are typically less resilient to such shocks.

Investment sector

Investment sector sales fell 87 percent q/q and 92 percent y/y to a record low of KD 26 million in 2Q20. The decline came on the back of the exceptionally low transactions (24), contrasting sharply

● **Weak Q2 sales were seen across all three subsectors, though sales picked up slightly in June on easing restrictions.**

● **Thin Q2 volumes mean price data is inconclusive; observation of trends over coming months may yield better indications.**

● **Longer-term coronavirus implications on the expat population mean the investment and commercial sectors may take longer to recover to pre-pandemic norms.**

with a quarterly average of 329 transactions during 2019 and 271 in 1Q20. Due to the unusually thin volumes, we believe that the market will need time to settle back into more normal patterns before any reliable conclusions on prices can be drawn.

Looking forward, investment sector sales and transactions may improve as lockdown restrictions ease, but will likely remain muted, especially given that the bulk of rental demand for such properties

typically stems from the expat labor force, which has certainly been affected by the lockdown and business closures. Further, with oil prices and economic growth expected to recover but remain moderate next year, slow progress on policy reforms, and investors increasingly turning to the residential sector for opportunities, it may take some time for demand and prices to recover to pre-coronavirus levels. Additionally, according to the consumer price index, residential rents (mostly apartments) have been either flat or falling y/y over the past ten months, but are expected to resume a downtrend on reportedly higher vacancies, with recent reports of rent cuts and/or no rent for 1-2 months as landlords attempt to attract new tenants.

Residential sector drops

While other sectors will likely continue to be affected by coronavirus restrictions and lockdowns in the near term, the residential sector has typically been more resilient to such shocks, as the demand base stems from the local population with mostly stable jobs, and supply is somewhat limited, especially in prime areas. Due to these strong fundamentals, we expect the residential sector to witness a relatively quick recovery (in terms of volumes) in the coming months as restrictions ease.

Commercial sector sales dropped 91 percent q/q and 86 percent y/y to a mere KD 15 million in 2Q20, stemming from only four transactions (-98 percent y/y). The commercial sector - which typi-



cally sees fewer sales than other sectors - was a victim of weak business activity during the lockdown, with various reports of businesses struggling to pay rent for commercial space, leading to rent reductions and deferred payments for various commercial tenants, but mostly for severely impacted retail tenants with high rents in malls. As restrictions are slowly lifted, a gradual recovery may be underway for the sector, but weakness may take some time to subside. This is especially given a large number of distressed businesses and with a large loss of expat jobs which will likely weigh down on demand for commercial space, likely to be reflected in lower prices in some areas.

Fortnite maker accuses Apple of going on attack

SAN FRANCISCO: The company behind popular video game Fortnite on Monday asked a judge to stop what it claimed is retaliation by Apple for challenging the App Store fee policy.

After pulling Fortnite from its App Store last week, Apple notified Epic Games it will cut off access to tools needed to tailor software for devices powered by the iPhone maker's operating systems, according to a request for a temporary restraining order. Without those tools, Epic will not be able to create iPhone, iPad or Mac computer versions of its widely used Unreal Engine for powering rich graphics, the company said.

The Unreal Engine powers popular video games other than Fortnite, and has applications such as virtual reality training for astronauts and visual effects for television shows such as "The Mandalorian," according to Epic. "Not content simply to remove Fortnite from the App Store, Apple is attacking Epic's entire business in unrelated areas,"

the restraining order request argued. "Left unchecked, Apple's actions will irreparably damage Epic's reputation among Fortnite users and be catastrophic for the future of the separate Unreal Engine business," Epic asked a judge to stop Apple from refusing to list Fortnite at the App Store or restrict access to the developers program until the matter is resolved in court. Apple told Epic it would be cut off from software development tools by August 28, the filing said. The Silicon Valley-based tech giant did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

'Anti-competitive conduct'

Apple and Google last week pulled video game sensation Fortnite from their mobile app shops after Epic released an update that dodges revenue sharing with the tech giants. 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.

Apple, which does not allow users of its popular devices to download apps from anywhere but its App Store, booted the game from its online marketplace, followed later by Google. Epic quickly filed a federal lawsuit against Apple, accusing the iPhone maker of wielding monopoly power.

The suit seeks a halt to Apple's "anti-competitive conduct" and invalidation of the tech giant's rules



In this file photo boys sit on pillows outside during the 2019 Fortnite World Cup Finals - Round Two at Arthur Ashe Stadium, in New York City. The maker of video game sensation "Fortnite" sued Apple for the way it rules over the App Store. — AFP

requiring app developers to pay the company 30 percent of transactions.

The suit is asking the court to order Apple to change its commission structure for all developers. Apple said last week that 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." Gamers will still be able to play Fortnite on their mobile devices, though Apple users will no longer be able to receive updates because those would need to come through the App Store. Android users can still download updates directly from Epic. — AFP

G7 may extend debt freeze for low-income countries

WASHINGTON: Finance ministers from the Group of Seven rich countries on Monday noted improved conditions in their economies, but underscored their concerns about the debt problems facing low-income nations, a US Treasury spokesperson said.

During a videoconference hosted by US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, the ministers urged all official bilateral creditors to fully implement the G20 debt freeze for the poorest countries, and agreed to consider additional options, including extending the initiative into 2021, the spokesperson said.

The meeting also included the leaders of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, who have urged the Group of 20 countries to extend their Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) given the economic impact of the novel coronavirus pandemic. G20 members, including China, and the Paris Club of official creditors in April offered a freeze on debt service payments to the 73 poorest countries through year-end to free up an estimated \$12 billion in funds for the poorest countries to fight the outbreak and mitigate its economic impact. As of July 24, 41 countries had requested forbearance under the initiative. But implementation of the debt freeze has been challenging and the global economic downturn has hit those countries particularly hard, triggering calls for its extension and expansion.

China's reluctance to include its state-supported China Development Bank and state-owned enterprises in the debt payment suspension and concerns over confidentiality agreements included in many Chinese loans to countries in Africa have slowed progress in executing the debt freeze, economists say. German Finance State Secretary Wolfgang Schmidt said the debt issue was a key topic during the meeting, and emphasized the need for the private sector to take part. "We all agree that a debt moratorium must be implemented in full by all creditors," he said in a statement. "We also emphasized that it is very important that the private sector be part of this." Countries have been reluctant to ask for a freeze in private sector debt payments for fear it would hurt their credit ratings. The ministers agreed to "advance debt data transparency and consider additional options going forward for low income countries, including an extension of the DSSI into 2021," the spokesperson said. They also emphasized the need to manufacture and distribute vaccines and treatments for the virus. — Reuters

Ooredoo Kuwait introduces 5G home Wi-Fi Mesh

KUWAIT: Ooredoo Telecom, the first to introduce innovative digital services in Kuwait, announced its offer of the all new Huawei 5G Mesh Q2 Pro 3 Pack which will allow customers to enjoy super-fast, super-strong internet with 5G Home Wi-Fi Mesh. Customers will be able to get the Huawei 5G Mesh Q2 Pro 3 Pack for KD 18 per month.

The Huawei 5G Mesh Q2 Pro 3 Pack enables customers to transform their 5G signals into a Wi-Fi hotspot. This means that customers will be able to connect their smartphone, PC and other devices wherever they are in the house or office - even if they are in a blind spot. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, millions of people across the globe have been isolated at home and working remotely. This has caused a huge demand for increased network speeds, which will help our customers who are working remotely to avoid interruptions.

Commenting on this, Youssef Al-Shallal, Director of Marketing at Ooredoo Kuwait said, "During these unprecedented times, people are asked to remain at home, and more specifically to get online at home for work or online learning." Al-Shallal further added, "We are removing the hassle of dead zones that used to be an inconvenience to customers; especially those working from home who need to work in quiet areas of their homes; especially large homes that contain many rooms. With this solution, there is no need for multiple routers across the home and no need to change the Wi-Fi network on the same device while moving in areas within the home. This is aligned with our commitment to embracing digitalization and leading the way in meeting the growing demands for online digital services in Kuwait".

It is worth mentioning that Ooredoo Kuwait also launched its 'Be Safe. Be Home. Be Online' campaign, featuring an array of digital offers and services designed to support customers and to ensure they are well connected and informed during the Coronavirus outbreak in the country. The digital offers and services provided by Ooredoo Kuwait include subscription to any Ooredoo Surprise offer on My Ooredoo App, enjoying the best music, series, movies, and games, recharging online, joining ANA and free SIM delivery to customers' doorsteps, and amazing benefits from Shamel. Customers can also view Ooredoo's services as well as exclusive offers and their subscription data online through the MyOoredoo application and the Company website Ooredoo.com.kw in addition to contacting our call center through 121 around the clock for all enquiries and services.

Ooredoo Kuwait reaffirms its keenness to adhere to all instructions issued by the official authorities in Kuwait related to the current situation, confirming its cooperation and its complete readiness to implement the procedures followed in this regard during the coming period.



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Business

KIB reports 17% growth in total assets and 10% growth in customer deposits

13% growth in financing portfolio to KD 1.95bn • 18.23% capital adequacy ratio

KUWAIT: Sheikh Mohammed Jarrah Al-Sabah, Chairman of Kuwait International Bank (KIB), announced nearly KD 29 million worth of operating revenue, for the six months period ended June 30, 2020.

The Bank's financial results revealed that KIB's total assets grew by KD 399 million at 17 percent to KD 2.75 billion, compared to approximately KD 2.35 billion at June 30, 2020. This increase was primarily the result of the growth in the financing portfolio by KD 228 million, to approximately KD 1.95 billion, compared to KD 1.72 billion at the end of the same period last year: a growth of 13 percent in addition to the volume growth in the investment portfolio, driven by Sukuk Investments, by approximately KD 90 million. On the other hand, depositors' accounts increased by nearly KD 144 million, almost by 10 percent, to KD 1.57 billion compared to approximately KD 1.43 billion at June 30, 2020. The shareholders' equity amounted to approximately KD 259 million.



Continued prudent approach to risk management

Commenting on the Bank's performance and results during the first half of 2020, Al-Jarrah suggested that these are very good results that coincided with the Bank's support for all government and Cabinet decisions in facing these unprecedented challenges, namely the outbreak of COVID-19, its repercussions and disruption of various sectors, including banks and financial institutions, in addition to the decline in oil prices and its impact on the economic sector in general, and banking in particular, which was one of the main reasons behind profit pressure for fear of high

debt costs, as well as market inactivity and decline in financial transactions of individuals and companies relatively during this time.

In the same context, he stressed that the efforts and directives of the Central Bank of Kuwait in combating the outbreak have significantly contributed to easing the burdens incurred by the country, individuals and companies alike, including the establishment of a special fund valued at KD 10 million with the participation of local banks to support the urgent government needs in the face of this crisis, in which KIB contributed half a million Kuwaiti dinars. In addition to granting loans and concessional financing to SME owners, customers and companies affected by this crisis through joint financing with local banks - an approach that KIB has adopted and has consequently began to receive requests for concessional financing for SMEs affected by the repercussions of the coronavirus crisis, in compliance with the conditions approved by the Central Bank of Kuwait, in addition to installment deferral for consumer finance, housing and credit cards for a period of six months starting April 2020, without incurring any additional profits as a result of the postponement, as this was seen as a short-term liquidity support to address potential customer cash flow problems and respond to the consequences of the new coronavirus outbreak.

On the other hand, Vice Chairman and CEO, Raed Jawad Bukhamseen said that over the past few months, KIB has continued to provide its services to customers without fail, thanks to the loyalty and dedication of its employees. Bukhamseen explained that flexible policies have been implemented for the completion of customer transactions, which included working remotely and forming a special team to meet the needs of customers, in addition to developing an electronic service network available 24/7, where we have introduced 6 new services within the framework of retail banking services, thereby allowing existing customers to open a deposit and/or a bank account, issue a prepaid or credit card, and request Murabaha through telephone



banking by following quick, simple and secure steps, in order to meet the needs of our customers during the current circumstances whether through telephone or online.

He also pointed out that KIB's distribution rates to depositor accounts are considered to be amongst the highest returns in the market, where the Bank recorded an annualized return of 2 percent on long-term (3 year) deposits in Kuwaiti Dinars and 1.450 percent on term (1 year) deposits, at the end of the second quarter of this year. The annualized return of the investment savings account in Kuwaiti dinars was 0.750 percent at the end of the second quarter of 2020, given that the distribution of profits on the savings account is performed on a quarterly basis, reflecting the Bank's performance. Profits were deposited into the accounts of the depositors on the same day on which the Bank's financial results were announced.

KIB's investment strategy is to emerge as a key player in the regional debt capital market, as the Bank continues to take part in high quality issues across the region. The Bank acted as Joint Lead Manager and Joint Bookrunner in the Sukuk issuance for Qatar International Islamic Bank (QIIB), Joint Lead Manager in the \$750 million Sukuk issuance for Boubyan Bank, in addition to being selected Co-Manager of the first-of-its-kind 'Sustainability Sukuk' by the Islamic

Development Bank (IsDB), valued at \$1.5 billion for a period of five years and an aim to mitigate the effects of the novel coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) for IsDB member states. Bukhamseen also mentioned that this achievement has contributed to strengthening the Bank's role and position in the global investment market within the frame of its ongoing efforts to play an active and effective role in the debt market.

He also noted that KIB strives to take a lead in digital transformation in terms of providing its customers with simple yet advanced digital services and a unique digital experience, as customers have an increasing demand for more digital services - a trend that the coronavirus pandemic has accelerated, and the Bank will deal with this change through its premium digital products designed to provide a great customer experience.

Furthermore, the strategic plan includes a range of initiatives that seek to automate the process of conducting real estate assessments with the aim of reducing time, increasing accuracy and effectiveness, receiving and automating mortgage offers, as well as building a unique and wide-ranging experience in the local real estate market. A comprehensive cost-cutting excellence program and implementation plan are also tailor-made for enhancing efficiency in line with the new strategy. Bukhamseen added that KIB has taken into account several measures and protocols, (in addition to the continuity of business, technological initiatives and contingency plans) with the aim of mitigating the impact of credit risks, market risks, liquidity risks and operational risks, along with continuing to monitor capital adequacy, liquidity and other ratios.

Bukhamseen stressed that KIB continues to strive towards achieving growth rates in its financial indicators in the last months of the year, thanks to the Bank's continued prudent policies, in addition to the transformation and modernization of its business model and enhancement of its e-services, as well as the implementation of strategic growth plans that enable the Bank to overcome challenges and manage all risks.

Exclusive benefits, financing solutions for NBK customers to buy dream cars

KUWAIT: As part of its efforts to meet customers' needs, while adhering to safety and social distancing measures, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK), through its Direct Sales Team present at 30 locations and auto dealerships in Kuwait, continues to provide outstanding and exclusive financing solutions and products that suit all customers' needs and meet all their requirements to buy their dream cars.

On this occasion, Head of Direct Sales at National Bank of Kuwait, Abdullah Al-Faras said: "Despite the circumstances imposed by COVID-19 pandemic, NBK's Direct Sales Team, present at key auto dealerships, has been available and working side by side with customers throughout the past period to meet their needs and provide the best



solutions to finance car purchase, starting from flexible conditions to easy application submission and approval process.

Al-Faras affirmed that NBK Direct Sales Team adhere to all health authorities' guidelines regarding social distancing and take precautionary measures to keep our customers and employees safe.

He pointed out that NBK always seeks to offer added-value products to its customers by providing various highly advanced and innovative banking services. Additionally, the bank has the largest presence at auto dealerships in Kuwait, thanks to its wide geographical spread, covering more than 30 locations and car dealerships. Al-Faras added that the long experience, in addition to creativity and ability to provide effective solutions, are unique edges for NBK, which enable us to understand our customers' financial needs more deeply and contribute to providing appropriate advice in line with their needs and expectations.

Al-Faras pointed out that, as part of the bank's continuous keenness to provide exclusive offers to its customers, it has recently launched, in cooperation with Kuwait Automobile & Trading Co. (Al Zayani), and Mutawa Alkazi auto dealerships, discounts and offers on selected cars offered by Jaguar and Maserati, in addition to GAC cars with 0 percent interest for up to five years.

Al-Faras emphasized that NBK is distinguished by providing top-notch banking services and solutions for customers looking for Auto Loan, in terms of facilitated conditions as well as easy application submission and approval process, whether by visiting the bank or through NBK Online Banking, and speedy review and approval of applications with flexible conditions.

Al-Faras added that NBK Customers can get all the details of these discounts as well as the terms and conditions through the sales staff at auto dealerships or NBK Representatives available at the showrooms. NBK Customers benefit from the various banking services provided through its largest network of branches locally, which includes branches, ATMs and POS terminals, and through NBK Online Banking and NBK Mobile Banking, enabling customers to complete their banking transactions anytime, anywhere.

AUB congratulates winner of Al-Hassad Eid Al-Adha draw

KUWAIT: In accordance with full preventive guidelines and measures set by health authorities, Ahli United Bank (AUB) held Eid Al-Adha draw on 12th August 2020 of Al-Hassad Islamic account which is the very first draw in Islamic banking in Kuwait and has won the "Best Savings Product in Kuwait 2019" by the prestigious Banker Middle East Magazine for the numerous unique features it provides. Al-Hassad Islamic account offers over 800 prizes, over 12 month period and has reshaped the lives of thousands lucky winners.

The bank announced Moudhi Abdullah Al-Enezi, the winner of KD 100,000.

The draws of Al-Hassad include several cash prizes, such as KD 100,000 each Eid and the grand quarterly draw of KD 250,000 prize which continues to be a key aspiration for customers who are wishing to fulfill their dreams. On top of that, Al-Hassad offers a monthly draw of KD 100,000, as well as 20 weekly prizes of KD 1,000 for each winner. In addition to this attractive package of rewards, Al-Hassad Islamic account incorporates a Wakala contract for projected annual profits, making this account beneficial to all customer segments that are aspiring to build their short and long-term savings through a unique savings account with many advantages.

Furthermore, for the first time in Kuwait, the AUB Al-Hassad presents the "Privilege Draw", which is a quarterly draw of KD 25,000 exclusively for Al-Hassad customers who maintained their balances for more than one year and have not won a prize in the past five years.

For all draws, the clients are eligible for one draw chance for each KD 50 deposited in their Al-Hassad account. It is worth mentioning that Al-Hassad Islamic account has won the "Best Savings Product in Kuwait 2019" by the prestigious Banker Middle East Magazine for the numerous unique features it provides. Such features include the simplest and easiest program, highest number of winners, largest prize value, unique draws during Eid Al-Fitr and Eid Al-Adha, loyalty multipliers, unique online account opening feature, transparent draws held during radio shows with live broadcast on the Bank's social media platforms..

German industry hails short-time work scheme

BERLIN: German industry on Monday welcomed Finance Minister Olaf Scholz's proposal to double the period over which state aid is paid under a government short-time working scheme to prevent unemployment surging further during the COVID-19 pandemic. Short-time work, also known as Kurzarbeit, allows employers to switch employees to working fewer hours or even none during an economic downturn. It aims to stop immediate shocks such as the coronavirus crisis from leading into mass unemployment. Under the scheme, companies can apply for state aid to keep skilled workers on the payroll despite a lack of orders and avoid lay-offs for a limited time of currently up to 12 months, with the government paying two-thirds of the lost net income.

The scope of the scheme, instituted years before coronavirus, was widened in March as the pandemic hit and now Scholz wants to extend its cover to 24 months, as its effects on the economy could be long-lasting. The VDMA engineering association said the instrument was saving many jobs, as it did during the financial crisis in 2009.—Reuters



Excessive land fragmentation, a legacy of switching at speed from communism to a private-property system, has long hindered agricultural development in Armenia - where about half of all arable land lies abandoned. — Reuters

As Soviet seed blights Armenian farms, reform offers growth

YEREVAN/MILAN: Gayane Azatyan has grown veg for 20 years - a prosperous enough venture despite the bad seed that was planted by the Soviet system and has blighted Armenia all her working life.

The 43-year-old makes a living growing broccoli, lettuce and other vegetables in the northern Armenian village of Jrashen. Her farm covers 8.5 hectares - roughly a dozen football pitches and a sizable area by local standards. Only the land is not contiguous, but made up of several small plots scattered across the village, some of which she owns and the rest she rents from near-neighbors. "It is a problem," she said by phone. "We spend a lot of time and resources to take our workers from one land plot to another. It would be very good to have one big land plot."

Excessive land fragmentation, a legacy of switching at speed from communism to a private-property system, has long hindered agricultural development in Armenia - where about half of all arable land lies abandoned, according to the government. So now the authorities plan to reform the setup, do away with the communist legacy, modernize the Armenian economy and shore up food security in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. "Fragmentation of lands makes agricultural activities unfavorable and economically unprofitable," the country's deputy economy minister, Arman Khojayan, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation in a phone interview.

"The land reform will be an important step for unlocking growth in the agricultural sector."

Lotteries and leases

After Armenia became independent in 1991, state-owned farmland was split into small parcels and distributed in equal amounts - through a lottery - to an array of locals. While the process was fair and buoyed food production at a time where the centralized system was in freefall, it also laid the groundwork for today's problems, said Morten Hartvigsen, a land tenure officer at the United Nations food agency (FAO). Most Armenian food comes from the 320,000 or so family farms that dot the fertile land in the southern Caucasus, according to the FAO, which is helping the government craft the reforms.

About 60 percent of these are less than one hectare in size and 89 percent are smaller than 3 hectares, it said. By contrast, the average farm in England is 86 hectares, making for greater efficiency and higher yields. Smallholders in Armenia are often unable to afford the sort of modern machinery and systems that would help them prosper.

In 2016, almost 40 percent of food produced in Armenia was eaten by the people who grew it, according to official data, killing off hopes of a vibrant free market in the former Soviet state.

This fuels a vicious circle of emigration and land abandonment, compounded by low and loosely enforced land taxes, according to the FAO.

"It doesn't cost (owners) anything to have this land," said Hartvigsen. "So, you get a job in Moscow for some seasonal work, for example, you move there and just leave the land, abandoned." The government wants to send a reform package to parliament by the end of the year, aiming to bring fallow land to life by banding small plots together and marketing them as one unit. "Currently (investors) have to deal with too many small land holders and most of them have some paperwork issue," said Khojayan, the deputy minister.

Armenia's land agency would act as an intermediary, seeking out the owners of abandoned parcels and encouraging them to put the plots on a database of available land that the agency would then combine and lease to farmers, he said. Owners who want to take part would receive a small rent as incentive, he said, while government plans to raise taxes on abandoned lots have been shelved. The agency might also buy parcels and lease them out, and run an exchange system so owners can swap plots, Khojayan added.

COVID-19 and water

The target is to get 25 percent of the abandoned land working within five years, boosting a sector that makes up a quarter of the country's economic output, said the deputy minister.

"Coronavirus has doubtlessly stressed the need for reform," he said, noting how the pandemic had revealed the true extent of food insecurity and unemployment in his landlocked country. Border closures due to COVID-19 grounded the tens of thousands of Armenians who usually travel abroad for seasonal jobs, and the reform could help them find work at home, he said. "Land reforms can be a stimulus to engage in agriculture and land cultivation," he said.

To succeed, though, Armenia badly needs better roads and irrigation networks, according to the Agricultural Alliance of Armenia, an umbrella group of farming organizations. "The main reason for not cultivating the land is the absence of irrigation water," the group said in a statement, noting that about 75 percent of abandoned agricultural land had no irrigation. Farmers agreed.

"Before implementing these changes, the government should think about solving the irrigation problem. If it is solved, no inch of plot will remain unused," said Aram Kirakosyan, a 60-year-old who grows apricot and grapes in the Ararat region. Others, like Azatyan, worry she might be charged more to farm the land post-reform. "I'm afraid the price for the rent will increase," she said, explaining she only paid a symbolic price to fellow villagers.—Reuters

Classifieds

Wednesday, August 19, 2020



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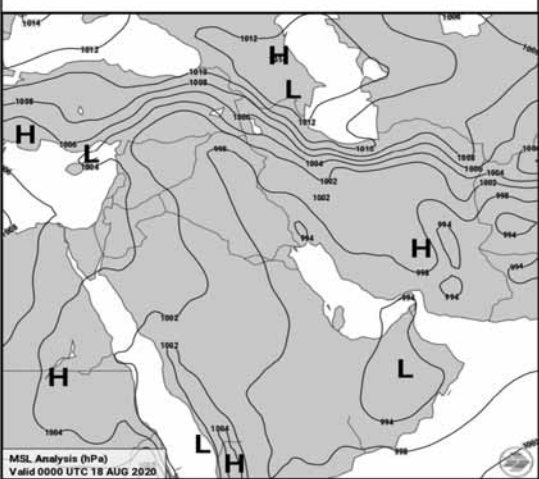


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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

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

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.	SFC. CHART 18/08/2020 0000 UTC	
KUWAIT CITY	46 °C	33 °C		
KUWAIT AIRPORT	46 °C	29 °C		
ABDALY	45 °C	27 °C		
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C		
JAHRA	46 °C	32 °C		
FAILAKA ISLAND	45 °C	30 °C		
SALMIYAH	42 °C	34 °C		
AHMADI	- °C	- °C		
NUWAISIB	45 °C	30 °C		
WAFRA	45 °C	31 °C		
SALMY	43 °C	25 °C		

4 DAYS FORECAST					
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction
			MAX.	MIN.	
Wednesday	08/19	Very hot	47 °C	28 °C	NW
Thursday	08/20	Very hot with a chance for rising dust over open areas	48 °C	29 °C	NW
Friday	08/21	Very hot with a chance for rising dust over open areas	48 °C	29 °C	NW
Saturday	08/22	Very hot	48 °C	30 °C	VRB

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	03:54
Sunrise	05:18
Zuhr	11:52
Asr	15:27
Sunset	18:26
Isha	19:48

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	46 °C
MIN. Temp.	27 °C
MAX. RH	24 %
MIN. RH	06 %
MAX. Wind	NW 46 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

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

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

Clinics	
Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
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British Airways	22425635
Air France	22430224
Emirates	22921555
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Egypt Air	22421578
Swiss Air	22421516
Saudia	22426306
Middle East Airlines	22423073
Lufthansa	22422493
PIA	22421044
Bangladesh Airlines	22452977/8
Oman Air	22958787
Turkish Airlines	22453820/1

Word Search



Budgeting

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

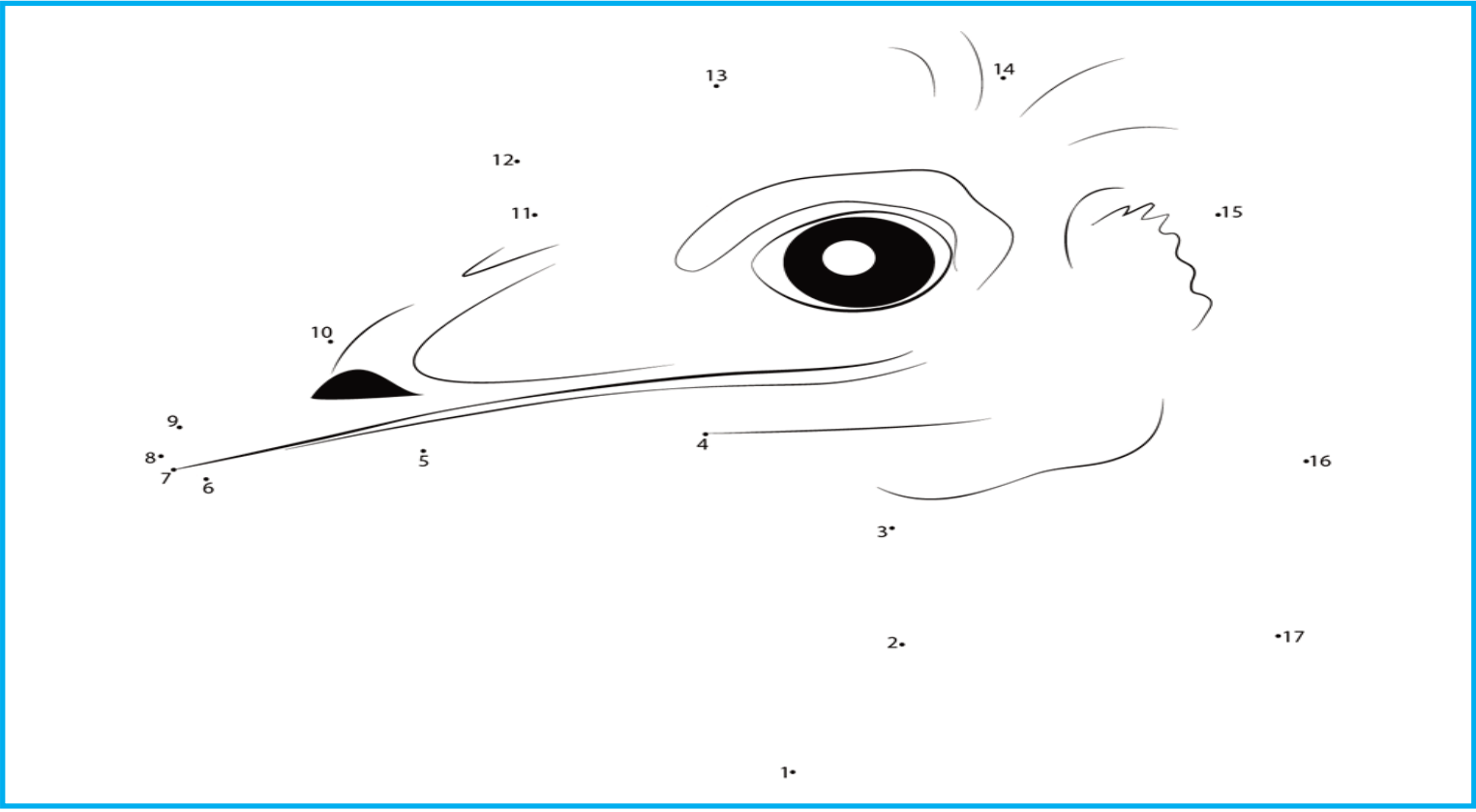
A G K I Y Z B G P A D J U S T M E N T W N		
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L I Q U I D I T Y F W V H I C F E E W G I		
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T B L N M S N L D R X Q T U L L W A N T S		
Z A F V A R S S A E P N D S D E E N B E H		
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ADJUSTMENT
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BENEFITS
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EXPENSE
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GARNISHMENT
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Join the Dots




STAR TRACK




Aries (March 21-April 19)

Are you satisfied with your current career, Aries? If not, start by making a plan. There are specific steps that you can take to give you the greatest advantage in the opportunities available. Consider visiting online career sites. There are wonderful articles and tips for the taking. Don't settle for less than you deserve. See what's out there and find a more fulfilling career.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Follow your instincts, Cancer. Even if you tend to listen more to your reason, put that aside. While your ears can hear words, your intuition can hear what's between the lines and provide you with a much bigger picture. If something sounds right but feels wrong, you'll be better off trusting your feelings. Act with careful consideration and caution.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Are you living your dreams, Libra? Are you still in touch with them? The energy from today's planetary aspects can lend strength and encouragement to this part of your life. Take hold of the things you want most of all. Ask yourself, "What do I want people to say about me when I'm gone?" Get back on the road to a fulfilled life by taking steps toward your desires.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Use your creativity to make things happen today, Capricorn. This doesn't have to take the form of a finished product. You can come up with new and innovative ways to approach a task, project, or problem. Trust your ability to discover such things. You're known for your sharp thinking and creative abilities. Combining them can make you unstoppable when finding solutions to almost any problem.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Don't fear change, Taurus. Even if you think you don't adjust well, you have far more adaptability than you realize. Without change, life would become stagnant and lifeless. It wouldn't be long before you grew unsatisfied and bored with the same old thing. Try to see change as an adventure and a gateway to greater happiness and fulfillment. Trust in your versatility, too.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Feed your mind with new knowledge, Leo. Visit an internet bookstore or read some interesting information online. If you have more time, visit the library, if possible, or explore courses that you might like. There is knowledge to be had everywhere you look, provided you're open to receiving it. People are often the best resource. Ask someone to explain something, if that's what you need.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Today's a good day to check into advancing your career or education, Scorpio. The energy favors expansion and growth. When was the last time you learned a new skill? It doesn't have to be work related, either. If arranging flowers, skydiving, or programming websites is something that appeals to you, go for it. Never stop looking for ways to expand your knowledge.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Find new ways to expand your horizons, Aquarius. The web has an infinite number of resources and information to explore. Not only that, but your community and local colleges offer various online courses to choose from. Think about what you'd enjoy learning - perhaps a new job skill or craft. Whether it's judo or Italian or woodworking that strikes your fancy, it's out there. Find it.




Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Make your dreams valuable tools for insight, Gemini. Back in the old days, great rulers believed so strongly in the insight of dreams that they employed interpreters. Whether you think dreams are mystical insights or random thoughts, you can gain a lot from them. Recurring dreams are significant and can point to something that needs addressing. Consider exploring this area.




Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Try to see nightmares as safe ways to understand feelings, Virgo. No one likes to experience them, and we'd sooner forget them once awake, the quickest way to ensure they don't return is to understand what they're saying. Fear, pain, and anxiety are the most common ingredients of nightmares. What frightens you? Do you feel insecure? Consider the questions and probe for answers.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Do you recognize your intuition as a valuable asset, Sagittarius? Some people do and some don't. Which group are you in? It can be easy to trust more in concrete, factual reality than in the things you can't touch, yet your intuition can serve you more than you may realize. That gut feeling you experience can guide you toward greatness and alert you to danger. Trust it more.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Step out of your usual role, Pisces. Doing this every now and then can add knowledge and expand your life. The day's planetary aspects favor such growth. Your willingness to walk a different path can give you far more than you imagine. Try something you've never considered before. Go to a new place. Change your desk around. See what you can discover about yourself and the world.



A picture shows the UAE's Al-Badia Farms in Dubai, an indoor vertical farm using innovative hydroponic technology to grow fruits and vegetables all year round.



Emirati farmer Abdul Latif Al-Banna walks among pineapple trees on his smart farm in the desert in the Gulf emirate of Dubai.— AFP photos

HIGH-TECH FARMERS SOW SEEDS OF REVOLUTION IN DUBAI DESERT

An ultra-modern vertical farm in the middle of the desert stands as a testament to Dubai's determination to spark a "green revolution" to overcome its dependence on food imports. Al-Badia market garden farm produces an array of vegetable crops in multi-storey format, carefully controlling light and irrigation as well as recycling 90 percent of the water it uses. "It's a green revolution in the middle of the desert," the farm's director Basel Jammal tells AFP. "Each plant is given the amount of light, humidity, heat and water it needs. It's as if it were a guest in a five-star hotel," he says.

The COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted global supply chains, has refocused attention on food security in the United Arab Emirates. The UAE is rich in oil and ingenuity, but has little arable land and endures dry, baking summers. That was not an issue decades ago when the area was sparsely inhabited by Bedouins. But the wealth generated by oil discoveries since the 1970s sent expatriates flocking to the UAE. Dubai now has more than 3.3 million inhabitants of 200 nationalities, relies largely

on expensive desalinated water, and its food needs have grown and diversified.

'Choices for the future'

Dubai, like the other six emirates that make up the UAE, is heavily dependent on imports, which make up 90 percent of its food needs according to official statistics. Produce arrives from all over the world by air and at Dubai's state-of-the-art port, stocking supermarkets with a range that compares favorably to those of any Western capital. But in a region where geopolitical tensions with nearby Iran frequently threaten to boil over, long-term food security and self-sufficiency are key goals. More than a decade ago, the UAE began buying or leasing agricultural land abroad, mainly in east Africa, to lock in supply even in times of crisis. Problems on the ground including political instability led it to look towards Australia and Eastern Europe.

But the need to address its over-reliance on imports has inspired other strategies including stockpiling and high-tech agriculture. Jammal says his model farm where everything is controlled by computers, is a "choice for



Basel Jammal, the manager of the UAE's Al-Badia Farms' in Dubai, an indoor vertical farm using innovative hydroponic technology to grow fruits and vegetables all year round, is pictured.



A cooled fruit and vegetable warehouse is pictured in Dubai.



A picture shows the milk production line at the UAE's Rawabi factory in Dubai.

the future". "We no longer want to depend on imports. We want to produce locally, all year round, without worrying about climate change, rainfall or drought," he says. Like Al-Badia, a number of farms are springing up in Dubai and less-developed areas like Al-Ain and the mountainous emirate of Ras Al-Khaimah. Abdellatif Al-Banna is another independent farmer joining the innovation drive, growing pineapples in greenhouses using hydroponics-without soil and selling his production via an internet platform.

At his farm in Al-Awir, Banna also experiments with growing fruits, vegetables and even wheat in the cooler months-producing enough grain for his family in what he hopes is a prototype. Elsewhere, not far from Dubai's coastline and glitzy skyscrapers, several farms raise cows in air-conditioned sheds that help provide the local market with dairy products. And in vast tanks overseen by a control room that duplicates Norway's sunrises and sunsets, salmon are being farmed in tanks, despite searing heat outside.

Free of shortages

Such farms are often private ventures but are actively encouraged by Emirati authorities, said Omar Bouchehab, who

chairs Dubai's Food Security Committee. Authorities have launched a plan to raise domestic agricultural production by 15 percent by 2021 and boost the use of agricultural technologies, he said. At the beginning of the coronavirus crisis, while many developed cities saw shelves stripped of pasta, tinned goods and toilet rolls, Dubai did not experience any shortages in fresh produce or staples.

Thanks to airborne cargo services via giant carrier Emirates, which repurposed passenger seats to boost capacity,

Dubai was even able to ensure the re-export of various food products to its neighbors. At the Fresh Market, a large wholesale enterprise, workers busily transported and stored tons of imported fresh food. Executive director Redha Al-Mansouri was upbeat about the emirate's food security. "Dubai has an adequate infrastructure and a stock capable of meeting the needs of the United Arab Emirates, and even the needs of neighboring countries," he said. — AFP



A cooled fruit and vegetable warehouse is pictured in Dubai.



A picture shows a worker works at the milk production line at the UAE's Rawabi factory in Dubai.



Laborers work near cows that were imported from the Netherlands for use in the manufacture of food products, in the UAE's Rawabi factory in Dubai.



A picture shows the UAE's Al-Badia Farms in Dubai, an indoor vertical farm using innovative hydroponic technology to grow fruits and vegetables all year round.



Cows used in the manufacture of food products are pictured in the UAE's Rawabi factory in Dubai.



A picture shows the UAE's Al-Badia Farms in Dubai, an indoor vertical farm using innovative hydroponic technology to grow fruits and vegetables all year round.

Lifestyle | Features



In this picture, an artisan uses a blowtorch to dry the hands of clay idols of elephant headed Hindu god Ganesha at Muslim potter Yusuf Zakaria Galwani's workshop at Kumbharwada inside the Dharavi slums in Mumbai. — AFP photos



In this picture Muslim potter Yusuf Zakaria Galwani (left) along with his staff, work on the idols of elephant headed Hindu god Ganesha at his workshop at Kumbharwada inside the Dharavi slums in Mumbai.



Muslim potter Yusuf Zakaria Galwani (left) along with his staff, work on the idols of elephant headed Hindu god Ganesha.

Indian Muslim artisan fights virus slowdown with Hindu idols

Since the coronavirus pandemic clobbered his pottery business, one Muslim artisan from India's largest slum has turned to a Hindu god to revive his fortunes by making environmentally friendly Ganesha idols for an upcoming festival. Potter Yusuf Zakaria Galwani works with his two brothers in the Mumbai shanty town of Dharavi to create 13-inch-tall statues out of terracotta clay, counting on the god-who is revered as the remover of obstacles-to give his business a much-needed boost ahead of the celebrations. Ganesh Chaturthi-which kicks off on Saturday-is embraced with gusto in India's financial hub. The Hindu festival traditionally ends with devotees leading massive proces-

sions to the Arabian Sea to immerse elaborately decorated figurines of the much-loved elephant god into the water. But this year's celebrations are expected to be muted, with authorities in the virus-plagued city urging people to mark the 10-day festival at home in a bid to ensure social distancing. "As our pottery sales dwindled, I decided to make Ganesha statues... as a means of survival and also to promote environmentally friendly (alternatives)," 40-year-old Galwani told AFP.

Activists have long criticised the practice of immersing the idols in the sea, arguing it contributes to water pollution, and Galwani agrees. "Every year, we see huge Ganesha statues made

from plaster of Paris washing up on the shores after the immersion. This affects our local environment and marine life as well," he said. His clay creations are designed to disintegrate quickly and turn into soil. They also contain a seed inside which can germinate if watered like a plant. Sold for 1,500 rupees (\$20) each, Galwani has received orders for 800 statues so far and hopes to see his neighborhood bounce back economically after tackling the virus.

Made famous by the 2008 Oscar-winner "Slumdog Millionaire", Dharavi was thrown back into the spotlight in April over fears that the lack of social distancing or sanitation in its densely packed streets would make it an easy target for

the virus. But a sharp focus on testing accompanied by tough quarantine and lockdown measures have seen infections plunge across the slum. "Previously I lost business as customers were wary of stepping into the slums," Galwani said. "Now, things have changed and they're willing to even come and pick up their own orders."

A third-generation potter, he said he saw no conflict in practicing his faith while catering to the needs of Hindu worshippers. "What's the big deal if I am a Muslim making statues of Hindu deities like Ganesha? India is a secular democracy and we have grown up with many cultures living together," Galwani added. Although officials have not

issued an outright ban on sea immersions this year, they have imposed restrictions on local celebrations.

Devotees are barred from making public offerings to the deity and organizers have been ordered to sanitize any outdoor marquees several times a day. India has registered over 2.6 million infections-the third-highest in the world-with western Maharashtra state, of which Mumbai is the capital, responsible for a fifth of coronavirus cases nationwide. Pandemic deaths across the country passed 50,000 as of yesterday. — AFP



Aerial views of graffiti on buildings as part of the first edition of the NaLata International Art Festival which has 15 national and international artists of urban art at Largo da Batata, in Sao Paulo, Brazil. — AFP photos



Cardi B gets real with Joe Biden on police brutality, health care

In a wide-ranging interview published Monday, superstar rapper Cardi B candidly quizzed Democratic presidential hopeful Joe Biden on issues including police brutality, health care reform and higher education. Speaking via Zoom for Elle Magazine, the Grammy winner and the former vice president kicked off by agreeing on their mutual goal of removing Republican Donald Trump from the White House, which Cardi B said was particularly vital considering the tumultuous federal pandemic response. The rapper-who vocally backed Democratic socialist Bernie Sanders in the two previous presidential primaries-also reiterated her support for Medicare for All along with free higher education. "And I want Black people to stop getting killed and no justice for it," said the 27-year-old, born Belcalis Almanzar to a Dominican father and Trinidadian mother. "There's no reason why we can't have all of that," Biden answered. "Presidents have to take responsibility."

Biden encouraged Cardi B's young fanbase to stay politically engaged and vote, telling her "the reason I'm so optimistic is because of your generation." "You're the smartest, the best educated, the least prejudiced, and the most engaged generation in history," Biden said. Saying that Trump "appeals to... prejudice," Biden vowed to work towards repairing stark social divisions in the United States, which Cardi B warned "could be the start of a civil war." "Nobody wants to feel targeted. Nobody wants animosity. Everybody just wants the best for themselves, their future, their kids' future," she said. The mother of a two-year-old, Cardi B also brought up the issue of child-care so parents can work, a need that has become particularly acute with schools closed due to COVID-19.

Biden agreed, pointing to his struggles as a single father when his wife and one of his children died in a car accident, with two of his boys surviving. A former stripper, Cardi B emphasized the need for bolstering initiatives in underserved communities, also saying some of those policies must extend beyond K-12 schooling and that as a college student she couldn't always afford meals. The interview comes on the opening day of the Democratic Party's virtual convention, with the party's disparate factions projecting a united front behind the 77-year-old Biden, with a common determination to boot Trump in November's vote. — AFP



This combination of file pictures shows a file photo of US rapper Cardi B and Democratic presidential nominee, former US Vice President Joe Biden. — AFP

Street art thrives in Sao Paulo despite pandemic

Perched atop a platform swaying in the air 10 stories high, Paola Delfin is putting the final touches on a giant graffiti mural in the sprawling concrete jungle of Sao Paulo. The Brazilian megacity is known as a world street-art capital, and not even the coronavirus pandemic has stopped graffiti painters. Delfin and 14 other artists are painting 12 giant murals on the facades of a series of buildings around a square in the chic neighborhood of Pinheiros. The work is part of the NaLata urban art festival, an event that had to be mostly canceled because of the coronavirus pandemic-except for the murals.

Together, they cover 3,689 square meters (40,000 square feet), the biggest

ensemble graffiti work in Brazil. Because of coronavirus stay-at-home measures, "we decided we would only feature artists who were already in Sao Paulo," said the festival's curator, Luan Cardoso. "The festival was originally going to have a series of public activities, but we had to cancel them to avoid crowds. With these paintings, though, this part of the festival is happening in the street. It's totally democratic," he told AFP.

Delfin, a 31-year-old Mexican artist, said painting on the streets of the Brazilian cultural capital was a dream come true. Her 182-square-meter work depicts a man and woman's face in black and white with near-photographic realism. "Sao Paulo is obviously a super important

place in the art world, especially street art and public art. I had always wanted to work here, and doing it in such a central place where lots of people can see is really important," she said.

Brazil is the second-worst-hit country in the pandemic, after the United States, with more than 3.3 million cases and more than 108,000 deaths. Sao Paulo state, the hardest hit, accounts for a quarter of the death toll. The artists all depicted their reflections on the pandemic in their work. Delfin said she wanted hers to send "a message of hope, that things will get back on track." "I can see loads of people looking at it out their windows," she said. —AFP



Suspects charged in the long-unsolved murder of rap star Jam Master Jay

Two people have been charged in connection with the murder of hip hop innovator Jam Master Jay of the seminal group Run-DMC, an infamous New York slaying that's gone unsolved for 18 years. On Monday, prosecutors announced the 10-count indictment against the alleged suspects Ronald Washington-who is already in federal custody-and Karl Jordan Jr, who was arrested

Sunday. The charges are linked to the events of October 30, 2002, when the pioneering rap music star Jason "Jay" Mizell was fatally shot in the head at his studio in Queens. The artist was 37 years old and a father of three.

Jordan Jr, 36, pleaded not guilty to all counts Monday in a teleconferenced arraignment. Washington, 56, will be arraigned at a later date. Both defendants

face charges of murder while engaged in narcotics trafficking, and firearms-related murder. Jordan also faces several additional narcotics distribution counts. If convicted, each defendant faces 20 years to life in prison, or the death penalty. "They walked in and they murdered him in cold blood," said Acting United States Attorney Seth DuCharme in announcing the charges. "For the crime of murder, the passage of time offers you no escape." According to court documents, the motive was linked to Mizell's acquisition of cocaine that was intended for distribution in Maryland by a group including Washington and Jordan. An internal dispute resulted in Mizell cutting Washington out of the deal, which according to prosecutors led to the murder plot.

The killing was particularly shocking given the reputation of Run-DMC, a 1980s-era hip hop group known for hits including "It's Tricky" and "Christmas In Hollis." The trio regularly railed against violent gang culture, which in the early 1990s became associated with rap music. Over the years, investigators had explored a number of possible motives-including that the fatal shooting involved a grudge against fellow Queens-born rapper 50

Cent, who was Jam Master Jay's protege. That theory was later dropped. Jam Master Jay's murder followed a string of executions of rappers in the 1990s, including the notorious shootings of superstars Tupac Shakur and The Notorious B.I.G.

Hip hop pioneers

Along with LL Cool J and Public Enemy, Run-DMC were trailblazers of new school hip hop-a sound characterized by rock elements, aggressive boasting and sociopolitical commentary-and its outgrowth golden era hip hop, which included eclectic sampling. They also established a new, enduring rap aesthetic incorporating street culture, a departure from the flashy, disco-inflected attire of the group's predecessors. Their single "My Adidas" off their hit album "Raising Hell" led to a massive endorsement deal with athletic brand Adidas, kicking off today's inextricable link between hip hop culture and sneakers. And the "Walk This Way" remake off the same album propelled rap into the mainstream, with Run-DMC and Aerosmith performing a groundbreaking rap-rock version of the latter's 1970s hit. —AFP



In this file photo taken on November 5, 2002, the coffin of Run DMC's Jam Master Jay, Jason "Jay" Mizell, is carried out of Allen A.M.E Cathedral after his funeral. — AFP

Sports

Photo of the Day

Alexander Albon of Thailand driving the Aston Martin Red Bull Racing RB16. —Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.comTennis pioneer
Angela Buxton
dies aged 85

LONDON: Former British tennis player, two-time Grand Slam doubles champion and equal rights pioneer Angela Buxton has died at the age of 85, it was announced on Monday.

Buxton, who had Jewish heritage and was targeted by anti-Semitic abuse during her career, was a doubles partner and lifelong friend of Althea Gibson, whose 1956 French Open title was the first Grand Slam singles triumph by a black American player.

"Saddened to hear of the passing of British tennis player Angela Buxton, friend and doubles partner of Althea Gibson," Billie Jean King wrote on social media. "It was wonderful to spend time with her and hear her words about Althea at the unveiling of her statue (at the US Open) last year. Rest In Peace to a true champion."

Buxton won the women's doubles alongside Gibson at both Roland Garros and Wimbledon in 1956, the latter of which was the first All England Club title to be won by a British-Jewish player.

That year Buxton also reached the singles final at Wimbledon, losing to American Shirley Fry.

However her career was cut short at the age of just 22 due to a serious hand condition. Buxton was inducted into the Black Tennis Hall of Fame in 2015 for her relationship with trailblazer Gibson, who won five Grand Slam singles titles including both Wimbledon and the US Open in 1957 and 1958. —AFP

Seager brothers slug it out
as Dodgers top Mariners 11-9

Angels stun Giants with La Stella's walk-off homer

LOS ANGELES: Corey Seager got the best of Kyle Seager on Monday as the Los Angeles Dodgers pounded out 13 hits in an 11-9 victory over the visiting Seattle Mariners in the opener of a four-game, home-and-home series. Corey Seager had a home run and reached base three times as the Seagers played against each other as professionals for the first time. It was Corey Seager's sixth home run of the season. The Mariners' Kyle Seager, the older brother by six years, hit his own home run, had three hits and reached base four times. It was his fourth home run of the season. The Seagers became the first set of brothers to homer in the same game while on opposing teams in more than 19 years. Rookie Evan White also hit two home runs for Seattle. Enrique Hernandez added a two-run home run in a five-run seventh inning for the Dodgers as they rallied for their sixth consecutive victory. It was the Dodgers' second five-run inning of the game, also doing it in the second.

BRAVES 7, NATIONALS 6

Host Atlanta swatted a pair of two-run homers in the ninth inning, the second a walk-off blast by shortstop Dansby Swanson, to rally from a three-run deficit and stun Washington. The Braves came back against Washington closer Daniel Hudson (1-2), who gave up a two-run homer to Adam Duvall after hitting Nick Markakis with a pitch to open the inning. After surrendering a single to Johan Camargo, Hudson got two quick outs, but Swanson hit his third homer of the year, making a winner of reliever Will Smith (2-0). The Nationals got homers from rookie Luis Garcia, Eric Thames, Asdrubal Cabrera and Juan Soto, who hammered a 445-foot solo shot in the ninth. It was Soto's seventh of the season and sixth homer in eight games on Washington's current 10-game road trip. Garcia, ranked as the organization's No. 2 prospect, became the first player born in the 2000s to hit a homer in the major leagues.

PADRES 14, RANGERS 4

Fernando Tatis Jr. drove in seven runs with a pair of home runs as San Diego snapped a five-game losing streak, routing Texas in Arlington, Texas. The 21-year-old Padres shortstop leads the majors with 11 home runs and 28 RBIs. Catcher Austin Hedges also homered for the Padres and former Ranger Jurickson Profar hit a two-run double in the top of the second as the Padres scored five times off Rangers starter and loser Jordan Lyles (1-2) to snap a scoreless tie. Padres starter Zach Davies (3-2) allowed three runs on three hits and two walks with six strikeouts in five-plus innings to earn the win. The Rangers had only four hits, including RBI doubles from Rougned Odor and Joey Gallo.

DIAMONDBACKS 4, ATHLETICS 3

David Peralta's walk-off, bases-loaded single with one out in the bottom of the ninth squirted through the right side of the infield and gave Arizona the win over Oakland in Phoenix. Peralta also homered as the

Diamondbacks ran their winning streak to five games, with another quality outing from pitcher Zac Gallen leading the way who took a no-decision after allowing one run and three hits with eight strikeouts in seven innings. Stefan Crichton (2-0) got the win, recording three outs in the top of the ninth. In the bottom of the ninth, Nick Ahmed hit a leadoff double, knocking out Joakim Soria (2-1). Jake Diekman entered and struck out Kole Calhoun before Ketel Marte's single moved Ahmed to third. Following an intentional walk to Starling Marte, Peralta singled on an 0-2 pitch.

ANGELS 7, GIANTS 6

Tommy La Stella's two-run home run in the bottom of the ninth inning lifted Los Angeles over San Francisco in Anaheim, Calif., snapping a four-game losing streak and extending the Giants' losing streak to five. Thanks to Mike Yastrzemski's two-out, two-run double in the sixth inning, the Giants took a 6-5 lead into the bottom of the ninth. But after a one-out single by David Fletcher, La Stella launched a 1-2 breaking ball off Trevor Gott (1-2) over the fence in right field to end the game. Anthony Rendon had three hits, La Stella, Fletcher, Brian Goodwin and Albert Pujols each had two and Mike Trout homered for the Angels, who finished with 12 hits in all. Fletcher extended his hitting streak to 16 consecutive games. Ty Buttrey (1-0) pitched one scoreless inning to get the win.

ASTROS 2, ROCKIES 1

Rookie right-hander Brandon Bielak surrendered one hit over six innings in his third career start, and host Houston made a two-run first inning stand up against Colorado. Bielak (3-0) earned his first victory as a starter by limiting Colorado to a Trevor Story home run with two outs and a full count in the third inning. Bielak walked four, including three to lead off innings, yet routinely pitched around traffic. He struck out four and threw 87 pitches, 53 for strikes. The Astros extended their winning streak to a season-high five games and improved to 13-2 over their last 15 games against the Rockies including six in a row. Rookie left-hander Blake Taylor recorded the save, his first, by working around a leadoff single by Charlie Blackmon in the ninth.

CARDINALS 3, CUBS 1 (GAME 1)

Brad Miller hit a tiebreaking, two-run double in the top of the seventh inning, and St. Louis held on for a win at Chicago in the first game of a doubleheader. Miller's deep line drive to the gap landed just beyond the glove of Cubs center fielder Albert Almora Jr., who tried to make a diving catch to preserve the tie in a shortened seven-inning game. The Cardinals improved to 3-1 since returning from a long layoff as the team dealt with an outbreak of COVID-19 among players and staff members. The Cubs dropped their fourth game in a row. All of those defeats have come by one or two runs. Giovanni Gallegos (1-0) earned the victory after pitching a scoreless inning of relief, and Andrew Miller deliv-



LOS ANGELES: Enrique Hernandez #14 of the Los Angeles Dodgers hits a two run homerun in front of Austin Nola #23 of the Seattle Mariners, to take a 10-8 lead, during the seventh inning at Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles, California. — AFP

ered a flawless seventh inning for his second save. Kyle Hendricks (3-2) took the loss after allowing three runs on three hits in 6 1/3 innings. He walked one and struck out five.

CUBS 5, CARDINALS 4 (GAME 2)

David Bote hit a go-ahead, three-run homer in the sixth inning, and Chicago held on for a win over St. Louis in the second game of a doubleheader. Cubs reliever Duane Underwood Jr. (1-0) earned his first career victory with 1 1/3 innings of scoreless relief. Brad Miller hit two homers for the Cardinals, who are in a grueling stretch of playing three doubleheaders in five days. Reliever Tyler Webb (0-1) drew the loss after giving up three runs in two-thirds of an inning. The game marked the first time the Cubs batted in the top of the first inning at Wrigley Field in the 106-year history of the ballpark. Chicago was listed as the road team because the game was rescheduled from the Aug. 7-9 series that would have taken place at Busch Stadium before the Cardinals had to change plans because of their COVID-19 outbreak.

WHITE SOX 7, TIGERS 2

Tim Anderson and Luis Robert smacked two home runs apiece while Yoan Moncada and Danny Mendick each hit one to boost host Chicago past Detroit. Detroit suffered its sixth straight defeat as left-hander Matthew Boyd (0-3) again struggled to limit the White Sox. As with Wednesday's start against Chicago in Detroit, Boyd gave up back to back home runs to the first two batters in the game. Anderson and Moncada on Monday. Jonathan Schoop went 3-for-4 for the Tigers, who allowed four

unanswered runs to end the game. Five White Sox relievers combined on 4 1/3 innings of one-hit ball with one walk and three strikeouts. Codi Heuer (1-0) was the winner after pitching a scoreless sixth.

BLUE JAYS 7, ORIOLES 2

Randal Grichuk hit a three-run homer and finished with four RBIs, and starter Hyun Jin Ryu threw six solid innings as Toronto won at Baltimore. Ryu (2-1) gave up one run on four hits. He didn't walk a batter and struck out three. Baltimore went just 2-for-5 with runners in scoring position in the game. Blue Jays leadoff hitter Cavan Biggio hit a two-run homer and knocked in three runs. Orioles starter Alex Cobb (1-2) allowed five runs on eight hits and a walk with four strikeouts in 6 2/3 innings.

YANKEES 6, RED SOX 3

Luke Voit homered in consecutive at-bats, and New York continued its domination over Boston to complete a four-game sweep and remain undefeated in games played at Yankee Stadium. Voit recorded his fourth career multi-homer game — all with the Yankees — and the two blasts gave him seven for the season. The Yankees got their 10th straight win over the Red Sox, two shy of the team record. Right-hander Michael King (1-1) pitched three innings of relief, after an 83-minute rain delay, and was awarded the win. The Red Sox dropped their eighth straight and fell to 1-15 in the past 16 meetings with the Yankees and 1-15 in the past 16 visits to New York. Martin Perez (2-3) took the loss after allowing three runs on two hits in three innings. He walked three and struck out one. — Reuters

Super Rugby goes
from world's best
to unholy mess

SYDNEY: The clock is ticking ever louder as powerbrokers squabble over ways to save Super Rugby, after the coronavirus pushed the once admired southern hemisphere competition to the verge of collapse.

The one point on which all agree is that the globe-spanning model which has seen teams regularly jetting from Buenos Aires to Bloemfontein is all but dead, with or without COVID-19 travel restrictions.

That appears to leave Argentina's Jaguares on the

scrapheap alongside the already jettisoned Sunwolves of Japan, while South Africa's four clubs are considering a switch to Europe's Pro 14.

Australia and New Zealand, meanwhile, are fighting over the remains of what was once hailed as the world's best club rugby tournament.

New Zealand — powerful on the field but commercially limited off it, due to the country's small population — has proposed a trans-Tasman competition involving Australia and a new team from the Pacific islands.

But the proposal caused anger after the Kiwis said they only had room for between two and four Australian sides. Rugby Australia is adamant all five of its franchises must participate, and has given New Zealand a September 4 deadline to accept a separate proposal before they go it alone. New Zealand and Australia both set up makeshift domestic events after the regular Super Rugby competition was cancelled this year, giving a glimpse of

what the future could hold if no agreement is reached.

New Zealand's Super Rugby Aotearoa wrapped up at the weekend and was a huge success, played in packed stadiums until the final weekend, when fans were locked out of one game and another was cancelled because of a surge in COVID-19 cases.

In contrast, Super Rugby AU started slowly with lean crowds, but it has gained traction after some high-quality matches which have left all teams bar the Western Force in contention with three rounds left.

With stalemate looming in the negotiations, senior figures on both sides of the Tasman are urging a compromise for the good of the game. Auckland Blues coach Leon MacDonald said a New Zealand competition without the Australians would be viable, but it would be stronger with them. "Their teams are really starting to get their mojos back and look really strong, so I'd really like to see the Australians involved in some capacity," he

told reporters. There were similar sentiments in Australia from the NSW Waratahs' New Zealand-born coach, Rob Penney. "From a Kiwi's perspective, it's always great to play the Australians, there's something very special about that relationship," he said.

With 15 teams from Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Argentina and Japan, Super Rugby was already struggling before coronavirus hit. It was seen as unwieldy and expensive to run, with too much travel for elite players and a global format straddling so many time zones that fans found it hard to follow.

Japan's Sunwolves were due to be axed at the end of this season to trim the number of teams, but COVID-19 forced the contemplation of more drastic alternatives.

Governing body SANZAAR insists it still has a part to play, even though Australia and New Zealand have left it out in the cold on discussions about Super Rugby's future. — AFP

Sports

Clippers rally to beat Mavericks, Nuggets edge Jazz in overtime

VanVleet scores 30 points as Raptors defeat Nets

LOS ANGELES: Kawhi Leonard scored 29 points and had 12 rebounds and Paul George tallied 27 points as the Los Angeles Clippers held on to beat the Dallas Mavericks 118-110 in the opening game of their playoff series.

"This is my tenth year in the league and I still get butterflies," said George. "It took the second half for me to get going but I understood just to let the game flow." Dallas's 21-year-old star Luka Doncic scored a game high 40 points to become the first player in NBA history to record a 40-point performance in his playoff debut.

"He is the future," George of Doncic, who also had nine assists and seven rebounds. "We didn't expect to stop him but we wanted to wear him down as much as possible." Marcus Morris had 19 points for the Clippers, who will try to go up 2-0 in game two of the best-of-seven series on Wednesday.

Dallas had to play much of the second half without star player Kristaps Porzingis after he was ejected while trying to intervene in a skirmish between his teammate Doncic and Clippers Morris. Porzingis, who argued the ejection, appeared to give Morris a light push in the chest. It was his second technical of the contest. The Mavericks were leading the series opener 71-66 at the time of the ejection. Porzingis had 14 points and six rebounds in 20 minutes.

Also, Jamal Murray scored 36 points, including 10 in overtime, as the Denver Nuggets overcame a 57-point performance from Donovan Mitchell to defeat the Utah Jazz 135-125 in their first round playoff series.

Nikola Jokic finished with 29 points and 10 rebounds for Denver, who were taken to overtime

by the Jazz for the second-straight contest. "I'm smiling because those are the games you want to be in," Murray said. "Those are the games that are the most fun and most competitive."

Jokic had a chance to ice the victory in regulation, but his hook shot at the buzzer over Utah's Rudy Gobert failed to drop. Murray seized command in overtime, clinching the outcome with a three-point dagger with 46 seconds on the clock to give the Nuggets a 1-0 lead in their series.

Mitchell has a habit of saving his best for the

“ I still get butterflies ”

Nuggets, but it wasn't enough as he was 13-of-13 from the free throw line in scoring a franchise playoff record 57 points.

The previous franchise record for most points in a playoff game was 50 by Karl Malone in 2000. Mitchell's total was also the third-highest scoring game in NBA playoff history.

The teams met four times in the regular season. The last time was August 8, when Mitchell had another huge game, but the Jazz lost that one as well in double overtime. The Nuggets have now won all five games against the Jazz this season.



ORLANDO: Ivica Zubac #40 of the LA Clippers grabs the rebound against the Dallas Mavericks during Round One, Game One of the NBA Playoffs at The AdventHealth Arena in Orlando, Florida. — AFP

This is the fifth time the teams have met in the playoffs, and the Jazz have won three of those previous playoff series, most recently a 4-2 win in the first round of the 2010 playoffs.

The Jazz were eliminated in the first round by Houston in 2019, but reached the Western Conference semi-finals the previous two playoffs.

Also, Fred VanVleet scored 30 points as the

defending NBA champion Toronto Raptors defeated the Brooklyn Nets 134-110 in the opening game of their first-round series. Jayson Tatum scored a playoff-career-high 32 points. Jaylen Brown added 29 and the Boston Celtics beat the Philadelphia 76ers 109-101 in the opener of their series. Celtics forward Gordon Hayward left the game late in the fourth with an ankle injury. — AFP

England and Pakistan draw second Test

SOUTHAMPTON: Pakistan's Mohammad Abbas took two wickets on Monday as a weather-interrupted second Test against England at Southampton ended in a predictable draw. England were 110-4 in reply to Pakistan's first innings 236 when home captain Joe Root (nine not out) declared to hasten the end of a match ahead of what would have been the statutory last hour.

Root's move ended the shortest Test in England, in terms of balls bowled, since a rain-affected draw between England and Pakistan at Lord's in 1987. Abbas, who took 2-28 from 14 overs, removed Zak Crawley (53) and Dom Sibley (32).

England, who enjoyed a three-wicket win in the first Test at Old Trafford earlier this month, remain 1-0 up in a three-match series ahead of Friday's finale, also at Southampton. "It has been frustrating for both teams," Pakistan captain Azhar Ali told Sky Sports. "The game was set quite nicely, with conditions good for bowling throughout — the total we got, we thought would be very competitive but, unfortunately, the weather was the winner in the end."

Umpires Richard Kettleborough and Michael Gough had been widely criticised for their interpretation of the rules regarding rain and bad light, even on a ground where the floodlights have been in use, with former England captain Nasser Hussain saying that "merely because conditions are not ideal is not a reason to walk off the field".

Root, while happy to still be 1-0 up, suggested England could follow the example of other Test-match countries by being flexible with their start time in the event of bad weather, rather than sticking rigidly to 1000 GMT and trying to make up lost time later in the day.



SOUTHAMPTON: Pakistan's Mohammad Abbas appeals successfully for a LBW (leg before wicket) decision against England's Zak Crawley (L) during play on the fifth day of the second Test cricket match between England and Pakistan at the Ageas Bowl in Southampton. —AFP

"Potentially, in England, we may be able to start half an hour earlier," he said. Pakistan's Mohammad Rizwan was named man of the match for his fine 72 in overcast conditions that made batting difficult.

"The England bowling attack is a brilliant attack, with the experience of (Stuart) Broad and (James) Anderson," said Azhar. "The guys stuck to the task." Rizwan added: "I was looking forward to a good contest - we've worked hard for it but unfortunately we couldn't play the full game."

START DELAYED AGAIN

An early morning downpour meant Monday's play did not start until 1420 GMT. England were then 7-1 after Rory Burns was out for a duck on Sunday. Sibley was two not out and Crawley, play-

ing after star all-rounder Ben Stokes opted out to be with his ill father in New Zealand, five not out.

Crawley, beneath sunny blue skies, confidently pulled and drove the usually accurate Abbas for two elegant fours.

Azhar, perhaps wary of risking his frontline quicks in a dead match ahead of the third Test, brought medium-pace Shan Masood, an opening batsman, into the attack.

Rizwan, who had impressed behind the stumps in the first Test, missed a chance to stump Crawley, on 37, off leg-spinner Yasir Shah. Crawley completed a 97-ball fifty when he pulled Yasir for four. But two balls later, Crawley was out when Abbas, with the first delivery of a new spell, had him lbw on the back leg after nipping one off the seam. — AFP

four of their first round series. Kadri finished with two goals and an assist and German goalkeeper Philipp Grubauer stopped 14 shots for Colorado who were coming off a 4-2 loss in game three. The Avalanche now lead the best-of-seven series three games to one.

Matt Calvert, Cale Makar and Mikko Rantanen each had a goal and an assist for Colorado who started quickly Monday by scoring three times in the first period. Grubauer got the start after Czech Pavel Francouz started in goal for game three.

Matt Nieto and Joonas Donskoi also scored to put Colorado in position to clinch the series today. Arizona netminder Darcy Kuemper had been the talk of the NHL playoffs early, but he gave up four goals on 22 shots Monday before being replaced by Antti Raanta in the third period. Jakob Chychrun scored for the Coyotes, who managed just 15 shots on the Colorado goal.

BLUE JACKETS ON BRINK

Andrei Vasilevskiy had 28 saves as the Tampa Bay Lightning pushed the Columbus Blue Jackets to the brink of elimination with a 2-1 win. Tampa leads the series 3-1 with game five set for today in Toronto. Barclay Goodrow and Yanni Gourde each scored for the Lightning, who are trying to avenge a series loss after being swept by Columbus in four straight games in the first round of the 2019 playoffs.

"Every game has been a battle, and I don't expect any different going forward," said Lightning centre Blake Coleman. "They're not going to be a team that lays over for us. Being up 3-1 is great, but it doesn't mean anything if you don't take care of business." Cam Atkinson scored for Columbus, and Joonas Korpiasalo had 20 saves. Ryan O'Reilly tallied three points and Alex Pietrangolo had a goal and an assist as the defending Stanley Cup champion St. Louis Blues beat the Vancouver Canucks 3-1 to level their series at 2-2. — AFP

Bruins erupt for four goals in third to smother Hurricanes

LOS ANGELES: Jake DeBrusk scored twice in the third period for the Boston Bruins who rallied from a two-goal deficit to beat the Carolina Hurricanes 4-3 in a thrilling NHL playoff game on Monday.

The Bruins scored four times in less than seven minutes of the final period at Scotiabank Arena in Toronto to take a 3-1 lead in the best-of-seven Eastern Conference series.

Game five is today in the hub city of Toronto. Connor Clifton tied the score 2-2 halfway through the third before teammate Brad Marchand scored on a breakaway 90 seconds later to give the Bruins their first lead of the contest.

Justin Williams, Jordan Martinook and Teuvo Teravainen scored for the Hurricanes, who had a 2-0 lead after two periods. Boston goalie Jaroslav Halak stopped 16 shots. Halak was in his second game since first-choice Tuukka Rask announced at the weekend that he was opting out of the playoffs because of family reasons.

Carolina goalie James Reimer stopped 29 shots. DeBrusk capped the scoring for Boston with 5:43 remaining and Carolina added one more late goal but that was as close as they could get.

The Hurricanes were missing Russian forward Andrei Svechnikov, who was hurt in game three, and the Bruins played without their leading scorer David Pastrnak, who scored 48 goals in the regular season.

In Edmonton, Nazem Kadri had two power play goals as the Colorado Avalanche rebounded from a loss to rout the Arizona Coyotes 7-1 in game

Aouar gives Lyon reason to believe in another CL shock

LISBON: In Houssem Aouar, Lyon have a player who is both a symbol of their success at bringing through gifted young talent and a reason why the French side can hope to pull off another Champions League sensation when they meet Bayern Munich in the semi-finals in Lisbon today.

Moussa Dembele stole the headlines by scoring the late goals which gave Lyon a shock 3-1 win over Manchester City in the quarter-finals, but Aouar was at the origin of both.

The 22-year-old playmaker supplied the pass for Dembele to put Lyon 2-1 up in the 79th minute at the Estadio Jose Alvalade. Then it was Aouar's shot which Ederson parried out for Dembele to wrap up the victory.

According to statisticians Opta, only Kylian Mbappe and Riyad Mahrez have given more assists than Aouar since the start of last season in the Champions League.

Yet his game against City was about much more than that. For all the opposition's expensive talent, he ran the midfield.

It is little wonder he has been linked with a move to City, while not so long ago it was Barcelona who were reportedly his biggest admirers. Aouar has been at Lyon since he was a little boy, signing for his hometown team aged 11 and quickly wowing those who brought him through the ranks.

"He was always getting moved up to play with a higher age group because his potential was so great," his former youth coach, Armand Garrido, told AFP in Lyon.

This may be the year that Aouar, not yet capped at full international level by France, moves on. He has three years left on his contract and his value is sky high.

After Saturday's game, City coach Pep Guardiola praised Aouar and his midfield colleagues, Bruno Guimaraes, also 22, and 20-year-old Maxence Caqueret, another academy graduate. "They have three exceptional players in the middle," he said.

Now that trio are preparing for a meeting with a Bayern side who appear on another level to everyone in Europe just now. After finishing a lowly seventh in the curtailed Ligue 1 season, Lyon came to Lisbon for the 'Final Eight' knowing they had to win the Champions League just to qualify for Europe again next season.

That seems highly unlikely, but before facing City, Aouar made clear that Lyon had not come to Lisbon to make up the numbers. "If we are here, it is because we want to go as far as possible," he said.

A CLUB WITH SOLID FOUNDATIONS

Nevertheless, 'OL' are punching above their weight here, having been forced to adapt to a new landscape in France since the Qatari takeover of PSG in 2011.

Champions seven years running between 2002 and 2008, they are no longer the country's leading force, but the foundations have been laid for Lyon to establish themselves as Ligue 1's second power.

Their revenue last season of 220.8 million euros (\$262m) was only a third of that of Bayern and PSG, but it placed them 17th in the Deloitte Football Money League. — AFP

Legendary Olympiakos keeper Theodoridis dead

ATHENS: Savvas Theodoridis, the revered goalkeeper who was a key figure in the great Olympiakos side of the 1950s and early '60s, died on Monday at the age of 85.

Theodoridis was capped 12 times for Greece and served as vice president and general manager of Olympiakos until becoming the Piraeus side's honorary president.

"A great member of the Olympiakos family departed today. Savvas and I had a very special bond of love and mutual understanding, both on and off the pitch," said Olympiakos boss Evangelos Marinakis. "Standing always next to his beloved Olympiakos, he always offered his services from various positions, carrying out the duties of vice president and general manager. As such, he won among others seven domestic titles," a statement from the club said.

Last month he celebrated the club's 45th championship trophy which was dedicated to him personally by Marinakis. Greek Sports Under secretary Lefteris Avgenakis said the loss of Theodoridis, "the eternal teenager of Olympiakos with his genuine and unadulterated love for his team, spreads grief."

"Greek football has lost a part of itself, the loyal keeper for 70 years," Avgenakis added. Theodoridis joined Olympiakos as a player in 1955 and he retired at the age of 27 seven years later, with many considering him as one of the best goalkeepers in the club's history. He passed away in an Athens hospital of an undisclosed illness. — AFP

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14 Seager brothers slug it out as Dodgers top Mariners 11-9



15 Clippers rally to beat Mavericks, Nuggets edge Jazz in overtime



15 England and Pakistan draw second Test



DUESSELDORF: Inter Milan's Italian defender Danilo D'Ambrosio (R) scores the 2-0 during the UEFA Europa League semi-final football match Inter Milan v Shakhtar Donetsk in Duesseldorf, western Germany. — AFP

Inter demolish Shakhtar to reach final

Martinez dazzles, Lukaku extends his record Europa League goalscoring run

DUESSELDORF: Lautaro Martinez played chief tormentor as Inter Milan claimed an emphatic 5-0 victory against Shakhtar Donetsk to reach the Europa League final and come closer to a first title in nine years on Monday.

Argentine striker Martinez, who scored twice, was the pinnacle of a perfect tactical display as Antonio Conte's team set up a clash with five-time champions Sevilla, also thanks to a goal by Danilo D'Ambrosio and a Romelu Lukaku brace.

Shakhtar had their share of possession but failed to threaten a compact Inter side, who eventually completely overwhelmed their opponents. Sevilla beat Manchester United 2-1 on Sunday to book their place in Friday's showdown.

"It's an incredible night, the kind we dreamed of. It has been a long time since I had played such a match and we have shown that Inter are ready for the

big matches," Martinez told Sky Sport Italia. "I am very happy for the team, which is playing well and growing match after match."

Shakhtar dominated possession as expected but were toothless up front and Inter opened the scoring with their first chance after 19 minutes. Nicolo Barella collected a woeful clearance from goalkeeper Andriy Pyatov and raced down the right flank before crossing for Martinez, whose perfectly-timed header went into the back of the net.

Seeking their first trophy since a 2011 Coppa Italia triumph, Inter controlled Shakhtar, who pinged the ball around without being able to bring it forward before the 43rd minute, when Marcos Antonio fired a shot just over the bar.

Pyatov made up for his earlier mistake with a superb save four minutes into the second half, tipping the ball wide to deny Martinez who had attempted

a fine loop from 30 metres. Shakhtar, who had not mustered a single shot on target in the first half, still failed to threaten after the break until the 62nd minute when Junior Morales headed the ball straight at Samir Handanovic.

"We've had a great campaign in Europe but this result was a big disappointment. We couldn't show our football. Their second goal destroyed us mentally," said Shakhtar's Davit Khocholava. "Inter have two fantastic strikers. It was very hard to play against them in one-on-one situations."

Inter were just more clinical. Two minutes later, D'Ambrosio headed home from Barella's corner to make it 2-0.

REMARKABLE MARTINEZ

Martinez curled in a perfect shot in the 74th to cap a remarkable individual performance, dashing any

hope of a comeback by Shakhtar. Martinez, who before his brace had not previously scored in the competition, then turned provider releasing Lukaku on the right for the Belgian striker to make it 4-0 from inside the box.

Lukaku has now scored in 10 consecutive Europa League matches and by producing another cool finish at the end of powerful run seven minutes from time, he is now one short of Ronaldo's mark of 34 goals in one season for Inter in 1997-98.

"We are a team that is growing day by day, there are both young and experienced players. This is fundamental in a team, so the less experienced can follow those who have more experience," added Martinez.

"Sevilla are a strong team. We will try to prepare as best we can for this match, we hope that everything goes well and that the Cup can go to Inter." — Reuters

Barcelona sack Setien, Koeman may take charge

MADRID: Barcelona have sacked Quique Setien as coach, the club confirmed on Monday, with Ronald Koeman the frontrunner to be his replacement. "The new coach will be announced in the coming days as part of a wide ranging restructuring of the first team," Barca said on Twitter.

Setien was only appointed in January but has paid the price for Barca surrendering the La Liga title to Real Madrid and then being humiliated by Bayern Munich in the Champions League.

His exit was finalised during an emergency board meeting at Camp Nou, which lasted almost six hours and saw Koeman emerge as the favoured choice to take charge. The club also announced next year's presidential elections, scheduled for June, will be brought forward to March 15.

Angry supporters had hoped they would be held

immediately but that possibility was ruled out, meaning under-fire president Josep Maria Bartomeu will continue. "After analysing all the options, the Board considers that this (March 15) is the most viable date for holding these elections," the statement continued.

"The Board understands that the immediate call for elections is not feasible considering the league will begin on the weekend of September 12 and due to the economic and social framework caused by the Covid-19 crisis."

Setien's successor will still be under pressure to deliver quickly given a new board next year could install their own coach, with Xavi Hernandez linking himself to rival presidential candidate Victor Font.

Koeman has been in charge of the Dutch national team since 2018 and is due to lead them at the postponed European Championship next year and the World Cup in 2022. Mauricio Pochettino was also considered but his previous comments dismissing Barca due to his links with rivals Espanyol have counted against him.

Koeman and his agent were negotiating a two-year contract on Monday night, according to reports in Spain, with the second year dependent on the outcome of the presidential elections.

He enjoys hero-status at Barcelona after starring for them as a player under Johan Cruyff and scoring the winning goal in the 1992 European Cup final. But his coaching career has been mixed and he would arrive at a club in crisis, with one of his first tasks to persuade captain Lionel Messi not to depart.

MESSI FUTURE UNCERTAIN

Shortly before the board meeting began on Monday, sources at Barcelona insisted the club had not heard anything from Messi about wanting to leave. But the 33-year-old has grown increasingly frustrated in recent months and a report from Esporte Interativo on Sunday claimed he has made up his mind to find a new club this summer.

Gerard Pique said he would depart if it was necessary and it remains to be seen which players are considered surplus to requirements.

Any recovery might be focused on youth, with Ansu Fati, Riqui Puig and Frenkie de Jong leading the next generation.

Koeman will know the scale of the challenge at Barcelona, where an ageing team ended up lost under Setien, who failed to convince the players of his methods.

Setien oversaw 16 wins, four draws and five defeats from his 25 games in charge.

Despite the occasional high-scoring win and some eye-catching spells of the possession football he craves, Barcelona were also ponderous, disjointed and defensively weak.

Before the three-month suspension, they lost the Clasico to Real Madrid and after it, they drew against Sevilla, Celta Vigo and Atletico Madrid.

After defeat by Osasuna effectively handed Madrid the title, Messi vented his frustration, pointedly saying the team had been a mess since January, which was when Setien was appointed.

Setien, meanwhile, admitted he had never managed a dressing room like Barca's and few place the blame for the club's decline at his feet.

Most of the fans' fury is directed at Bartomeu and the board, who have alienated the dressing room and made too many mistakes in the transfer market.

There was no mention of sporting director Eric Abidal in the club's statements and it appears he will continue for now. Abidal drew public criticism from Messi in February after suggesting the players were responsible for the sacking of Ernesto Valverde. He is also believed to have been key to the appointment of Setien. — AFP