



2 80% adherence to anti-virus measures by gyms, shops



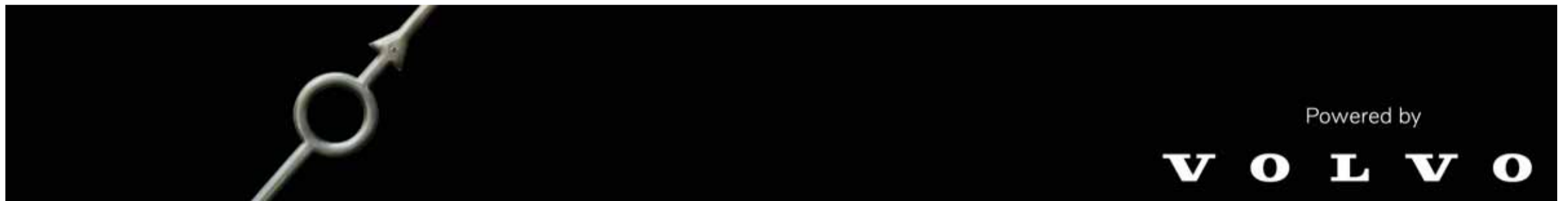
5 Nightmares, flashbacks, fatigue: Beirut faces mental health crisis



13 Gold hunters destroy Sudan's priceless past



16 Bayern defeat PSG to become European champs for 6th time



No new virus test required for trips of less than 4 days

US approves plasma treatment • Global death toll above 800,000

New curbs on visa transfers to private sector

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Manpower yesterday issued a decision banning the transfer of government workers to the private sector and placed restrictions on the transfer of dependent visas to work visas in the private sector. Director General of the Public Authority for Manpower Ahmad Al-Moussa said the decisions are based on the instructions of Social Affairs Minister and State Minister for Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel. Moussa said transferring employees from the

private sector to the government should comply with procedures followed by the manpower authority and the Civil Service Commission. The decision to ban transfers of government workers to the private sector exempts Kuwaiti women's husbands and children, wives of Kuwaitis, Palestinians with travel documents and those in specialized technical professions in the health field who are transferring to licensed facilities to provide medical services, such as doctors, nurses and others in the medical field. Moussa said only certain categories of expats are allowed to transfer dependent visas to work in the private sector, including husbands and children of Kuwaiti women, those born in Kuwait, Palestinians with travel documents and those having at least a diploma after the secondary stage from Kuwaiti educational establishments.

By B Izzak and Agencies

KUWAIT/WASHINGTON: Kuwait's civil aviation authority said people who travel out of Kuwait and return within four days are not required to do a new PCR coronavirus test on their return. The authority has already extended the validity of the PCR test to four days instead of three (96 hours instead of 72 hours) for travelers returning to Kuwait or flying out of Kuwait. The authority said travelers who take the test and fly out of Kuwait and then return within 96 hours are not required to repeat the coronavirus test. Meanwhile, the United States announced an emergency authorization to use blood plasma from recovered coronavirus patients as a treatment for the disease, which has killed more than 800,000 people around the world. Plasma is believed to contain powerful antibodies that can help fight COVID-19 faster, and has already been used on patients in the US and other countries.

In April, Kuwait's central blood bank started to produce plasma artificially to help treat coronavirus patients. The process entails taking samples from COVID-19 patients who have recovered from the disease, and transfusing it to current patients to help them boost their immunity, the blood bank's head of blood transfusion Dr Reem Al-Radhwan told KUNA at the time. Blood plasma extracted from a former patient could help treat three active patients, she added. Many governments around the world are renewing efforts - including the reimposition of lockdowns - to contain the virus, which has infected well over 24 million people. The United States remains the hardest-hit country with more than 176,000 fatalities, and President Donald Trump is under intense pressure to curb the contagion. The plasma therapy shows "an incredible rate of success" and "will save countless lives", Trump claimed on Sunday - but that went much further than his own health officials' cautious welcome of the treatment.

Continued on Page 2

NZ mosque survivors face gunman

CHRISTCHURCH, New Zealand: The white supremacist who murdered 51 Muslims in last year's New Zealand mosques shooting showed no emotion yesterday as distraught survivors confronted him in court with harrowing accounts of the atrocity. At the opening of the sentencing hearing in a Christchurch courtroom, prosecutors revealed chilling details of a meticulously planned attack in which Brenton Tarrant wanted "to have shot more people than he did".



Brenton Tarrant

With the Australian gunman face-to-face with the bereaved families and wounded for the first time, survivors told of hiding under bodies, of forgiving

Continued on Page 2

15 killed in twin bombing in Philippines

MANILA: Twin blasts including a suicide bombing killed 15 people and wounded 75 others on a restive southern Philippine island yesterday, among them security forces and civilians, with Islamist militants suspected of being behind the attack. The bombs went off within an hour of each other in the main town on Jolo island, a stronghold of Abu Sayyaf, an Islamic State-linked group that has intensified its campaign in recent years through the use of suicide bombers. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for what was the biggest attack of its kind in the southern Philippines since Jan 2019, when a double suicide bombing at a Jolo church killed more than 20 people and wounded over 100. The military said the first blast happened around noon yesterday, when a homemade bomb in a motorcycle was triggered close to two parked army trucks, killing soldiers and civilians.

Continued on Page 2



JOLO: Military personnel and civilians stretcher away a soldier after an improvised bomb exploded next to a military vehicle in this town on Sulu island yesterday. — AFP

After Beirut blast, workers beg to leave

BEIRUT: After struggling first through Lebanon's economic crisis and then the coronavirus pandemic, Ethiopian worker Tarik Kebeda said the deadly blast that ripped through her Beirut home was the final straw. Inside the small house she shares with four friends, she pointed to the window frames covered by sheets, because the glass was smashed out by the Aug 4 explosion. They had already lost their jobs - as domestic workers, or in supermarkets or restaurants - but now their home too is at risk. "I'm scared to sleep here," the 22-year old said, showing the deep cracks running down the bedroom's walls, saying she feared the building "will collapse on top of us". Thousands of foreign workers were already stranded in Lebanon, after months of dollar shortages and then

the coronavirus pandemic. Then came the blast in Beirut's port that killed more than 181 people, wounded thousands and devastated swathes of the city. Many say it was just one disaster too many, and now they need to leave. "I love Lebanon, but I don't want to live here anymore," Kebeda said. "There's no more work. How will I eat?" Some foreign workers also say they feel sidelined by aid efforts. In the poor neighborhood of Karantina, Kebeda's neighbor Hana claimed aid workers sometimes put fellow Lebanese first. Next door, 31-year-old Romane Abera recounted how she hid beneath a parked car to hide from the explosion. "Once, a truck came to distribute food boxes but they said: 'Only give them to the Lebanese,'" Hana said. Today her damaged home is barely held up by scaffolding, with hot gusts of summer air sweeping through a huge hole in the wall. "I wish Lebanon could go back to how it was before," said Abera, who left behind her baby boy in Ethiopia and recently lost her job.

Continued on Page 2

Indian resort turns pool into fish farm

KOCHI, India: A luxury resort in southern India has turned its swimming pool into a fish farm to stop the business sinking amid the economic crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic. Normally the 150-m pool at the Aveda Resort in Kerala state is packed with European tourists. Now thousands of pearl spot fish are causing the splash. The complex was forced to shut in March when a nationwide coronavirus lockdown was ordered. Few hotels have been allowed to reopen since. Of those which are still shuttered, not many boast a pool with 7.5 million litres of water, which can be put to alternative use. "We have had zero revenues, so in June, we put around 16,000 two-month-old pearl spot fish in the pool," Aveda's general manager Jyotish Surendran told AFP. The fish, which takes about eight months to reach full size, is a popular ingredient in dishes in southern India and the Middle East. "We plan to harvest by November and will



KUMARAKOM, India: A general view of a swimming pool that has been turned into a fish farm is pictured at Kerala's Aveda Resort on Sunday. — AFP

export to the Middle East," Surendran said, predicting about four tons of pearl spots growing in the swimming pool could be worth \$40,000 on the market. The makeshift farm would not cover the losses from the pandemic, which has driven many hotels to bankruptcy, said the hotel boss. But Surendran was hopeful that the

business would help cover basic bills so the business can keep running until tourists return. And the Aveda plans to keep faith with the pearl spot even when business resumes. "We can't continue with this farm in the pool, but we are trying to find alternative land where we can build up this knowledge for bigger projects," he said. — AFP

Local

Kuwait's Deputy Amir gets call from Bahraini King inquiring about Amir

Speaker: Deputy Amir's call 'necessary and warranted'



His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday a call from Bahraini King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa who inquired about the health condition of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. King Hamad prayed to Allah Almighty to bless His Highness the Amir with rapid recovery. His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince thanked King Hamad for his prayers, and said his phone call reflected the "historic and deep" relations between the two countries, wishing him good health and for Bahrain further progress and prosperity under his leadership.

His Highness Sheikh Nawaf had also received a cable on Sunday from Sudan's Transitional Military Council Deputy Head Lt Gen Mohammad Hamdan Dagalo, who inquired about the health of His Highness the Amir, wishing him life-long health and wellbeing. His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince expressed gratitude for the sincere gesture and, in turn, wished the Sudanese official health and wellbeing.

'Necessary and warranted'

In other news, National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince's call to "reorder" politics in the country is "necessary and warranted,"

describing his earlier address as firm and clear. In his assessment of the address, the parliament chief said in a press statement that His Highness Sheikh Nawaf shed light on a couple of aspects, when highlighting corruption in the country. These include "the need to tackle corruption, that nobody is above the law - even members of the Ruling Family - and that the matter has gained his own personal interest and observation."

The other being "not to use these irregular acts as a reason and a means to spread a culture of frustration and portray Kuwait as a 'hub for corruption,' as described by His Highness (the Deputy Amir)," Ghanem added. "His

Highness, while stressing the need to fight corruption and obtain fair punishment for the corrupt, stressed his condemnation of what he called, the heresy of leaks and manifestations of tampering and spreading an atmosphere of discord and harming the nation," Ghanem said. His Highness the Deputy Amir was also keen to reiterate the words of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, who repeatedly warned of the dangers some social media rumors, in their deviation of the truth and aim to spread an atmosphere of sedition and launch baseless accusations. He also warned against being drawn in to such an atmosphere, the chief lawmaker concluded. — KUNA

Kuwait registers three deaths, 432 COVID-19 cases



KUWAIT: Kuwait announced yesterday it registered three deaths that resulted from the novel coronavirus, while 432 people tested positive for the virus in the past 24 hours. Ministry of Health Spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad said that total deaths reached 518, and the tally of registered cases topped 80,960. He said cases in health zones were: 150 in Ahmadi, 83 in Farwaniya, 80 in Jahra, 60 in the Capital and 59 in Hawally. The health ministry announced earlier yesterday that 618 people recov-

ered from the virus, raising the total number of recovered patients to 72,925.

Dr Sanad said 99 patients were receiving treatment in intensive care units, while a total of 7,517 people were receiving medical care in the past 24 hours. Health care workers conducted 3,056 swab tests in the same period, said Dr Sanad, raising total tests since the outbreak of the disease to 590,623. He urged the public to abide by health preventive measures including social distancing. — KUNA

Gyms, shops 80% observing measures against COVID-19

KUWAIT: Gyms and shops' adherence to health guidelines set to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) is at about 80 percent nationwide, said chief of Kuwait's municipality yesterday. Speaking to the press while inspecting several establishments in Sharq, Director General of Kuwait Municipality Ahmad Al-Manfouhi indicated that the municipality was keen on following up health guidelines throughout the country to positively participate in the national fight against COVID-19. Measures such as temperature checks in addition to distributing gloves and sanitizers for clients as well as employees were among the few easy steps that will contribute majorly to curb the spread of the virus, he affirmed. He added that since the cabinet approved the fourth phase of the national plan to bring back normalcy, the municipality and its teams were working vigorously to implement the steps included in the strategy. Manfouhi revealed that the municipality was working with health ministry teams to ensure that commercial establishments were carrying on their part in preventing COVID-19 spreading, stressing that any violations will result in closure of shops. He urged citizens and residents to abide by the set regulations and help the government to achieve the goal of restoring normal life in Kuwait. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwait Municipality Ahmad Al-Manfouhi (left) inspects a gym in Sharq yesterday. — KUNA



15 killed in twin bombing...

Continued from Page 1

As police and army surveyed the scene, a suicide bomber tried to breach a cordon and detonated her device, killing herself and several others.

In total, eight members of the security forces, six civilians and the bomber were killed and 27 security personnel and 48 civilians were wounded in the attacks on Jolo, one of a chain of mainly Muslim islands in the southwest of the majority Roman

Catholic country. "We condemn in the strongest possible terms the explosion incidents in Jolo," presidential spokesman Harry Roque said. "Authorities are now conducting an investigation, which includes identifying individuals or groups behind these dastardly attacks."

The troops were among hundreds from a special infantry division created by President Rodrigo Duterte to destroy Abu Sayyaf, a group notorious for banditry, piracy and kidnap-for-ransom and countless attacks on civilian and military targets. Yesterday's incident was one of at least six suicide bombings in the past three years, a mode of attack previously rare in the Philippines, despite decades of separatist conflict that has given rise to Islamist sentiments. — Reuters

No new virus test required for trips...

Continued from Page 1

But the extent of its effectiveness is still being debated by experts and some have warned it could carry side effects. When challenged by a reporter to explain the contradiction between his confidence in the treatment and the caution among experts, Trump passed the question to one of his experts and then ended the press conference.

Breakneck efforts to develop a vaccine or effective treatments are under way around the world, but until one is available, social distancing measures remain among the few weapons against the virus. New Zealand yesterday extended the lockdown of its biggest city to Sunday as it battled a small but persistent outbreak. Auckland went into lockdown on Aug 12, a day after the virus re-emerged in the city and ended New Zealand's run of 102 days without local transmission.

European nations have also tightened border restrictions, wary of new virus clusters. Strict border

controls came into effect in Finland yesterday, with arrivals from just a handful of countries able to enter without virus restrictions. Norway had already tightened its border controls on Saturday, while South Korea imposed social distancing measures nationwide on Sunday to fight its latest outbreak.

Indonesian authorities have banned foreign tourists from Bali, a popular holiday destination, for the rest of 2020 - scrapping plans to open up the island from next month. The pandemic has devastated the global economy, and policies to reduce the high risk of transmission in large groups of people have impacted everything from sport and religious services to music concerts and elections.

It caused the unprecedented delay of the summer Olympics and Paralympics in Tokyo to next year. Some major world sports have resumed but with no spectators. There was no roar as Bayern Munich on Sunday won the Champions League final - the biggest game in European club football - in an empty, 65,000-capacity Lisbon stadium.

Some nations have had to deal with related tragedies as they have enforced virus lockdowns. At least 13 young people suffocated in a crush during a raid at a nightclub in Peru's capital Lima over the weekend, with people trying to escape through a single exit.

NZ mosque survivors...

Continued from Page 1

Tarrant, and of living with the sound of an automatic rifle ringing in their ears. Held amid tight security with snipers positioned on downtown rooftops, the hearing was told how on March 15 last year the heavily-armed Tarrant opened fire on men, women and children, ignoring pleas for help and driving over one body as he moved from one mosque to the next.

When he saw three-year-old Mucad Ibrahim clinging to his father's leg, Tarrant killed him "with two precisely aimed shots," prosecutor Barnaby Hawes told the court. Tarrant has pleaded guilty to 51 charges of murder, 40 of attempted murder and one of terrorism

after storming into two mosques in Christchurch, with the rampage ending when police stopped him as he travelled to a third. Lawyers expect the 29-year-old to be the first person jailed for life without parole in New Zealand.

Wearing grey prison clothing and surrounded in the dock by three police officers, the 29-year-old remained silent, occasionally looking around the room, as Hawes delivered a chilling summary of facts. "He admitted going into both mosques intending to kill as many people as he could," Hawes said. "He stated that he wanted to have shot more people than he did and was on the way to another mosque in Ashburton to carry out another attack when he was stopped," he said.

"In his interview, the defendant referred to his attacks as 'terror attacks'. He further stated the attacks were motivated by his ideological beliefs and he intended to instill fear into those he described as 'invaders', including the Muslim population or more generally non-European immigrants." — AFP

After Beirut blast, workers...

Continued from Page 1

Hundreds of thousands of migrant workers of multiple nationalities - including at least 250,000 housekeepers and carers - toil in Lebanon for cash to send home. They enter Lebanon under a controversial sponsorship system called "kafala", which has been repeatedly denounced by rights groups as enabling a wide range of abuses.

Under kafala, a worker cannot terminate their contract without the permission of their employer or they will lose their legal immigration status. Many foreign workers have reached breaking point. Outside the Gambian consulate in Beirut, around 30 Gambian women clamored for help. "We're like slaves," one protester shouted. "We are not treated well, and the racism here is very high."

Zeina Ammar, from Lebanon's Anti-Racism Movement (ARM) organization, urged countries to

fund evacuations, and provide travel documents when needed. "We want to go home," they chanted. Some threw handfuls of dirt towards the building, while others hit its door with hammers. "It should be a systematic, unconditional provision of laissez-passer to absolutely everyone in order to save their lives," she said.

After the port blast, Lebanese shared videos online celebrating the courage of migrant workers helping with clean-up efforts in the streets, as well as footage of a housekeeper on Aug 4 diving to rescue a toddler from an imploding window. But ARM says not enough attention is being given to the migrants who fell victim to the blast. "The official tally of the deceased and the missing remains incomplete, excluding primarily people of non-Lebanese origin," ARM said. "Migrant workers and refugees are systematically dehumanized and marginalized in Lebanon, in life as in death."

Outside the Kenyan consulate, dozens of women said they had been holding a sit-in since Aug 10 to demand their repatriation. Among them, a 21-year-old recounted escaping abusive employers, only to be injured and see her home destroyed in this month's explosion. — AFP

Local

Expatriate women can sponsor children, as long as they meet conditions

Expats wary of three decisions that might 'tear families apart'

KUWAIT: The residency affairs department retracted its verbal decision to stop transferring children's residencies to their mother in case the father leaves the country for good or dies, Al-Qabas reported yesterday quoting 'high ranking sources'. The sources said new instructions were issued to directors of residency subdivisions in all six governorates to resume receiving children's residency transfer applications sponsored by their mothers, provided that they meet family visa conditions, most important of which is a salary of KD 500 and higher in the mother's work permit. They added that female teachers at the education ministry, female nurses at the health ministry and female doctors at the forensics department can sponsor their children regardless of the conditions.

Three decisions

Meanwhile, well-informed sources at the Public Authority for Manpower predicted that a potential decision banning the transfer of dependent visas into work visas will have some exemptions for citizens' spouses and children, holders of Palestinian passports and documents, expats born in Kuwait, those studying in Kuwaiti universities and others.

After issuing decision no. 367/2020 pertaining banning the transfer of workers from the government to the private sector and decision no. 520/2020 pertaining banning the issuance of work permits for expats aged 60 without university degrees from the beginning of 2021, expats are currently anticipating a decision banning the transfer of dependent visas (article 22) into work visas (article 18) as declared by

Manpower Authority Director Abdullah Al-Motouah a few days ago without mentioning the exact date of enforcement or any further details, Al-Jarida reported. This made expats worried about the fate of their children (holders of dependent visas who wish to seek private sector jobs in Kuwait).

Accordingly, many expats residing in Kuwait with their families believe that the three decisions will have extremely negative socioeconomic impacts on their lives and that many families would be torn apart,



Ministry to return stranded doctors

leaving only "bachelors" residing in Kuwait. Expats are also concerned about the fate of their children in various educational stages - from primary to university - who will not be able to return home. They also warned that the decisions would result in a lack of manpower in some professions, increases in wages and devastating effects on the real estate market.

Separately, Al-Anbaa reported quoting a source at the residency affairs department that the depart-

ment did not receive any new instructions with regards to extending the ministerial decision that extended the validity of residency and visit visas until Aug 31, adding in case a decision is taken to extend them further, it will be done automatically without the need to go to the concerned authority.

When told that the airspace of many countries remains closed and those with expired visas and residencies will be in violation, the source said: "The residency affairs department is waiting for instructions, but if instructions are not received, then those with expired visas and residencies must leave the country, otherwise they will be in violation and a fine of KD 2 per day will be collected from them."

Stranded doctors

In the meantime, Al-Jarida quoted well-informed health sources who said the Ministry of Health (MoH) received over the past two weeks lists of expatriate doctors stranded outside Kuwait from various hospitals. The sources added that hospitals and health zones had sent the lists of doctors and all MoH medical and technical staff members stranded abroad to start working on facilitating their return to Kuwait so that various health facilities could operate at full capacity.

The sources stressed that hundreds of doctors and medical staff members will be returned soon to support the ministry's plan to resume work at various OPDs, evening clinics and operations with over 80 percent capacity. "The lists submitted to MoH include the medics' full names, civil ID numbers, spe-

cialties, workplaces, passport numbers, nationalities, countries of residence and residency validity," the sources elaborated, noting that all precautionary measures would be followed with returnees including swab tests and 14-day home quarantine prior to resuming work.

KD200 million

In other news, the health ministry asked the finance ministry to transfer an urgent payment of KD200 million so it can be sent to the Kuwait health office in Washington to avoid accumulation of demands and court cases by hospitals against the health office, Al-Anbaa reported. This came after the Cabinet asked the health ministry to coordinate with the finance ministry to study the demands of US hospitals and take the necessary steps to care for patients' health and safeguard Kuwait's reputation abroad.

Health sources said the health offices were suffering for some years because of the drop in the assigned sum of money for treatment abroad, down from the amount requested by the health ministry, and that the lack of payments is due to the lack of a budget to cover them. Nonpayment led some hospitals and health institutions to refrain from receiving Kuwaiti patients. They said the allocated amount for treatment abroad is KD 170 million, and it is for patients who are still under treatment abroad. This amount cannot be used to cover dues, especially since 50 percent of this approved amount is used for patients' allocations, airline tickets, health insurance and medicines.

Quarantine hurts Kuwait's economy while neighbors recover: Report

KUWAIT: The strict measures taken by the government towards aviation and travel, the latest of which was imposing a 14-day quarantine on arriving passengers, came as a precious opportunity with high economic revenues for neighboring countries that were more flexible in dealing with COVID-19, a local daily argued in a report published yesterday.

The report claims that these countries are "taking advantage of the situation in Kuwait to revive several of their sectors while Kuwait wasted such an opportunity." Countries such as Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain, Turkey, Lebanon and Tunisia opted for less harsh and strict precautionary measures compared to compulsory quarantine for returnees. They followed the same measures used by European countries, which rely on health tests including PCR.

In this regard, Kuwait Travel Agents Union told Al-Rai daily that Kuwait's economy is currently suffering from wasted operational opportunities in various sectors due to the strict measures that go far beyond preventing the spread of the virus to making normal life restrictive, which reflects a 'corona obsessive compulsive disorder', as the union described it.

The union added that compulsory quarantine is an impediment for thousands of citizens and residents desiring to travel and made the mere thought of planning a trip burdensome in view of the current situation and the lack of direct flights to destinations that used to have high operation levels. The union also pointed out that over 30 countries do not oblige passengers travelling there to undergo home quarantine. "Those countries are actually recovering and there is a great demand for travel there, which has a highly positive impact on various economic sectors there," the union claimed.

"Countries worldwide have resumed normal life and re-opened their airspaces, while Kuwait bans receiving passengers arriving directly from 31 countries," the union added. It noted that this has cost Kuwait's economy considerable losses that are still growing, because Kuwait's decision that passengers from those 31 countries can only return after spending 14 days in a third country has provided ample opportunities for seven GCC and European countries to

attract more tourists and transit passengers, who revive those countries' hotels, various touristic facilities and airlines by sums they spend on their way back to Kuwait, while Kuwait gets nothing.

Stranded teachers

In the meantime, Egyptian teachers employed by Kuwait's Ministry of Education (MoE) and who are currently stranded in Egypt urged Kuwait's Education Minister Saud Al-Harbi to save them from the consequences of a flight ban decision, namely by giving them their salaries and financial dues. The teachers, who reached out to Al-Rai, stressed they only left Kuwait due to compulsory family obligations and not for tourism before the travel ban decision was suddenly made.

The teachers also explained that they had been waiting for five months for MoE's decisions so that they can return to work, but to their surprise, MoE decided to conclude the academic year. The minister also said teachers couldn't leave without travel permits on grounds that they would have to be back before the beginning of the following academic year. "It was not our fault. Why should we be considered absent?" the teachers wondered.

A teacher said that she had to go to Egypt to undergo gallbladder surgery and see her elderly mother, leaving her husband and children in Kuwait.

"It is unfair to consider me absent and on leave without pay after serving for 12 years in Kuwait," she said.

While the teacher predicted flights will resume by Aug 30, an educational source told Al-Rai that MoE had so far not made any decisions concerning stranded teachers and that coordination is in progress with the Civil Service Commission (CSC). "Their fate is expected to be determined by MoE's public education sector by September 1 - the beginning of the new academic year," the source said.

The source added that salaries of the past period cannot be touched, as it is usually the summer vacation for all teachers including grade 12 teachers currently working on concluding the remaining period of the 2019-2020 school year. "This is an exceptional situation and it is expected that MoE will take their family circumstances into consideration, especially since everybody has been affected by the health situation," the sources underlined.

Meanwhile, MoE stopped teachers from going to school in some schools in Ahmadi and advised them to continue teaching online from their homes after discovering a number of teaching and administrative staff members were infected with COVID-19. Some schools urged staff members not to come to school until further notice. However, educational sources stressed that there is no need to suspend school and that all other staff should show up to work.

News in brief

MPs praise speech

KUWAIT: MP Mohammad Al-Dallal called on the government to translate His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's recent address into action by reevaluating the state secret service agency and rebuilding it on serious and legal standards. MP Humoud Al-Khudhair called on the government and the assembly to issue legislation that curb those who sow divisions in the society and fight against corruption.

Returning via land

RIYADH: Saudi custom authorities have decided to allow Saudi citizens to return home via land checkpoints from neighboring countries. The Saudi passports general directorate said in a statement yesterday that returning citizens via the land routes must abide by protective measures against the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). They should also present identity documents of non-Saudi accompanying relatives via the website "Absher" in advance. Returning non-Saudis must also carry PCR tests' certificates showing negative result.

US storms

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti Embassy in Washington Sunday urged Kuwaiti students and citizens living in the US to be more careful as Tropical storm Laura and Hurricane Marco hit several American cities. The embassy, in a press statement, also instructed Kuwaiti nationals to follow the guidelines and directions of US local authorities, wishing them all well.

Robots at refineries

KUWAIT: An official oil source said Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) plans soon to use artificial intelligence robots to operate the company's refineries in order to reduce costs and solve high cost problems without having to stop the refineries, Al-Anbaa reported. KNPC's research and technology department is working on this major project and have already contacted experienced companies in using artificial intelligence to overcome operation and inspection problems. It urged companies wishing to participate to contact them by September 1.

Stay safe. Stay home. Stay informed.

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Crimes

Child drowns in Wafra

KUWAIT: A child died after he drowned while swimming in a pool in Wafra, said security sources. A case was filed and further investigations are in progress.

21 kg of drugs

KUWAIT: A Chinese woman was arrested with a mail parcel she received that contained drugs, said security sources. Case papers indicate that air customs inspectors suspected a parcel arriving from China, and on opening it, they found 21 kg of 'chemical': a street name used for a common drug consisting of 'Spice' (synthetic marijuana) with added chemicals. Checking the recipient's name, they found that it was a 30-year-old female Chinese resident, who was arrested and referred to relevant authorities pending further investigations.

Break-in and assault

KUWAIT: A citizen filed a case against a Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW) employee accusing him of breaking into his house and assaulting him, said security sources. Case papers indicate that the citizen filed a complaint at Sabahiya police station against an MEW employee, saying that the latter wanted to get into his father's house to check the meter but he refused him as it was not his house. "He insisted on entering by force and assaulted me," the citizen claimed, providing a medical report stating bruises and scratches he allegedly sustained. A case was filed and the employee is being summoned for further investigations.

—Translated by Kuwait Times from Al-Rai

KRCS chief applauds 'generous' Kuwaiti donations for Lebanon



KUWAIT: Kuwait Red Crescent Society's team in a group picture in front of an aircraft carrying humanitarian aid to Lebanon. —KUNA photos



Medical equipment donated to the Lebanese Hospital Geitaoui.



Medical equipment provided by KRCS to Lebanese hospitals.



Food supplies provided by KRCS to Lebanese families.

KUWAIT: Kuwait Red Crescent (KRCS) Chairman Dr Hilal Al-Sayer on Sunday commended donors in Kuwait - including citizens, expatriates and businesses alike - for their donations to the organization's fundraisers for Lebanon. In a press statement, Sayer said Kuwaitis contributed generously to support Lebanon, helping the organization in its role to support hospitals with medical equipment, distribute food and medical supplies and visit the injured. Sayer said he is grateful to these donors, who have provided Lebanon with a lot, noting that the goal is to assist anyone impacted by the recent devastating blast in the capital Beirut.

Thanks to the donations, Kuwait has provided medical devices and equip-

ment, through KRCS, to several damaged hospitals. These hospitals include the likes of Wadia Hospital, Lebanese Hospital Geitaoui, Makassed General Hospital, Al-Roum Hospital and Karantina Hospital, he mentioned. Other health facilities include the Children's Cancer Center of Lebanon, which treats over 300 children battling the sickness. The assistance provided aims to enhance the center's capabilities, improve the quality of services provided, while giving rapid treatment to patients, he explained. KRCS field teams in Beirut are distributing humanitarian aid to those impacted on a non-stop basis, in collaboration with the Lebanese Red Cross, Sayer reiterated. —KUNA



Officials examine medical equipment provided by KRCS to Lebanese hospitals.



Humanitarian aid provided by KRCS to people affected by the Beirut blast.

KIB launches 'For Kuwait' initiative in collaboration with EPA

KUWAIT: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) announced the launch of a new environmental initiative entitled 'For Kuwait', which includes printing 500 carton trash bins for the disposal of used face masks and gloves, in collaboration with the Environment Public Authority (EPA). These eco-friendly trash bins are to be distributed to all the ministries of Kuwait, as well as government agencies, shopping malls and government and private hospitals. The initiative seeks to support the joint efforts of KIB and the EPA in protecting the environment of Kuwait and raising awareness about the importance of safe disposal of personal protective equipment (PPE) in halting the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

Othman Tawfeq, General Manager of the Retail Banking Department at KIB, said: "The launch of this initiative is part of KIB's leading social responsibility program, which always strives for raising awareness about the negative effects of environmental contamination, including that which occurs as a result of throwing contaminated gloves and face masks on the ground or in public squares. We are all partners when it comes to keeping Kuwait's environment clean. We hope that through this initiative we can contribute towards encouraging responsible behavior in individuals towards their environment, drawing their attention to the importance of maintaining a healthy, clean and sustainable environment just as we seek to protect ourselves and those around us from contracting the novel coronavirus."

Tawfeq added that this initiative is a continuation of KIB's efforts towards helping fight the spread of coronavirus, as the bank is keen on adhering to its responsibility, not only towards its employees and customers but also towards the community and the environment in which it operates, stressing that KIB is implementing all preven-

tive measures within its headquarters and currently operating branches, where all employees and customers are screened to ensure they are symptom-free and wearing PPE including face masks and gloves. Additionally, the bank is only allowing a limited number of customers inside the branch, alongside undertaking other precautionary practices such as pre-booking appointments and waiting in the car rather than in the branch. Furthermore, all branches, the bank's main building and ATM machines are all constantly being sterilized, with hand sanitizers provided next to all ATM machines in order to ensure the safety of everyone.

Tawfeq concluded by commending all public institutions and concerned authorities for their unwavering efforts in protecting citizens and residents against the coronavirus, through the adherence to strict preventive measures and protocols, stressing the need to commit to wearing face masks and gloves and disposing of them in trash bins to preserve the environment and reduce the spread of the virus.

Meanwhile, Sheikha Al-Ibrahim, Director of Information and Public Relations Department, said: "The trash bins distribution initiative comes as a continuation of the campaign launched by EPA over the past months, which included the distribution of nearly 700 trash bins, also as part of the awareness campaign launched in collaboration with KIB. The campaign was attributed to community participation aimed at preserving the Kuwait's environment, promoting environmental culture among members of the community, and highlighting the importance of safe disposal of PPE after use to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19)."

Ibrahim stressed that the distribution of these trash bins to ministries and government agencies is an attempt to raise people's awareness about the importance of separating office waste and PPE waste after being used for prevention against the virus, such as face masks and gloves, as well as to alert people at shopping malls and hospitals to the importance of safe disposal of these wastes in their proper place, thereby ensuring public safety and contributing towards curbing the spread of the virus.

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Japan leader 'second hospital visit' within days sparks concern

IPOB and secret police clash in eastern Nigeria



BEIRUT: Aida Merhi, a resident of the badly-affected Karantina neighborhood of the Lebanese capital, shows her damaged house to the director of Medecins du Monde's (MDM) mental health program, after the earth-shaking explosion which killed over 170 people and wounded more than 6,000. — AFP

Beirut faces mental health crisis after blast

Practitioners warn of widespread psychological trauma

BEIRUT: More than two weeks after a massive explosion tore through Beirut killing 181 people and leaving entire neighborhoods in ruins, Sandra Abinader still jumps at the slightest sound. "The other day, I was trying to open a jar and the popping sound made me jump back and scream. I felt for a second I needed to run away." Despite recognizing the magnitude of her ordeal, Sandra, 18, said she was not interested in seeking professional help.

"We're used to dealing with our problems on our own," she said, stoically. Her attitude is common in Lebanon, a country hardened by past wars and sectarian conflict and where stigma still rules attitudes towards mental health. But the blast caught Lebanon at an extremely vulnerable point following months of severe economic crisis compounded by the coronavirus pandemic.

Now practitioners are warning of a national mental health emergency as people begin to show signs of trauma from the explosion, including nightmares, flashbacks, crying, anxiety, anger and exhaustion. Psychologists say this is being exacerbated by the constant stream of images on

Lebanese TV and social media showing the blast and its bloody aftermath.

"Every time we say it can't get worse in Lebanon, it somehow does," said Jad Daou, a vol-



Nightmares, flashbacks and fatigue

unteer with Lebanese mental health NGO Embrace, who mans the phones at its crisis clinic. "A lot of people are feeling hopeless about the entire situation here in Lebanon." The explosion was a tipping point. Embrace, which usually receives between 150-200 calls a month, says more people have been

reaching out since the blast. The group has stationed volunteers in one of the affected neighborhoods and has started home visits.

Many mental health professionals have mobilized in the wake of the blast to offer their services and post tips on social media, but some are struggling to cope themselves. "I never had psychologists say, 'we are not ready to talk at this moment. I need time to heal for myself,'" said psychologist Warde Bou Daher. "But the trauma affected everyone ... they need to heal their own wounds before being able to help others." While Sandra insists she has not cried once since it happened, her cousin cannot hold back tears as she recounts her experience of the explosion, which wounded 6,000 people and was so loud it could be heard as far as Cyprus, 100 miles away.

When the blast hit, Lourdes Fakhri ran from the supermarket where she works to her home in the Karantina neighborhood near the port, one of the worst affected, fearing that her family had been killed. "There was rubble everywhere, so high. I could picture them all lying there on the floor, with our house on top of them." Lourdes' parents and six

siblings survived but the feeling of terror has remained with her.

For older Lebanese, the blast triggered memories of the 1975-1990 civil war and the 2006 war with Israel among others. Many have never dealt with their traumas and don't know how to help their children, said Ola Khodor, a 25-year-old child psychologist. "A lot are telling their children that nothing happened, that it was a game," Khodor said. "The child deserves to know the truth - not the very detailed truth, but they deserve to know what exactly happened to allow them to grieve and to process the event like they need to."

Experts say trauma begins to set in several weeks after an event, as people progress out of a period of "acute stress". Unicef on Friday estimated that half of the children they have surveyed in Beirut are already showing signs. One father told Reuters that when his four-year-old son came back home for the first time after the explosion, he invented a game called "pretend boom" in which his playhouse was hit by an explosion and rabbits needed rescue from the broken glass. — Reuters

Childhood packed in rucksack; young refugees at risk

BELGRADE: A group of boys sit on a sunny patch of grass in a park in downtown Belgrade, but they are not here for a picnic. They are "unaccompanied minors"-the official name for the most vulnerable category of migrants who travel thousands of miles without adult supervision-and they came to meet a smuggler to ferry them across the next border. Although the so-called Balkan route was officially closed in the wake of Europe's migrant crisis five years ago, the region is seeing a fresh tide of travelers, even amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Some 30,000 refugees and migrants were registered in Serbia in the first half of 2020, almost three times the number for the same period last year, according to official data. Among them, 1,200 are minors travelling alone, the youngest at just seven years old. In the Belgrade park, a green-eyed 14-year-old from Afghanistan describes leaving home in February after the Taliban took his father, two older brothers and two uncles to the mountains and killed them.

"My mother decided that I had to go," Ahmed, whose name was changed for this story, told AFP. Since then, he has travelled more than 4,000 km across five borders, mostly on foot. "When we crossed from Afghanistan to Iran, we took the mountain route. It was snowing, and 12 people from our group froze to death," the child recalled, with a trembling voice.

PTSD

Youngsters like Ahmed face myriad dangers on the migrant trail, which involves linking up with smugglers, evading border police and finding places to sleep in foreign cities. Almost a third of unaccompanied children passing through Serbia have experienced violence-either physical, psychological or sexual, according to data from Doctors Without Borders (MSF). They describe "blackmail, torture or rape, mostly during the trail," former MSF psychologist Natasa Toskic said.



BELGRADE: A group of migrants rest at a park in downtown Belgrade. — AFP

The majority of the children Toskic worked with had developed issues like anxiety, depression, substance abuse and behavioral problems such as self-harming. "The percentage of those who developed PTSD is larger than the ones that didn't," she said. Official refugee camps can be dangerous too. After Serbia went into lockdown to battle the coronavirus earlier this year, it sealed migrant centers shut. In June, a video emerged showing security guards slapping and beating minors with batons in Bogovadja camp, a site which has only one social worker for 330 children. In March, six adult migrants were arrested in a centre in Bosnia on suspicion of raping several teenagers in the camp.

Violent pushbacks

Linking the Middle East to Europe, the Balkans became a thoroughfare for migrants in 2015, when hundreds of thousands flowed through the region in hopes of reaching Western Europe. The route was shuttered under a 2016 agreement between the European Union and Turkey, which agreed to house the refugees in return for 6 billion euros in aid. But traffickers continue to carve paths through the peninsula, crossing seas, rivers and mountains, and often packing up to 20 migrants in a single vehicle.

As a hub for smugglers, Belgrade remains a major intersection, from which trails branch out towards neighboring Croatia, Bosnia and Hungary. Smuggler fees range up to \$10,000, often putting families in huge debt, said Vladimir Sjekloca, of the NGO Crisis Response and Policy Centre. "They can only pay a small amount of the needed money to the traffickers," effectively leaving the youngsters "in a form of slavery". — AFP

Blackout in Syria after 'terrorists' attack pipeline

DAMASCUS: War-torn Syria's government yesterday blamed a "terrorist" attack on a gas pipeline near Damascus for a nationwide blackout, in the latest such alleged assault on its energy infrastructure. Caretaker electricity minister Zuhair Kharboutli said a pipeline explosion in the Damascus area late Sunday "led to an electricity blackout across Syria", according to state news agency SANA.

The caretaker oil and mineral resources minister, Ali Ghanem, said the explosion of the gas pipeline, between Adra and Dmeir, was "the result of a terrorist attack", but provided no further details. Kharboutli said the explosion was the "sixth of its kind on the pipeline in that area", without giving a timeframe. SANA published pictures of firefighters working to put out a blaze, followed by images a mangled land pipeline missing a large chunk.

Damascus residents told AFP they woke up on Monday with no electricity in their homes. Mid-morning, Kharboutli told SANA that power had started to partially return to several provinces and had been restored to parts of central Damascus. "Power has returned to several vital installations in Damascus including hospitals and some residential neighborhoods," he said. The Russia and Iran-backed Damascus government in 2018 expelled the last rebels and jihadists from Dmeir, a town about 40 kilometers north-east of Damascus.

But the Islamic State group

retains a presence in the vast Badia desert east of the town. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said it was not immediately clear who was behind the overnight attack that had caused several explosions between Adra and Dmeir that were so loud they could be heard in Damascus. A host of pro-government forces are stationed in the area, said the Britain-based war monitor. Russian forces are present at the Dmeir military airport, while Iranian forces and allied fighters held positions around the town and on the edge of the Badia desert.

Rockets, frogmen

The pipeline explosion was the latest in a string of alleged attacks against the government's energy infrastructure. In February, the government said "terrorists" attacked four different oil and gas

facilities with rocket fire in the central province of Homs. In January, it said divers had planted explosives on offshore pipelines in the Mediterranean Sea of the Baniyas refinery, but that the damage had not halted operations.

In June 2019, Damascus said an unnamed foreign party had attacked and damaged six underwater pipelines connecting oil tankers to the Baniyas terminal. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for any of those attacks. Government-held areas of Syria have suffered repeated power cuts in recent years, with the authorities last month blaming the electricity rationing on Western sanctions and on a "sharp rise in temperature". In April, the oil ministry said power cuts were due to the "security situation in the Badia region," leading to the suspension of work at several gas wells there. Syria's war has killed more than 380,000 people and displaced more than half the pre-war population since it started in 2011 with the repression of anti-government protests. — AFP



DAMASCUS: A handout picture shows Syrian firefighters putting out a burning pipeline between the areas of Adra and Al-Dhamir in the Damascus area. — AFP

International

Angry Belarusian protesters defy army, flood the capital

Lukashenko seen with rifle, calls protesters 'rats'

MINSK: Tens of thousands of protesters demanding Belarusian leader Alexander Lukashenko step down defied a warning from the military on Sunday and flooded into Minsk, briefly gathering near the president's residence, before dispersing peacefully. The veteran leader denounced the demonstrators as "rats" and was seen in state media footage wearing body armour and holding a rifle, projecting an unyielding image amid the huge nationwide demonstrations that erupted after a disputed election on Aug. 9.

The protests have provided the biggest challenge yet to Lukashenko's 26 years at the helm and tested the loyalty of his security forces. Minsk's streets turned red and white as demonstrators carried flags symbolizing their opposition to Lukashenko and chanted for him to leave power and for new elections to be held. The crowd marched towards Lukashenko's residence at the Independence Palace, on the northern edge of the capital, the majority gathering at some distance, while a smaller group approached to between 10 and 20 meters of the building, a Reuters witness said.

Lukashenko, a former Soviet state farm boss, was shown in state media footage flying over the protests in a helicopter before landing at his residence and emerging in body armor with a rifle in his hand. Some protesters milling below chanted "coward" as a helicopter was seen flying out of the residence, the Reuters witness said. Later, a video circulated by state media showed Lukashenko walking over to riot police outside his residence and thanking them, eliciting an outburst of applause from security staff.

It was the first time in this month's demonstrations that protesters have neared the building's doors. The approach to the palace took place after a

crowd estimated by a Reuters witness to number as many as 200,000 rallied in central Minsk for the second weekend in a row. The crowd began to disperse in early evening. Reuters witnessed no clashes with police. "They have scattered like rats," Lukashenko could be heard saying in a video clip published by the Belta news agency as he flew overhead.

“**Protesters seek Venezuela style scenario**”

Belarus state television said 20,000 people took part in the protest. Earlier, the defense ministry said the army would deal with security around national World War Two memorials and issued a direct warning to protesters whom it likened to fascists. "We categorically warn: any violation of peace and order in such places - you will have the army to deal with now, not the police," it said in a statement. "We, soldiers, will not allow these places to be desecrated, there can be no fascism there!"

Moscow's view

Protests triggered by Lukashenko's claims of a landslide election victory on Aug. 9 found a leader in opposition candidate Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, a



MINSK: This grab taken from a video shows President Alexander Lukashenko holding an automatic rifle and wearing body armor as he arrives at his residence in Minsk, not far from where opposition protests are taking place. — AFP

former teacher who took her jailed husband's place on the ballot. Following threats to her safety, Tsikhanouskaya fled to neighboring Lithuania. Traditional ally Russia issued some of its strongest comments yet criticizing Tsikhanouskaya on Sunday. Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said her statements were directed at a Western audience. "It seems ... she has started to make political statements, harsh ones, demanding walk-outs, strikes, protests," Lavrov was cited by the RIA news agency as saying. He described her political agenda

as the opposite of constructive, focused instead on creating disunity by generating anti-Russian sentiment and squeezing out the Russian language and culture, and by aiming to join the European Union and NATO. Tsikhanouskaya, who speaks Russian at home, has said she would like to see Belarus maintain close relations with Russia, but that Belarus should remain independent and not integrate further into Russia. Lavrov said that by calling for Lukashenko to quit, protesters were pushing for a Venezuela-style crisis. — Reuters

News in brief

Taliban team in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has invited key members of the Taliban's negotiating team to Islamabad, where senior officials will this week press them on the importance of starting peace talks, the country's foreign minister said yesterday. The meetings come at a crucial time in Afghanistan's conflict, with talks once again stalled amid a controversial prisoner swap. "The delegation is in Islamabad and we will have a round of talks with them tomorrow as part of efforts aimed at (building) mutual confidence," foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi told a press conference. The Taliban and the Afghan government had signaled they were prepared to start talks immediately after the Muslim festival of Eid, which ended earlier this month, but the process remains bogged down over a prisoner exchange. — AFP

Opposition leader offers to quit

NEW DELHI: The leader of India's main opposition Congress party offered to resign yesterday, domestic media said, after almost two dozen top leaders called for better decision-making in the party, which has ruled for much of the country's independent history. The call, made in a letter, is a rare challenge to the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty that has dominated Congress since India won independence in 1947 from colonial ruler Britain. But Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party has dealt the party heavy defeats in two general elections. Italian-born Sonia Gandhi, widow of former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi, asked the party to relieve her of her role as interim president in a speech to a virtual meeting of the Congress Working Committee, Reuters partner ANI reported. "Sonia Gandhi asks CWC members 'to begin deliberations towards the process of transition to relieve her from the duty of party president,'" ANI said on Twitter, citing unidentified sources. — Reuters

Lithuanians form human chain

VILNIUS: Tens of thousands of Lithuanians linked arms on Sunday in solidarity with the people of neighboring Belarus who have been holding mass protests against authoritarian leader Alexander Lukashenko since a disputed presidential election two weeks ago. The participants formed a human chain stretching 30 kilometers from the Baltic EU state's capital Vilnius to the border with Belarus, with many holding the Belarusian opposition's red-and-white flag as well as the Lithuanian national tricolor. Solidarity rallies were also held in other European countries, inspired by the historic Baltic Way demonstration on August 23, 1989 when more than one million Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians linked hands to reject Soviet rule. — AFP

Contaminated water in China

BEIJING: Hundreds of people in eastern China have been infected with bacteria which can cause dysentery after drinking contaminated water, state media said yesterday, prompting the closure of a local water plant. Nearly 500 people in the rural town of Baoyi - about 550 kilometers west of Shanghai - have developed fever and diarrhoea since late last week. A report by the local government published Sunday found they have been infected with the shigella bacteria - a genus of microbes that can cause dysentery. The town's water supply has been shut down and nearly 300 people have been hospitalized, county officials said. — AFP

Thousands evacuate; dueling storms take aim at US Gulf Coast

HOUSTON: Hurricane Marco and Tropical Storm Laura tore through the Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico on Sunday, forcing thousands of coastal residents in Louisiana and Cuba to flee, and flooding roads in Haiti's capital, with damage across the region expected to worsen this week. Marco, which strengthened into a hurricane on Sunday with sustained winds of 75 mph, is forecast to make landfall along the Louisiana coast.

Laura, which hit the Dominican Republic and Haiti earlier on Sunday, killing at least 10 people before striking Cuba on Sunday evening, is forecast to strengthen into a hurricane before making landfall in Texas or Louisiana on Thursday. US President Donald Trump issued a disaster declaration on Sunday for Louisiana. He had previously issued a similar declaration for Puerto Rico.

In New Orleans, Billy Wright spent his Sunday



SANTO DOMINGO: Water runs along the streets of Santo Domingo causing the collapse of houses as Tropical Storm Laura batters the region. — AFP

buying bottled water, non-perishable food and an attic ax, which can be used to chop through a roof if floodwaters block doors and windows. The 33-year-old attorney lives with his fiancée in a one-story house just blocks from a canal that failed during 2005's Hurricane Katrina. "You'd rather have it and not need it than be stuck in your attic with rising floodwaters," said Wright. "Getting two storms back to back is a big concern."

Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards warned that tropical storm-force winds would arrive today and told residents that if they did not leave by Sunday night they should be prepared to ride out both Marco and Laura. Laura could strengthen into a Category 2 or 3 hurricane on the 5-step Saffir-Simpson scale for measuring hurricane intensity and move west, closer to Houston, said Chris Kerr, a meteorologist at DTN, an energy, agriculture and weather data provider.

Category 2 storms have sustained winds of at least 96 mph. The threshold for Category 3 storms is 111 mph. In the Dominican Republic, at least three people died, including a mother and her 7-year-old son, due to collapsing walls. Laura knocked out power to more than a million people in that country, forced more than a thousand others to evacuate and collapsed several homes along the Isabela River, authorities said.

In Port-au-Prince people wading waist-deep in muddy water in some of the worst flooding the Haitian capital has seen in years. Haitian authorities reported seven deaths, including at least two people swept away in flooding and a ten-year-old girl crushed when a tree fell on her home. Coastal neighborhoods of the capital were strewn with debris. — Reuters



BAMAKO: Former Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan (2nd left) walks at the International Airport in Bamako upon his arrival next to Malick Diaw (left), the Vice President of the CNSP (National Committee for the Salvation of the People). — AFP

Mali junta agrees to free president, wants 3-year military rule

BAMAKO: The junta that seized power in Mali wants a military-led transitional body to rule for three years and has agreed to release the ousted president, a source in a visiting West African delegation and the rebel soldiers said Sunday. Last week's coup-Mali's second in eight years-followed months of protests calling for Ibrahim Boubacar Keita to resign as public discontent with the government grew over the collapsing economy and a brutal Islamist insurgency.

"The junta has affirmed that it wants a three-year transition to review the foundations of the Malian state. This transition will be directed by a body led by a soldier, who will also be head of state," a source in the ECOWAS delegation told AFP after talks with the junta.

"The government will also be predominantly composed of soldiers" under the proposal, the source said on condition of anonymity. A junta official confirmed to AFP that "the three-year transition would have a military president and a government mostly composed of soldiers". The source and the official added that the soldiers have agreed to free Keita, detained along with other political leaders

since the coup on Tuesday, and he would be able to return to his home in the capital Bamako.

"And if he wants to travel abroad for (medical) treatment, that is not a problem," said the source from ECOWAS, which stands for the Economic Community of West African States. Prime minister Boubou Cisse, who has been held with Keita at a military base outside the capital where the coup began, would be moved to a secure residence in the city. While the coup was met with international condemnation, thousands of opposition supporters celebrated the president's ouster in the streets of Bamako.

The junta has said it "completed the work" of the protesters and has vowed to stage elections "within a reasonable time". However, Mali's neighbors have called for Keita to be reinstated, saying the purpose of the visit by the delegation from the regional ECOWAS bloc was to help "ensure the immediate return of constitutional order". Tuesday's coup has heightened concern over regional stability as Mali's jihadist insurgency now threatens neighboring Niger and Burkina Faso. The ECOWAS talks are set to resume in Bamako on Monday after two days of negotiations with the junta.

"We have reached a number of agreements but we have not reached agreement on all the issues," Nigerian ex-president Goodluck Jonathan, head of the delegation, told reporters as Sunday's discussions drew to a close. Both the regional delegation and the military officers "want the country to move on" after the coup, he said. "We are just discussing the way forward." — AFP

Protests erupt in US city; unarmed Black man shot

WISCONSIN: Protests erupted in the US city of Kenosha, Wisconsin, following a police shooting there of a reportedly unarmed Black man, prompting officials to impose a curfew. The victim, identified by Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers as Jacob Blake, was hospitalized in a serious condition on Sunday evening after police shot him multiple times, local media reported. Crowds gathered at the scene and threw bricks and Molotov cocktails at police, according to reports in social media. "We stand against excessive use of force and immediate escalation when engaging with BlackWisconsinites," governor Evers wrote in a tweet.

The shooting happened at around 5 pm local time in Kenosha as officers were responding to a "domestic incident". The victim was immediately taken to a hospital by the police, according to a statement issued by the Kenosha police department. No further explanation was given by the police as to what led to the shooting. The Wisconsin Department of Justice said early on Monday that officers involved in the shooting had been placed on administrative leave.

The state's Division of Criminal Investigation is heading a probe into the shooting and said in a statement it will seek to "provide a report of the incident to the prosecutor within 30 days," US media reported. A video circulating on social media and cited by the US press showed the man walking towards a car followed by two officers and one of them shooting him as he opens the car door. Multiple fires were set at the scene by a crowd that gathered to protest against the incident, according to various US media reports.

Social media posts showed large crowds marching down streets and throwing Molotov cocktails and bricks at the police, with one officer reportedly injured. The police responded by imposing a city-wide curfew until 7 am. There have been ongoing protests in the United States against police brutality and racism since the death on May 25 of George Floyd, a 46-year-old African-American man, after a white police officer knelt on his neck for nearly nine minutes. — Reuters

International

12 days for assault: Fury at weak penalties for attacks on women

Harassment, assaults 'not taken seriously enough' in Singapore

SINGAPORE: Sexual harassment and assaults against women are not being taken seriously enough in Singapore, activists warn, after students at elite universities were given punishments criticized as too lenient for their crimes. In the most recent incident, a 23-year-old spent just 12 days behind bars after he tried to strangle his ex-girlfriend during a vicious assault. The city-state is known for its tough approach to law and order, with vandalism punishable by caning, while drug trafficking and murder carry the death penalty.

But campaigners say crimes against women have long been minimalised—marital rape was only criminalized this year. "The justice system is very harsh on people who vandalize state-owned property. But you want to threaten and violate a woman's life? Oh yeah, sure. It's not as serious, is the message (authorities) are giving," said Pamela Ng, a spokeswoman for the Aim For Zero campaign against sexual violence.

There are also concerns the academic potential of male perpetrators is being prioritized over the actual effect of sex crimes on women. This echoes criticisms of incidents at prestigious schools in the US, including the six-month imprisonment of Brock Turner for three counts of sexual assault, where a judge feared a longer sentence would severely "impact" the Stanford University swimmer.

Last year, National University of Singapore (NUS) student Monica Baey took to social media to protest the light punishment given to a male student who filmed her in a dormitory shower. Her decision to go public was dubbed the city-state's #MeToo moment and is credited with encouraging other victims to come forward. But critics say recent cases involving men of privilege show not enough has changed.



Punishments criticized as too lenient

In July, Yin Zi Qin, a dentistry student at NUS, was jailed for less than two weeks and asked to conduct 80 hours of community service despite pleading guilty to strangling his ex-girlfriend and pressing his thumb into her eye until she lost consciousness. The judge opted for softer "community-based sentencing" put forward by the prosecution as he was a first offender, cooperated with authorities, and voluntarily sought counseling and to apologize to the victim.

But it provoked a public backlash with some angry the privileged only get a "slap on the wrists" for serious crimes. "I can't believe the sentence is so light! I guess NUS students have such a bright future that they can get away with any crime," commented Maruko Chan on a social media post about the ruling. "Because he's a medical student and a future doctor?... Go ahead do more of wrist slapping," said netizen Huev Lim.

In another case, NUS student Terence Siow Kai Yuan was sentenced to 21 months of supervised probation for molesting a woman on a train and at a station. The judge rejected the prosecution's call for a custodial sentence saying he had a high chance of being rehabilitated given his academic record and "relatively minor" nature of his acts, according to court documents.

However, his victim told The New Paper, the attack was not "spur of the moment" and the impact on her had not been minor. Siow was later jailed for two weeks after prosecutors appealed. Following the July case, women's rights group AWARE raised concerns that more consideration was being shown for the assailant than the impact on the victims. "Rehabilitation is important but this should not depend on the educational status of the perpetrator," AWARE executive director Corinna Lim adds.

when his examination lasted 7-1/2 hours, fuelling worries about his health. But major broadcaster Nippon TV said Abe was being treated for a chronic illness rather than a check-up, citing multiple unidentified government and ruling party sources. Abe has been prime minister since 2012 in his second stint after a troubled term from which he resigned abruptly in 2007, because of struggles with ulcerative colitis, a disease he now keeps in check with medicine that was not previously available.

'Not at all' worried

His office did not give a detailed explanation for the hospital visits, but close aide Health Minister Katsunobu Kato said last week's visit was a regular check-up and he was "not at all" worried about Abe's health. Japanese media have speculated about Abe's health this month, including detailed reports on his walking speed. Weekly magazine Flash said Abe had vomited blood at his office on July 6. Reuters was unable to verify the widely cited report, which was denied by government officials.

Abe gets a regular check-up twice a year, with his most recent on June 13, Kyodo news agency said, adding that last week's visit was a follow-up to a June check-up, citing a hospital source. If Abe is incapacitated, Deputy Prime Minister Taro Aso, 79, who doubles as finance minister, would take over temporarily as acting prime minister. If Abe says he has decided to resign, he would stay on until formally replaced, which requires a ruling Liberal Democratic Party presidential



SINGAPORE: A sign of the National University of Singapore is displayed at the campus entrance in Singapore. Sexual harassment and assaults against women are not being taken seriously enough in Singapore, activists warn. — AFP

'Sexual violence normalized'

Vanessa who runs Instagram account upand.out, which aims to empower youth, says the system must treat everyone equally. "23-years-old = fully functioning adult. He is fully capable of higher thinking if he was accepted in one of our top university's most competitive courses. If SG is taking a more compassionate stance for crimes now, it should be reflected in every case," the 22-year-old, who gave only her first name, added.

There were 56 cases of sexual misconduct involving students from six Singapore universities between 2015 and 2017, according to information Education Minister

Ong Ye Kung provided to Parliament last May. NUS toughened penalties for sexual misconduct after the Baey case in 2019, and said Yin Zi Qin is suspended pending disciplinary proceedings.

Despite the growing concerns, Singapore lawyer Gloria James-Civetta cautioned that the judiciary could only operate within the "boundaries prescribed by legislators". "In some instances, the academic background of the offender may be indicative of the offender's possibilities for reform," she explained. Singapore has toughened some of its sex crime laws, with "cyber-flashing"—sending unsolicited images of one's private parts—and "revenge porn" recently outlawed. —AFP

Japan leader 'second hospital visit within days' sparks concern

TOKYO: Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe wants to take care of his health and do his utmost at his job, he said yesterday, after a second hospital visit within days sparked concern whether he could stay on as leader of the world's third biggest economy. The visit came as Japan's longest-serving prime minister surpassed a record for longest consecutive tenure as premier set by his great-uncle Eisaku Sato half a century ago, adding to speculation Abe could resign after reaching the milestone.

Abe, criticized for his handling of the coronavirus outbreak and some scandals, has suffered a slide in voter support to one of the lowest levels since returning to office for a second term in 2012 with promises to revive the economy and bolster defense. "I'd like to take care of my health and do my best at my job," Abe told reporters at his official residence, after visiting a Tokyo hospital where he said he had received results of an exam done last week and undergone additional examinations. Abe, who turns 66 next month, also said he wanted to speak again later about his medical tests.

Earlier, government spokesman Yoshihide Suga said Abe was having a follow-up to a check a week ago



TOKYO: Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe wearing a face mask arrives at the Prime Minister's office in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

election, followed by the winner's formal election in parliament. Abe's tenure as LDP president, and thus, premier, ends in September 2021 unless he steps down earlier. Those tipped as possible successors include Aso, former defense minister Shigeru Ishiba, ex-foreign minister Fumio Kishida, Suga, and Defense Minister Taro Kono. All are veteran LDP lawmakers unlikely to make huge policy shifts, despite differing over details. But any successor may find it tough to emulate Abe's political longevity, which followed years of revolving-door premiers and was aided by the strong economy, tight control over bureaucrats and weak opposition parties. — Reuters

Xinjiang residents protesting online against lockdown

BEIJING: Residents in China's northwestern Xinjiang region have complained on social media about the harsh coronavirus lockdown measures in the sensitive region after a local outbreak. China - where the disease first emerged - had largely brought domestic transmission under control through lockdowns, travel restrictions and testing, but sporadic regional outbreaks have emerged. A new cluster in Xinjiang's capital Urumqi in mid-July prompted fresh restrictions. A total of 902 cases have been officially reported in the outbreak.

Officials said earlier this month that they had "effectively contained" the spread of the Urumqi cluster, and there have been no new cases reported in the last eight days. But hundreds of local residents flooded local social media forums in recent days to complain about harsh conditions, including many being forced to stay home. After some of these comments were removed - China's internet is heavily censored - users tried to flood local forums on the Twitter-like Weibo platform in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou.

Social media users shared photos of front doors sealed with steel crowbars, and locks installed by community workers. "Why can't prefectures with no cases remove the lockdown? Why do you need to lock down the whole of Xinjiang?" read one comment on Weibo, which received thousands of likes. "Doors have been sealed, this has brought huge inconvenience to workers and people's lives. Prices of daily items have risen... many things I buy are expired."

Little information has been released by the authorities about the Xinjiang cluster. Other local governments in China have provided information on patients' movements in granular detail. Photos circulating on Weibo and WeChat also purportedly showed people chained to community gates with handcuffs, reportedly as a punishment for leaving their homes. Some residents also wrote that they were forced by authorities to take Chinese medicine daily, and were required to film themselves doing so.

One video from Saturday purportedly showed dozens of high-rise residents in Urumqi yelling from their windows in despair. Stranded migrant workers, university students, business travelers and tourists have also complained about not being able to leave Xinjiang. "I have even taken three nucleic acid tests... but community workers won't let me leave," one user wrote on a message board run by the state-run People's Daily.

At a press conference last Thursday, local health officials in Xinjiang said that the epidemic situation remains "complicated and severe". Around half of Xinjiang's more than 21 million people are ethnic Uighurs and other Turkic Muslims, many of whom complain of decades of political and religious oppression by China's ruling Communist Party, which the government denies. Activists have accused the Chinese government of incarcerating about one million Uighurs and other Turkic people in Xinjiang camps. —AFP

Libyan Red Crescent retrieves 22 bodies

TRIPOLI: The Libyan Red Crescent retrieved the bodies of 22 migrants off the coastal town of Zwara on Sunday, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) said. "Today, 22 bodies were retrieved by the Libyan Red Crescent in Zwara," the IOM's chief of mission in Libya, Federico Soda, wrote on Twitter, sharing a photo of body bags lined up on a beach. On Wednesday, the IOM and the UN refugee agency said dozens of migrants and refugees had perished off Libya in the deadliest shipwreck so far this year.

The agencies said that survivors from Monday's sinking, 37 of whom were rescued by fishermen, said at least 45 others, including five children, had died when the engine of the vessel they were aboard exploded off Zwara. The latest tragedy, west of Tripoli, brings to 302 the number of mi-

grants and refugees known to have perished on the route so far this year, the IOM and the UNHCR said, stressing that the actual figure was likely much higher. Safa Msehli, spokeswoman for the IOM in Geneva, told AFP on Sunday it was possible the 22 bodies were from that same sinking, "given the reported location of the shipwreck".

"The bodies retrieved today were all African males. We still don't have information on the nationalities," she added. Libya has been in chaos ever since the 2011 overthrow and killing of dictator Muammar Gaddafi in a NATO-backed uprising, though its warring rival administrations said Friday they would cease all hostilities and organize nationwide elections soon. Since the ousting of Gaddafi, Libya has become a key route for irregular migration from Africa into Europe,



ABU QURAYN: Photo shows fighters loyal to the UN-recognized Libyan Government of National Accord (GNA) securing the area of Abu Qurain. — AFP

across the Mediterranean Sea. Migrant departures from Libya's coast increased by nearly 300 percent this year between January and the end of April, compared to the same period in 2019, according to the UN. "These painful deaths are the result of the increasingly hardening policy

towards people fleeing conflict and extreme poverty, and a failure to humanely manage migration flows," Soda added Sunday. More than 100,000 migrants tried to cross the Mediterranean last year with more than 1,200 dying in the attempt, according to the IOM. —Agencies

IPOB and secret police clash in Nigeria's east

LAGOS: Nigeria's secret police say two of its men were killed Sunday by Biafran separatists who in turn claim 21 of their members were killed in an unprovoked attack on a peaceful meeting. The Department of State Service (DSS) said one of its patrols was attacked Sunday in Emene, southwestern Enugu state, by members of the outlawed Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). "The Service lost two personnel in what was clearly an unprovoked

violent attack launched by IPOB on the team," it said in a statement.

Security forces were on the trail of the attackers, it said. "All measures have been put in place to ensure that their killers and everyone involved in this dastardly act are promptly apprehended and brought to justice." IPOB spokesman Emma Powerful denied his group killed any government security forces and said instead that it was Nigerian forces who killed unarmed Biafrans holding a peaceful meeting in Emene.

"The Nigerian security personnel stormed IPOB meeting ground in Enugu and started shooting sporadically which consumed the lives of 21 members and 47 arrested for no just cause or provocation," Powerful said in a statement. "Those responsible for this barbaric killing in Enugu... must pay for their ac-

tions against IPOB at the appropriate time," he said. The DSS statement did not say it killed any Biafran separatists, nor could the figure of 21 dead be independently verified. However, local and international human rights bodies have long accused Nigerian security forces of killing IPOB members.

In 2016, Amnesty International accused the national security forces of extra-judicial executions of 150 IPOB members, a charge they denied. IPOB which seeks a separate state for the Igbo people of southeast Nigeria has frequently clashed with the security forces. Calls for a separate state of Biafra are a sensitive subject in Nigeria, after a unilateral declaration of independence in 1967 sparked a brutal 30-month civil war. More than one million people died, most of them Igbo, from the effects of conflict and disease. —AFP

Business

TUESDAY, AUGUST 25, 2020

Asian firms eye Mexico as China risks grow

Trade war, coronavirus crisis prompt companies to rethink strategy

HONG KONG/TAIPEI/MEXICO CITY: Taiwan-based electronics manufacturers Foxconn and Pegatron are among companies eyeing new factories in Mexico, people with direct knowledge of the matter said, as the US-China trade war and coronavirus pandemic prompt firms to reexamine global supply chains.

The plans could usher in billions of dollars in badly needed fresh investments over the next few years for Latin America's second-largest economy, which is primed for its worst recession since the 1930s Great Depression. Foxconn and Pegatron are known as contractors for several phone manufacturers including Apple. It was not immediately clear which companies they would work with in Mexico.

According to two of the sources, Foxconn has plans to use the factory to make Apple iPhones. However, one of the sources said, there had been no sign of Apple's direct involvement in the plan yet.

Foxconn is likely to make a final decision on a new factory later this year, and work will commence after that, the two people said, adding there was no certainty the company would stick to the plan.

Apple spokesman Josh Rosenstock declined to comment. Pegatron is also in early discussions with lenders about an additional facility in Mexico mainly to assemble chips and other electronic components, said the people, who declined to be identified as the talks are confidential. Pegatron declined to comment.

Foxconn has five factories in Mexico mainly making televisions and servers. Its possible expansion would underscore a broader and gradual shift of global supply chains away from China amid a Sino-US trade war and the coronavirus crisis. The plans come as the idea of "near-shoring" gains ground in Washington. The Trump administration is exploring financial incentives to encourage firms to move production facilities from Asia to the United States, Latin America and the Caribbean.

Brandishing a new deal locking in free trade with the world's biggest consumer market, Mexico also has geography, low wages and time zones in its favor. Despite the global recession and concerns about the business climate under President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, government data shows foreign investment largely holding up so far this year. "The company indeed has contacted the

(Mexican) government," a third source said about Foxconn, adding the talks were at an early stage and rising cases of coronavirus in Mexico were a major concern for the possible investment.

Taipei-headquartered Foxconn, formally called Hon Hai Precision Industry Co Ltd, said in a statement that while it continued to expand global operations and is an "active investor" in Mexico, it had no current plans to increase those investments.

Reuters in July reported Foxconn planned to invest up to \$1 billion to expand a factory in India where it assembles Apple iPhones. Foxconn Chairman Liu Young-way told an investor conference in Taipei on Aug. 12 the world was split into "G2" - or two groups - following Sino-US tensions, saying his firm was working on "providing two sets of supply chain to service the two markets."

"The world factory no longer exists," he said, adding that about 30 percent of the company's products were now made outside China and the ratio could increase. Foxconn unit Sharp has said it is stepping up television production in Mexico. Sharp last year said it would set up a plant in Vietnam to shift part of its China production. It said it had no further information to give.

China's Luxshare Precision Industry Co is also considering building a facility in Mexico this year to offset the tariff war between the world's two largest economies, the two sources said. It was not immediately clear which product lines were being considered by

Luxshare, which according to media reports is a leading manufacturer of Apple AirPods. Luxshare did not respond to a request for comment. The Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Mexico, which represents Taiwan's government in the country, said it had heard Foxconn was interested in building another factory in Ciudad Juarez, in the northern border state of Chihuahua. "Pegatron, I also understand, wants to move a production line from China to Mexico," the office's Director General Armando Cheng told Reuters. He said he did not know details of either company's plans.

"Mexico is one of the ideal countries for companies considering readjusting their chain of suppliers," Cheng said. The scale of investment by Asian electronics contract manufacturers, and the employment they would create in Mexico, are not yet clear.

Promised investment in new manufacturing surveys taken after every flight.

"As important as (being) on-time is to our company, we know that cleanliness, particularly in this environment but also going forward, will be just as important," he said. Delta's average clean time for its domestic fleet is now 20 minutes, up from 10 minutes to 15 minutes previously depending on the aircraft size, but it aims to speed up the procedure to protect its turn times once schedules are heavier by adding resources.

To verify levels of cleanliness, Delta is purchasing ATP test kits that measure the amount of bacteria on airplane and airport surfaces. The kits cannot test for COVID-19. It has already purchased 30 of the handheld units, which cost about \$1,000 each, to test the effectiveness of its cleaning program. The plan is to buy the tests for all of its global airport bases, though details are still being developed.

Among large US rivals, American Airlines said it has doubled the strength of its cabin cleaning crews but has not had to add extra time to its turns given lighter passenger loads and fewer scheduled flights. United Airlines said it has added some extra time to its cleaning process but not workers given the lighter loads. Southwest Airlines, whose low-cost model depends on quick turns, has not added staffing and said this month it was scaling back some pre-flight cleaning with a view to preserving an average 45-minute turn once its schedule ramps up. It is still using an electrostatic and an anti-microbial spray that kill viruses and shield surfaces for 30 days, as well as a broad-spectrum disinfectant for lavatories and tray tables before every flight, but is not wiping down seat belts or arm rests.

All of the airlines are eyeing new cleaning technology. United, for example, is testing ultraviolet sanitation deployed by drones and hand-held wands for



A sign announces the manufacturing complex of Foxconn PCE Technology, in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico February 6, 2020. —Reuters

capacity has not always materialized. In 2017, US President Donald Trump said Foxconn would build a \$10 billion plant employing 13,000 people making LCD panels in the state of Wisconsin. Those plans have shifted dramatically. In 2019 the company downgraded the size of the planned factory. In April, Foxconn said it would make ventilators at the plant in partnership with Medtronic.

Stretched supply chains

Coronavirus ground cross-Pacific supply chains to a standstill, stranding automobile, electronics and pharmaceutical components from China, exacerbating firms' concerns about having their productive base an ocean away from American consumers. Additionally, the newly implemented United States-Mexico-Canada trade deal requires more locally sourced inputs for tariff-free exports to the United States. Mexico has spoken to a host of foreign companies in an effort to lure business from Asia to capitalize on the trade deal and was preparing to speak to Apple about relocating manufacturing, Economy Minister Graciela Marquez told Reuters in July.

She said she had not spoken to Foxconn, Pegatron and Luxshare directly. A senior government official said those companies were among others interested in investing in Mexico.

The government did not respond to a request for further comment prior to publication.

Despite the potential and solid investment fig-

ures, many investors see Lopez Obrador squandering a historic opportunity. "It could have been a tidal wave," said Eduardo Ramos-Gomez, a partner at Duane Morris & Selvam, a law firm working with Taiwanese and Chinese companies looking at Mexico.

Critics cite Mexico's poor handling of the pandemic - it is third in global deaths - along with Lopez Obrador's meddling in private investment decisions such as the cancellation of a \$1-billion brewery by US firm Constellation Brands, the scrapping of a major airport project and pressure on energy companies. The government has denied such decisions were anti-business. Regardless, Mexico's appeal is attracting some. Samuel Campos, an executive managing director of real estate brokerage Newmark Knight Frank, said his company is currently helping two Chinese companies, one in the autos sector and the other in manufacturing, relocate to an industrial cluster in Mexico.

Campos said electronics, medical and automotive firms in Asia are likely to help drive investments into Mexico in the fourth quarter this year. For Alan Russell, chief executive and chairman of Tecma Group, a company managing factories in Mexico, manufacturers in China that want to keep market share in North America have few choices. "They're going to have shorten their supply chain and be more regional," he said. "It seems the virus has tipped the scale." —Reuters

Delta doubles cabin cleaners in 'pit stop' revamp, buys kits

CHICAGO: Delta Air Lines has doubled its staffing to handle revamped pre-flight "pit stops" for deeper cleaning and wants to ensure that tray tables and restroom door handles are germ-free with a new testing process, an executive told Reuters. Airlines' efforts to reassure travelers of their safety during the pandemic have spurred a behind-the-scenes scramble to complete the enhanced cleaning that they are promising without sacrificing turnaround times, a cornerstone of profitability, once more passengers take to the skies.

"We've done quite a lot of change to our turn process," the head of Delta's new Global Cleanliness division Mike Medeiros said in an interview detailing the airline's strategy for "turns" — the time a plane spends on the ground between flights. Depending on the aircraft's size, Delta is deploying at least eight pre-flight cabin cleaners, up from three to five previously, and has adopted a new "pit stop mentality" based on industrial engineering studies into the extra resources required for cleaning each plane type, he said.

After cleaners spray with disinfectant and wipe down high-touch surfaces, a flight attendant and gate agent walk the cabin together to inspect. If the cabin is not up to par, they call back the cleaners. "Even if that means taking a delay to the flight," said Medeiros, who is among managers who receive daily cleanliness reports in their inbox based on customer

surveys taken after every flight.

"As important as (being) on-time is to our company, we know that cleanliness, particularly in this environment but also going forward, will be just as important," he said. Delta's average clean time for its domestic fleet is now 20 minutes, up from 10 minutes to 15 minutes previously depending on the aircraft size, but it aims to speed up the procedure to protect its turn times once schedules are heavier by adding resources.

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airport and aircraft surfaces.

Delta is rolling out antimicrobial LED light technology by Vital Vio in all its aircraft restrooms that will continuously prevent the growth of bacteria, fungi, mold and yeast. The airline is also in talks with Boeing Co and Airbus SE on developing touchless restrooms and is studying a UV light that would sterilize lavatories when they are not in use, Medeiros said. Last week Delta said it would continue blocking middle seats through Jan. 6. Southwest is limiting seating capacity through October, while American and United are selling all seats.

Beyond the jet, Delta is looking at bipolar ionization to improve air filtration at its airport facilities, including jetways. Airplanes already use hospital-grade HEPA that refresh air every two to four minutes. "We're not afraid of adding costs to the business, but it has to add value," said Medeiros. "If people are fearful or uncomfortable, travel won't come back in the near term." —Reuters

Saudi energy ministry to assist development of Neom economic zone

DUBAI: Saudi Arabia's energy ministry is to offer assistance so that Neom, a \$500 billion high-tech development that includes tourism and sport facilities on the Red Sea, can be completed on schedule, minister Abdul Aziz bin Salman said on Sunday.

The 26,500 square km (10,230 square mile) development, first revealed in 2017 with a planned completion in 2025, will include high-tech projects powered by wind and solar energy.

Neom CEO Nadhmi Al-Nasr, speaking at the signing ceremony of a cooperation agreement with the ministry, said the city will rely totally on renewable power, including solar, wind and hydrogen produced from renewable energy sources. "We have to persevere and make all our capacities available to realize this project," Prince Abdul Aziz told a press conference at the ceremony, broadcast on al-Arabiya TV channel. The project is part of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's Vision 2030 plan that aims to attract foreign investment and create jobs in a bid to wean the kingdom off reliance on oil. —Reuters

UK supermarket giant Tesco to create 16,000 jobs

LONDON: Supermarket giant Tesco said yesterday it will create 16,000 permanent UK jobs to meet soaring online demand for groceries triggered by the coronavirus pandemic. "The supermarket expects the majority of these roles to be filled by colleagues who joined on a temporary basis at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, but who now want to stay with the business permanently," Britain's biggest retailer said in a statement. —AFP



LONDON: In this file photo, customers leave a branch of a Tesco supermarket in London. Supermarket giant Tesco said yesterday, it will create 16,000 permanent UK jobs to meet soaring online demand for groceries triggered by the coronavirus pandemic. —AFP

Vietnamese tech firm sues TikTok

HANOI: Vietnamese technology firm VNG is suing TikTok, the popular short-form video app, saying it does not have adequate licenses for the songs being used in its videos, sources said yesterday.

VNG is accusing the Chinese-owned company of using audio tracks owned by Zing, a VNG subsidiary, without the company's consent, two sources familiar with the issue said. A legal document from the people's court of Ho Chi Minh City seen by Reuters seeks damages from TikTok and demands that it ceases use of Zing's music. "VNG requests TikTok remove all music segments taken from Zing records from both the TikTok applica-

tion and website, and an indemnification for damages of over 221 billion dong (\$9.5 million)," read the document.

TikTok and VNG did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

VNG Corporation is a Vietnam-based technology firm founded in 2004, known for its online games, music streaming and messaging applications. TikTok has soared in popularity in Vietnam, where it recorded 10 million users as of August with millions of short-clip uploads to the platform, official data showed. But some music rights-holders say TikTok does not have adequate licenses for the songs being used in its videos.

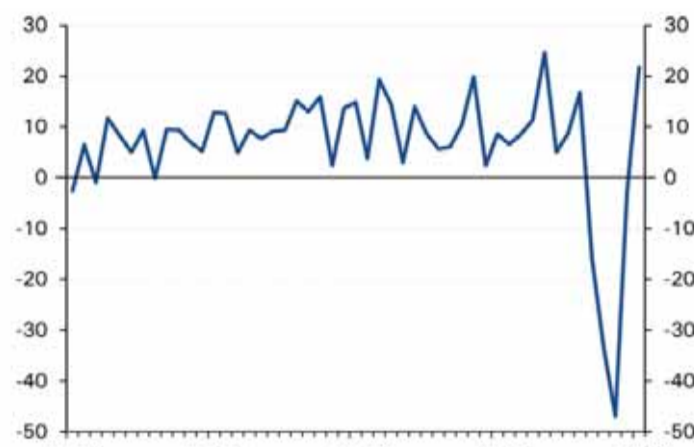
"Notably, TikTok has introduced a very complicated business model to avoid copyright compliance in Vietnam," the Vietnam Music Association said in a response to questions from Reuters. —Reuters

Business

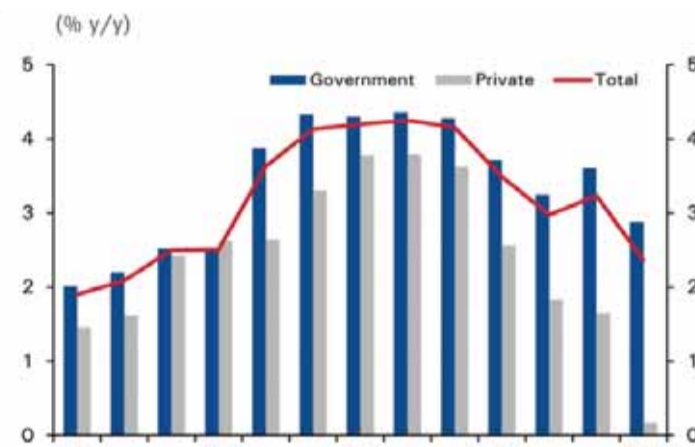
NBK ECONOMIC REPORT

Kuwait's consumer sector shows some resilience as mobility restrictions ease

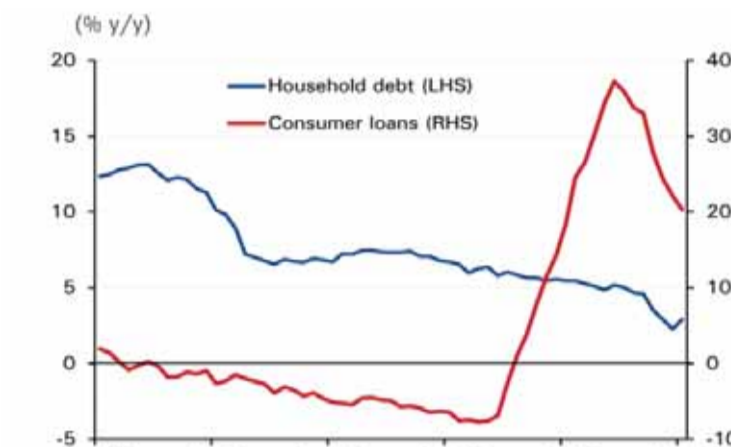
Expatriate workers likely to bear the brunt of slump in business activity



Source: Knet



Source: Public Institution for Social Security



Source: Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK)

KUWAIT: Consumer spending staged a decent comeback at the start of third quarter, reversing months of declines, as the reopening of parts of the economy was met with pent-up demand. Consumer spending growth may edge higher in August as further restrictions are eased, before tapering off as the initial boost from reopening subsides. Job insecurities and economic uncertainties remain as significant overhangs on overall consumer sentiment.

Consumer spending reverses

Consumer spending rose by a decent 21.6 percent year-on-year (y/y) in July, according to the latest Knet monthly report, reversing months of declines, as the ease in mobility restrictions and the reopening of retail stores were met with pent-up demand for discretionary items. Point-of-sale (POS) transactions declined by a mere 0.1 percent y/y in July, a stark improvement from the 35 percent decline in June, while growth in online spending surged 160 percent. Indeed, the prolonged lockdown measures is likely to have led to long-lasting changes in consumer behavior, as stay-at-home orders has increasingly forced people to shop online.

Spending has in part been supported by accumulated savings, not least because of the deferral of debt payments by six months (which is expected to temporarily free up +KD1 billion in incomes, equivalent to more than 5 percent of estimated household spending in 2019), and the fact that a large portion of the population is spending their summer holidays in Kuwait, amid strict travel restrictions.

While we may see consumer spending gather

more momentum in August and the remainder of Q3 as restrictions on public transport, catering, personal care services, health clubs and other recreation venues (such as museums, cinemas and concert halls) are eased, it is likely to taper off as the initial boost from the reopening of the economy subsides. Lingering worries over income security, particularly for expats, and the economy are likely to prevail and weigh on consumer sentiment going forward.

The latest trend in consumer confidence is at odds with the recent strength in consumer spending, reflecting the low oil price environment, underlying concerns about the economy and income insecurities, especially among expats, as employees are let go, furloughed or endure pay cuts. Ara's consumer confidence index was at 100 in July, down five points year-to-date, but still slightly higher than June's reading (98) as most subcomponents, including current employment

and durable goods, improved in tandem with the reopening of the economy.

Consumer confidence trends lower



Consumer lending

Personal consumer loan growth appears to show a correction so far in 2020, after accelerating sharply throughout most of 2019 mainly on the back of the Central Bank of Kuwait's (CBK) relaxation of consumer loan limits (to KD 25,000 from KD 15,000 previously) in December of 2018. The moderation so far in 2020 has undoubtedly been amplified by the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown measures. As such, growth in loans for consumption purposes (i.e. excluding housing loans) eased to 20 percent y/y in June, down from 22 percent in May and the 36 per-

cent surge in 2019.

Meanwhile, growth in overall household debt (i.e. including housing loans) also softened further for most of Q2, coming in at 2.9 percent y/y in June, lower than the 4.7 percent reading at the start of the year.

Labor market

The ongoing weakness in the jobs market is likely to weigh on the consumer spending outlook in the near-to-medium term. Employment growth among Kuwaitis slowed to 2.4 percent y/y in 1Q20 from 3.2 percent in 4Q19, led by a slowdown in both public sector hiring (2.9 percent - an over two-year low - from 3.6 percent) and private sector hiring (a mere 0.2 percent from 1.6 percent). Overall employment growth among Kuwaitis appears to have been moderating since the start of 2019 and is likely to face further headwinds in the quarters ahead, as the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic are felt, particularly in the private sector. The public sector has fared quite well in comparison to the private sector, but this could mostly be attributed to the effects of Kuwaitization efforts.

That said, expatriate workers are likely to bear the brunt of the slump in business activity. Although data on expat employment this year is yet to be released, it is likely to point to continued declines in expat employees in both the public and private sectors. Indeed, between mid-March and mid-July, northwards of 165,000 expats (around 5 percent of the total expat population) reportedly left the country. Many more expat workers are expected to leave by the end of 2020, according to some analysts, on the back of proposed changes to the residency law, aimed at clamping down on the number of expats in the country, and as companies are forced to shed workers amid a weaker economic climate.

Separately, while average wage growth edged higher in 4Q19 among both Kuwaitis (2.5 percent y/y from 2.1 percent in 3Q19) and non-Kuwaitis (2.7 percent from 2.4 percent in 3Q19), it is likely to moderate in the coming quarters, in line with a weaker eco-

Highlights

- Consumer spending stages a decent recovery at the start of Q3 led by an ease in some mobility restrictions.
- Spending has in part been supported by the deferral of debt repayments by six months and accumulated savings.
- Continued labor market weakness may weigh on spending in the quarters ahead.
- Sustaining the recovery in consumer spending will hinge upon the continued ease in virus-containment measures and people's sense of job security.

nomical climate, and ultimately weigh on consumer spending.

How much of the rebound in consumer spending will be sustained will be contingent upon how safe consumers feel about their incomes, the likely impact on expat demographics and also the future path of Covid-19 and the avoidance of future lockdowns, business closures and mobility restrictions. While we may see spending gathering some further momentum in the near-term as more parts of the economy reopen, a further weakening in the labor market and a potential drop in expat numbers, especially with sweeping changes to the residency law aimed at restricting expats in the country, are likely to weigh on consumer spending in the period ahead.

Algeria chafes against EU trade deal

ALGIERS: Days ahead of a final deadline, activation of a long-planned Algeria-EU trade deal risks unravelling as political and business leaders in the North African country warn it will undermine economic sovereignty. The deal is meant to come into effect on September 1, a decade and a half after the two sides initially agreed their Free Trade Agreement as part of a wider pact setting out economic, social, cultural and judicial cooperation. But as the clock ticks, concern has grown in Algiers about the coronavirus-hobbled economy's ability to cope without tariffs on steel, textiles, electronics and vehicles-protective measures originally meant to end three years ago.

For Ali Bey Nasri, chairman of Algeria's exporters' association, "the agreement was badly negotiated from the start." "When the deal was ratified in 2005, the EU had only 15 members, while now it is 27 strong and in a few years the membership will grow," said Nasri. A free trade zone would be a "disaster for the national economy", he added. In early August, President Abdelmadjid Tebboune called on Commerce Minister Kamel Rezig to reassess the European Union deal. The head of state insisted that the deal "must be the subject of special attention, asserting our interests for balanced relations".



Algeria's hydrocarbon-dependent economy is in an extremely fragile state.— AFP

an official statement said.

Mounting pressure

Algeria's hydrocarbon-dependent economy is in an extremely fragile state, as the effects of policies around the world to contain the coronavirus pandemic have hit already diminished oil and gas revenues. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) forecasts that Algeria's economy will shrink 5.2 percent this year.

On Wednesday, Prime Minister Abdelaziz Djerad pledged a thorough review of the country's trade terms and promised to revise all economic and commercial agreements "harmful to the country". Djerad did not men-

tion the EU free trade deal explicitly, but he was clearly alluding to it.

The EU is Algeria's largest trading partner, and Algeria is the EU's third-largest supplier of natural gas after Russia and Norway, according to the European Commission. Algeria imported \$320 billion in goods from the EU between 2005 and 2019, according to Nasri, mainly in the form of machinery, transport equipment and agricultural products. This figure is more than 20 times the \$15 billion in non-oil and gas exports Algeria sent to the EU over the same period. Algiers has repeatedly asked to renegotiate the terms of the agreement.—AFP

British Finance Minister Rishi Sunak plans to drop a tax on technology companies such as Facebook and Google because it does not raise much money and could hurt a push for a US trade deal, the Mail on Sunday newspaper said. Britain introduced the digital services tax in April after slow progress in global negotiations over how to tax tech giants, many of which are US companies. The tax is expected to raise about 500 million pounds (\$654 million) a year for Britain's public finances. That represents only a fraction of the 200 billion pounds in extra debt the country has racked up since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The tax is also a potential impediment to a post-Brexit bilateral trade deal between Britain and the United States. France and other countries have adopted or are considering similar taxes.

No one was immediately available for comment at Britain's finance ministry. The Mail on Sunday quoted a finance ministry representative as saying: "We've been clear it's a tempo-



Facebook Chairman and CEO Mark Zuckerberg testifies before the House Financial Services Committee in Washington, DC.—AFP

rary tax that will be removed once an appropriate global solution is in place, and we continue to work with our international partners to reach that goal." —Reuters

Australia's jobless rate to exceed 13% by Sept end

SYDNEY: Effective unemployment in Australia will climb above 13 percent by the end of September, Treasurer Josh Frydenberg said yesterday, as nearly half a million people lose their jobs due to a full lockdown of the country's second most populous city. Releasing modelling from Australia's Treasury Department, Frydenberg said effective unemployment totalled 9.9 percent at the end of July, down from the record high of 14 percent in April when large parts of the country's economy were ordered to close to slow the spread of COVID-19.

But demonstrating the economic impact of Australia's second wave of

COVID-19 infections, Frydenberg said the number of people out of work will swell by 450,000 during August and September amid a lockdown of nearly five million people in Victoria state capital, Melbourne.

"We know the road to recovery will be bumpy as we have seen with the setback in Victoria, however, the jobs recovery across the rest of the country gives cause for optimism," Frydenberg said in an emailed statement. Once heralded as a global leader in combating COVID-19, Australia has seen a surge of new infections in the past month. Desperate to contain the spread, Victoria state earlier this month imposed a nightly curfew across Melbourne, tightened restrictions on movement and ordered large parts of the state's economy to close. Australia has largely avoided the high casualty numbers of many other nations, it has recorded nearly 25,000 COVID-19 infections and 502 deaths.—Reuters

Facebook to pay 104m euros in back taxes in France

PARIS: Facebook France has accepted paying more than 100 million euros in taxes, including a penalty, relating to its accounting years before 2018, French financial magazine Capital reported on its website.

Facebook was not immediately available for comment. The French Finance Ministry said it could not comment on individual tax cases. Capital reported that it had seen documents showing that Facebook had been ordered to pay 104 million euros, including a 22 million euro penalty. UK plans to drop 'Facebook tax', Mail on Sunday says.

Job vacancy

KPTC announces its invitation for qualified candidates for the following vacancy:

Vacancy	Required Qualifications
Service Labor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transferrable residency • Candidate should not be older than (45) years • Candidates should of the Asian nationalities • Most preferred those fluently speak Arabic and English

Interested candidates should file their applications during the morning shift, from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm, at the KPTC's Shuwaikh Garage, located at: Shuwaikh Industrial area, Banks Street, opposite to Mazda Service Center and Politics Newspaper.

not later than (14) days as of the publication date, accompanying the following:

- Passport Copy.
 - Original Civil ID Card and Copy of it.
 - Recent personal photo.
- Applications with any such documents required missing shall be disregarded.



Business

stc revolutionizes postpaid plans with unique package Always ON

Always ON brings a wealth of benefits to customers

KUWAIT: Kuwait Telecommunications Company - stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announced its new revolutionary range of Always ON postpaid plans, packaged with new unique benefits designed to meet customers' connectivity requirements. Customers can unlock the new-to-market features by subscribing to one of stc's plans, which include premium digital and telecom services.

Whether you are a new or a renewal customer, you can sign up for one of stc's eligible plans and benefit from stc's Always ON continuous breakthrough connectivity, a highly convenient service that permits users to always remain connected to the internet. Additionally, subscribers will be able to upgrade from 4G to 5G service at any time and with ease to enjoy the network's top internet speeds. Internet roaming, WhatsApp and incoming calls while roaming, and international minutes are also part of



**Al-Sadoun:
Revamped
postpaid plans**

the bouquet of offerings, allowing users to stay in touch with friends and family wherever they are. For those looking to relax and enjoy quality home entertainment, stc has included a subscription to the Jawwy TV app which comes loaded with live TV channels, Arabic and English movies, TV series and more.

Commenting on the first-of-its-kind promotion in Kuwait, Chief Consumer Officer (CCO) of stc, engineer Nasser Al-Sadoun, said, "We have revamped

and redesigned our postpaid plans to bring out the best of what stc has to offer, specifically targeting this market segment. Focusing on enriching the customer experience, the new-to-market bundled services allow stc customers to access a wealth of features that are not yet offered in the local market. With that said, we aim to keep our customers satisfied by blending innovation with connectivity to deliver an unrivaled interactive experience."

He added, "stc is continuously searching for groundbreaking methods to enhance its customer satisfaction rate and online journey by offering unique solutions that enable digital transformation. By offering a rich selection of products and services, which include the latest smartphones, internet routers and entertainment devices, stc aims to grant its customers with an unmatched choice in quality, value, and convenience. Placing the customer experience at heart, the Company offers all its products and services through stc branches, its website



Nasser Al-Sadoun

(www.stc.com.kw) and mystc App."

With 5G wireless technology revolutionizing the world of connectivity, stc has invested its resources in building an infrastructure that can provide ultra-high-internet speeds through a stable network with low latency. Complementing this initiative, the Company has released a variety of 5G enabled devices and pro-

motions that can utilize the network's advantages and vast capabilities. These developments follow stc's vision to enable the digital transformation in Kuwait, which is now accessible to more customers at an affordable price.

Al-Sayer announces winners of 'Big Winner' campaign

KUWAIT: Mohamed Naser Al-Sayer & Sons Co (MNSS) Group Spare Parts Division, a subsidiary of Al-Sayer Holding, held an electronic raffle to select the winners of Toyota Genuine Parts Special Big Winner promotion on Tuesday 13th August 2020, through the Ministry of Commerce and Industry Computer system.

Toyota Genuine Parts Special - Big Winner promotion had commenced on 12th February until 15th March, customers were eligible to participate in the draw with every KD 5 spent on Toyota Genuine Parts at any Al-Sayer parts outlet or Service facility.



Its prize distribution will be held, at Toyota Parts Main Branch, located on Canada Dry Street, Road no 3, while maintaining the health precautions for COVID-19. The winners are requested to collect their prizes by presenting the official letter from the Ministry and their official Personal Identification proof registered for the draw. Mohamed Naser Al-Sayer continues to guarantee highest level of customer satisfaction through quality assured genuine products at fair and competitive prices. Al-Sayer Toyota Genuine Parts operate 17 exclusive outlets across Kuwait offering excellent customer experience through better accessibility and convenience.

digital signature will be created and the transaction will be processed. This voiceprint will be the customer's authentication method henceforth. It conveniently reduces the number of security questions and average call times providing an overall improved customer experience.

The Fraud Detection feature on 'Ahlan Ahli' analyses the voice through the course of natural conversation with a Call Center agent. This pioneering technology will work in the background to measure characteristics of the customer's voice, matching it to the on-record unique voiceprint of suspicious callers to provide an added layer of security. In case of a match, the call is reported in real-time to ABK call agents to provide quick assistance and to prevent potential fraud.

This enhanced IVR service is a key milestone in the Bank's digital transformation journey, and further simplifies routine banking transactions such as inter-account transfers; account and card statement requests; card payments and cash advances.

ABK enhances 'Ahlan Ahli' to improve customer experience

KUWAIT: In line with its 'Simpler Banking' strategy, Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) has upgraded its Interactive Voice Response Service (IVR) by introducing voice biometrics and fraud detection functions on 'Ahlan Ahli'. This innovation is a result of the Bank's commitment to leading industry standards of cybersecurity, and emphasizes the huge importance it places on safeguarding customers' data security.

ABK's voice biometrics feature is available to ABK customers, who will be required to record their voice three times in the IVR to create their unique voiceprint. If the verification is successful, a non-readable



European stocks bounce off lows on virus treatment hopes

LONDON: European stocks bounced from a two-week low yesterday as signs of progress in developing a COVID-19 treatment offset fears about a resurgence in virus cases across the continent that could risk stifling an economic recovery.

The pan-European STOXX 600 index rose 1.3 per-

cent, mirroring gains for Asian markets after the U.S. health regulator said on Sunday it authorized the use of blood plasma from patients who have recovered from COVID-19 as a treatment. Spain's Grifols, one of the world's top producers of treatments based on human plasma, gained 3 percent.

AstraZeneca Plc jumped 2.5 percent after the Financial Times reported the Trump administration was considering fast-tracking an experimental COVID-19 vaccine being developed by the company. "The week-end's vaccine news is at the fore," said Keith Temperton, an analyst at Lombard Forte. "But we're in this mid-summer volume vacuum, where the path of least resistance is higher."

Gulf Bank announces winners of Al-Danah weekly draw

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank held its weekly draw on 23rd August 2020 announcing the names of the winners for the week of 16 - 20 August 2020. The weekly draw consists of five winners who receive KD 1,000 each, every week.

The winners this week are:

Nawal Abdullah Hasen Abdullah
Khushi Mohammed Asghar Ali
Safiyah Ibrahim Dashti
Amal Sarhan Laftah Al-Shammari
Ali Mohammad Hussain Buolayyan

Al-Danah is now offering its biggest prize yet, with an annual draw prize of KD 1,500,000. The annual draw will be held on 14 January 2021, and the

last chance to deposit into an Al-Danah account to participate is 30 September 2020.

Gulf Bank encourages customers to increase their chances of winning with Al-Danah by depositing more into their Gulf Bank accounts using the new ePay (Self-Pay) service, which is available on Gulf Bank's online and mobile banking services. Al-Danah offers a number of unique services to customers, including the Al-Danah Deposit Only ATM card, which allows account holders to deposit money into their accounts at their convenience. Account holders can also calculate their chances of winning the draws through the 'Al-Danah Chances' calculator available on the Gulf Bank website and app. Furthermore, loyal Al-Danah customers are rewarded with loyalty chances. Loyalty chances are the total chances accumulated from the previous year, which are added to the customer's chances the following year. Therefore, the total chances earned by Al-Danah customers in 2019, have been added to their 2020 chances, and the same process will take place in 2021, and so on. Terms and conditions apply.

China's XPeng looks to raise \$1.1bn in US IPO

SHANGHAI: Chinese electric vehicle (EV) manufacturer XPeng Inc said it hopes to raise up to \$1.1 billion in its initial public offering (IPO) in New York, seeking to ride the enthusiasm for EVs even as US-China relations remain strained.

The company said on Friday it intends to sell 85 million shares American depositary share (ADS), each representing two class A ordinary share, priced between \$11 and \$13 per share.

At the top end of the range, XPeng's valuation stood at \$9.17 billion. The IPO comes at a time when US-listed Chinese companies are facing tightened scrutiny and strict audit requirements from US regulators, as tensions escalate between two of the world's biggest economies. The Chinese EV maker said existing investors Alibaba Group, Coate, and Qatar Investment Authority had indicated interest in buying up to \$200 million, \$100 million and \$50 million, respectively, of the ADSs being offered.

Backer Xiaomi Corp had also indicated interest in buying up to \$50 million of the ADSs.

Alibaba will own all of XPeng's class C ordinary shares, representing 14.9 percent of the voting power of its total shares immediately after the completion of the offering, XPeng said. XPeng's IPO comes after rival Li Auto Inc, another Chinese electric vehicle startup, raised \$1.09 billion in its IPO on Nasdaq last month.

Share prices of EV makers including Tesla Inc and Nio Inc have surged in recent months.

"Investors can't seem to get enough exposure to electric vehicle stocks. We are comparing Xpeng with Li Auto, which went public in July and is up 28 percent from its IPO and to Nio," Kathleen Smith, Principal, Renaissance Capital, provider of institutional research and IPO ETFs, said. Founded in 2014, Guangzhou-based XPeng delivered its first Xpeng G3 vehicle to customers in December 2018 and launched a second model in April this year. The company manufactures cars in two factories in China. BofA Securities, JP Morgan and Credit Suisse are among the underwriters for the IPO. — Reuters

Oil and gas companies led the surge in Europe, gaining from a rise in crude prices as storms closed in on the Gulf of Mexico, shutting more than half its oil production. Technology, mining and chemical companies also rose nearly 2 percent. British telecoms company BT Group jumped 4.3 percent after a media report that its board was preparing to defend it against takeover approaches from rivals and buyout firms.

The gains in European equities come after a lackluster week that saw data pointing to a stalling business recovery in the euro zone amid a surge in coronavirus cases. A UK government data showed on Friday the reproduction "R" number of COVID-19 infections had risen and may now be above 1, indicating a risk

Mega hit offer for Burgan Bank customers from Best Al-Yousifi

KUWAIT: Through its exclusive partnership with the leading electronics store in Kuwait, 'Best Al-Yousifi', Burgan Bank's prepaid and credit cardholders can now enjoy an exclusive monthly 'Mega Offer' where they can receive a deal on one product with a bargain price only available for Burgan Bank's customers. This mega hit offer provides limited quantities of a selected highly demanded product every month valid for 24 hours only. Customers can benefit from the 'Mega' offer while making purchases through "Best Al-Yousifi" website or the mobile application.

Abdullah Hussain Al-Maqseed, Unit Head - Card Products, at Burgan Bank said: "We are delighted to continue collaborating with 'Best Al-Yousifi', which has a leading reputation and position in the Kuwaiti market. Through our partnership, we always strive to reward our valued customers with exclusive deals, as the opportunity is available for them to obtain the most requested products at a special and exclusive price that is only available in the market for them."

Abdullah continued: "The exclusive price on selected products can be viewed on the bank's social media platforms on the same day of the offer and for a limited period only."

Established in 1977, Burgan Bank is the youngest commercial Bank and second largest by assets in Kuwait, with a significant focus on the corporate and financial institutions sectors, as well as having a growing retail, and private bank customer base. Burgan Bank has majority owned subsidiaries in the MENAT region supported by one of the largest regional branch networks which include Gulf Bank Algeria - AGB (Algeria), Bank of Baghdad - BOB (Iraq & Lebanon), Tunis International Bank - TIB (Tunisia), and fully owned Burgan Bank - Turkey, (collectively known as the "Burgan Bank Group"). Furthermore, Burgan Bank has presence in the UAE through its corporate office ("Burgan Financial Services Limited) which had helped the bank to participate in multiple financing opportunities in the UAE.

that the overall epidemic is growing. Similarly, Germany, France and Spain have seen a surge in virus cases, with their leaders looking at tightening travel restrictions.

"The way we're looking at the COVID narrative seems to be changing. The market is looking at a better situation in terms of hospitalization and death rates," Temperton said. Shares in British Airways-owner IAG dropped 0.5 percent and Air France dipped 0.4 percent after the UK government said travellers to France are required to self-certify that they are not suffering coronavirus symptoms or have been in contact with a confirmed case within 14 days preceding travel. — Reuters



Abdullah Hussain Al-Maqseed

Classifieds

Tuesday, August 25, 2020

Kuwait Times
 THE FIRST STOP FOR THE ARABIAN GULF
 Now you can browse
www.kuwaittimes.net
 e-mail: info@kuwaittimes.net



Tel: (+965) 161 Ext: 66819 - 66817
 Fax: (+965) 24348714
www.met.gov.kw

Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

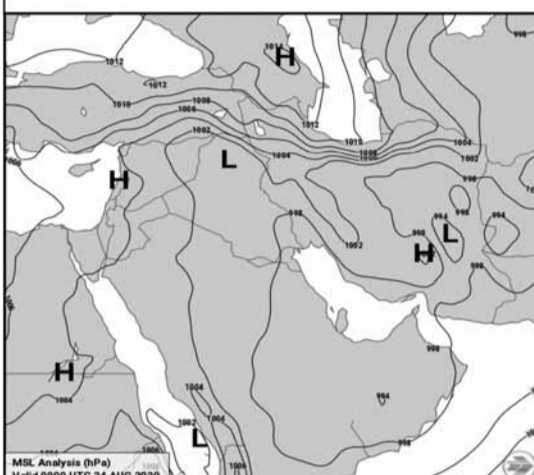
BY DAY: Hot and Relatively humid over coastal areas with light to moderate north easterly wind to north westerly wind with speed of 08 - 32 km/h .

BY NIGHT: Hot to rather hot and Relatively humid over coastal areas with light to moderate north westerly wind to light variable wind with speed of 08 - 28 km/h .

WEATHER WARNING: No Current Warnings

STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	43 °C	32 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	45 °C	32 °C
ABDALY	47 °C	28 °C
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C
JAHRA	47 °C	30 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	41 °C	30 °C
SALMIYAH	40 °C	33 °C
AHMADI	- °C	- °C
NUWAISSIB	46 °C	30 °C
WAFRA	46 °C	29 °C
SALMY	45 °C	28 °C

SFC. CHART 24/08/2020 0000 UTC



4 DAYS FORECAST

DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Tuesday	08/25	Hot with a chance for rising dust over open areas	46 °C	28 °C	NW	15 - 45 km/h
Wednesday	08/26	Hot	46 °C	27 °C	NW-VRB	08 - 32 km/h
Thursday	08/27	Hot and Relatively humid over coastal areas	46 °C	28 °C	NW-VRB	08 - 32 km/h
Friday	08/28	Hot and Relatively humid	46 °C	29 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 30 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	03:58
Sunrise	05:21
Zuhr	11:50
Asr	15:24
Sunset	18:20
Isha	19:40

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	45 °C
MIN. Temp.	28 °C
MAX. RH	67 %
MIN. RH	08 %
MAX. Wind	SE 39 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
Salmiya	25746401



EMBASSY OF INDIA

INVITES APPLICATIONS FOR THE POST OF CHAUFFEUR:

Minimum Qualifications : School Certificate.
 Age limit : 35 years on 01.08.2020
 Minimum five years driving experience and knowledge of various roads in Kuwait.

Valid residency (transferable) and driving license of Kuwait
 Knowledge of Arabic language essential.

Interested candidates may send their applications by e-mail with bio-data by 13th September 2020 to Second Secretary(HOC), Embassy of India, P.O. Box No.1450 Safat 13015, Kuwait.

E-mail: clerkrecruitment5@gmail.com



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

Word Search



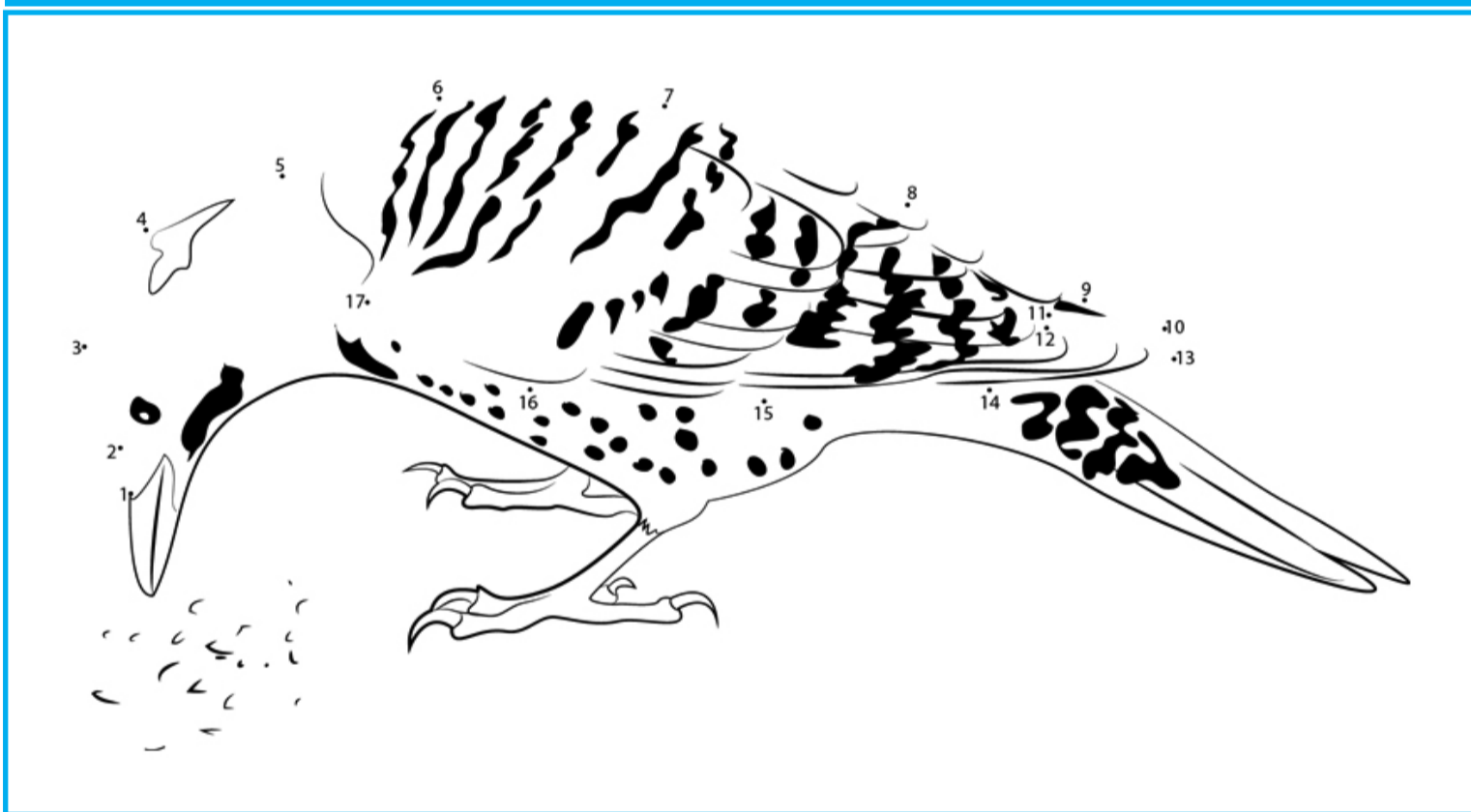
WORD SEARCH DIRECTIONS:
 Find and circle the vocabulary words in the grid. Look for them in all directions including backwards and diagonally.

CHESS

BISHOP	GAME	POSITION
BLACK	KARPOV	QUEEN
CASTLING	KASPAROV	RIVAL
CHAMPION	KING	ROOK
CHECKMATE	KNIGHT	RULES
CHESSBOARD	MATCH	STALEMATE
DEFEAT	MOVE	STRATEGY
DRAW	OPENING	TIMER
EN PASSANT	PAWN	TOURNAMENT
FISCHER	PIECE	WHITE



Join the Dots



STAR TRACK

Aries (March 21-April 19)
 You may run into a great deal of frustration if you try to fight the current circumstances, Aries. The key is to take whatever situation you're in and make the best of it. Whining and moping about your position won't make things better. You have great gifts to be proud of and thankful for, so don't throw them away by thinking that they have no outlet. Create your own reality.

Cancer (June 21-July 22)
 Make sure that the battle you fight today is yours, Cancer. There's a great deal of tension in the air that might erupt when you least expect it. It may behoove you to stay detached from the war that's apt to ensue. Keep things light and try not to take things too seriously. Your philosophical viewpoint and strong spirit are the very combination needed to resolve the situation.

Libra (September 23-October 22)
 Give people the benefit of the doubt today, Libra. Even though you may not agree with everything going on around you, people have their reasons for the way they act and the way they are. This doesn't mean that you need to act in exactly the same manner. Stick to your routine and don't get thrown off track by the aggressive warrior in others.

Capricorn (December 22-January 19)
 Use the day's boisterous energy to take charge and make things happen, Capricorn. You'll find that actions you take today resonate in the coming days. Don't worry about the consequences. Simply go for the gusto. Strong forces are at work encouraging you to seek freedom in your creative endeavors and giving you more room to explore your inner sanctuary that you hold so dearly.

Taurus (April 20-May 20)
 Keeping things in balance today might be tricky, Taurus, since your instincts may gravitate toward a loving, fanciful, peaceful situation. There's a harsh, warring force working against this position. Beware of this powerful energy that's self-centered and courageous. Stick with the things you know and don't stoop to another's level if it doesn't sit right with you.

Leo (July 23-August 22)
 Wake up on the right side of bed, Leo. This will set the tone for the rest of the day. Keep things positive and you'll find that the aggressive energies of the day work for instead of against you. Don't try to fight people who are so obstinate that they refuse to see another perspective. At the same time, make sure you stay open to other people's points of view.

Scorpio (October 23-November 21)
 Some action you took yesterday may be opposed today, Scorpio. Unclear facts and romantic fantasies could get in the way of your taking decisive action. You may feel the need to act anyway. Keep in mind that communication could be tainted by pockets of uncertainty. Try not to rock the boat. Today's energy is a delicate balance between war and peace.

Aquarius (January 20- February 18)
 There's apt to be powerful aggression today that may leave you feeling like you want to declare war on everyone, Aquarius. You may get the feeling that everyone else is completely nuts and you're the only one who really knows what's going on. Beware of misinformed people and false information. Fights could erupt over facts that seem true at first but are just someone's misguided dreams.

Gemini (May 21-June 20)
 Things may be tough and aggressive today, Gemini, but that doesn't mean you can't make progress. There's a nervous energy in the air spurring people to action. Keep in mind that you're likely to get caught up in the frenzy and be called to take a stand. Be careful that your viewpoint doesn't become fixed and stubborn. You can learn some valuable lessons by listening to others.

Virgo (August 23-September 22)
 You may feel a strong connection with your fanciful, romantic side today, Virgo. Dreams and illusions are apt to enter the scene and take you into the clouds. Be careful, because you might find that a strong aggressive force opposes these dreams. Your wit and connection with new technology and electrical gadgets will be your greatest assets on a day like today.

Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)
 If you find yourself in a slump today, Sagittarius, don't worry. It could be that nothing fits right or that a certain nervous, restless energy urges you to take action, but uncertainty prevents you from knowing which way to turn. This combination could result in a locked-up feeling that keeps you incapable of any movement at all.

Pisces (February 19-March 20)
 You may run into some tension today as fantasy gets in the way of your plan of attack, Pisces. Keep in mind that things are moving rapidly these days, and the slightest movement is magnified. Don't try to undo things that can't be undone. Accept your mistakes and move on. There's a whole world for you to explore and conquer, so try not to get trapped in your own little box.



A hoard of gold coins dating to the Abbasid Caliphate is pictured during a press presentation of the discovery at an archeological site near Tel Aviv in central Israel.



Israeli archaeologist Shahar Krispin, 35, counts gold coins dating to the Abbasid Caliphate during a press presentation of the discovery at an archeological site near Tel Aviv in central Israel. — AFP photos

Trove of 1,000-year-old gold coins unearthed in Israel

Israeli youths have unearthed hundreds of gold coins stashed away in a clay vessel for more than a thousand years. The treasure was discovered on Aug 18, the Israel Antiquities Authority said yesterday, by teenagers volunteering at an excavation in central Israel where a new neighborhood is planned to be built. "The person who

buried this treasure 1,100 years ago must have expected to retrieve it and even secured the vessel with a nail so that it would not move. We can only guess what prevented him from returning to collect this treasure," said excavation director Liat Nadav-Ziv.

The area it was found in housed work-

shops at the time the treasure was hidden and the identity of the owner is still a mystery. "It was amazing," said Oz Cohen, one of the volunteers who found the treasure. "I dug in the ground and when I excavated the soil, saw what looked like very thin leaves. When I looked again I saw these were gold coins. It was really exciting to find such a special and ancient treasure." Dating back to the ninth century Abbasid Caliphate period, the 425 24-carat pure gold coins would have been a significant amount of money at the time, said Robert Kool, a coin expert at the Antiquities Authority. "For example, with such a sum, a person could buy a luxurious house in one of the best neighborhoods in Fustat, the enormous wealthy capital of Egypt in those days," Kool said. — Reuters



An Israeli archaeologist displays gold coins dating to the Abbasid Caliphate during a press presentation of the discovery at an archeological site near Tel Aviv in central Israel.



Workers excavate a site where a hoard of gold coins dating to the Abbasid Caliphate was unearthed.



Workers excavate a site where a hoard of gold coins dating to the Abbasid Caliphate was unearthed.

TIMID RESTART FOR US CINEMAS

The United States had its first real weekend back at the movies with the reopening of theater heavyweights AMC and Regal-but film fans made only a timid return in a country which continues to register more than 40,000 new cases of coronavirus a day. Leading theater operator AMC reopened 100 cinemas last week, and expects to open a further 300 within the next two weeks while Regal also opened its doors Friday but did not release figures. The

country's third largest chain, Cinemark, had begun a gradual restart on August 14 and accelerated this weekend.

Several major states, first and foremost California, New York and New Jersey, have nevertheless not yet authorized the reopening of cinemas and have not given a timetable. During this first test weekend, the North American box office (Canada and the United States) passed the \$5 million mark for the first time since March 15, taking \$6.6 million, according

to specialist site Box Office Mojo. By comparison, in normal times weekend ticket sales seldom fall below \$100 million, according to Box Office Mojo. The first major production to attempt a release after a five-month hiatus was thriller "Unhinged", starring Russell Crowe as a frustrated motorist who takes road rage to extremes.

Although it was almost the only one on screen, the feature had to make do with \$4 million in North American box

office receipts for its second week of release, the first with a large number of theaters (1,823), according to Box Office Mojo. "Unhinged" is the first film to gross over \$1 million in the US and Canada in a single weekend since March. In a sign of film fans' reluctance to return to a closed theater, the specialist firm Exhibitor Relations noted that the top five sites in terms of ticket sales this weekend were all drive-ins, open-air cinemas where people stay in their vehicles dur-

ing the screening. Before the restart, the National Association of Theatre Owners had published on Friday a health protocol covering 2,600 theaters and 30,000 screens. It provides in particular for mandatory face masks, social distancing, except for people coming together, and a ventilation system in working order. — AFP



A man carries a surfboard at Kuta beach on the Indonesian resort island of Bali, which has seen a downturn in tourism following the outbreak of the COVID-19 coronavirus. — AFP

Bali bans foreign tourists for rest of 2020 over virus

Foreign tourists won't be allowed to visit Bali for the rest of 2020 due to coronavirus concerns, its governor said, scrapping a plan to open up the Indonesian island from next month. The holiday hotspot re-opened beaches, temples and other tourism spots for domestic visitors at the end of July and had said it would let foreign tourists return on September 11. But the plan has now been cancelled over concerns about Indonesia's mounting virus cases and with many foreign nationals subject to travel bans in their home countries.

Jakarta is also yet to lift its ban on foreign tourists entering Indonesia. "The situation in Indonesia is not conducive to allow international tourists to visit Indonesia, including...Bali," the island's governor I Wayan Koster said in an official letter dated Saturday. "The central government supports (Bali's) plans to

recover tourism by opening the doors for international tourists. However, this requires care, prudence, not to be rushed, and requires careful preparation," it added. He did not give a new date for allowing foreign tourists to visit. The volume of flights to and from Bali plummeted during the global pandemic, leaving hotels empty and restaurants struggling to survive. Bali has recorded some 49 deaths and just over 4,000 cases of coronavirus. "New cases are under control, the recovery rate is increasing and fatality rate is under control," Koster said. Nationwide, Indonesia has seen at last 6,680 virus deaths with more than 153,000 confirmed cases, but the real toll is widely believed to be hidden by limited testing. — AFP

Coronavirus dampens celebrations in China's wedding gown city

Store windows in the five-storey Huqiu Wedding Dress Mall in the Chinese city of Suzhou gleam with the reflection from rows and rows of elaborate gowns to entice potential buyers. But there are few shoppers in the modern mall, a glitzy showcase of the city's huge wedding gown production industry that usually attracts visitors not only from across China but abroad. "Sales this year have so far not been good, I hope they will recover a little in the second half," Ma Li, the owner of the Hua Qing Yu Wedding Dress Store in the mall told Reuters as she dressed mannequins. Suzhou, one of the world's largest bridal goods exporters, is feeling the chill as couples all over the world delayed, downsized or cancelled their nuptials because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The manufacturing hub in eastern China also hosts factories belonging to Apple suppliers as well as a technology center for Microsoft, but wedding dresses are a major part of its business. And it is big business. Wedding market sales in China surged from 923 billion yuan to 1.64 trillion yuan from 2014 to 2018, according to Frost & Sullivan, and the annual compound growth rate reached 15.5 percent. By 2023, the industry is expected to be worth 3 trillion yuan. That speedy growth was interrupted by the discovery of the first coronavirus cases in Wuhan, about 740 kilometers (460 miles) west of Suzhou, in late 2019 and lockdown measures began to be imposed in China and other parts of the world from late January.

While China recently began allowing the resumption of some large wedding gatherings following a sharp fall in the number of new COVID-19 cases, companies in Suzhou told Reuters sales were far from reaching usual levels as many couples were downsizing their celebra-



Zhang Zijian and Kang Yifei pose for photographs during a wedding photo shoot at a park following the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak, in Suzhou, Jiangsu province, China. — Reuters

tions due to budget or lingering guest restrictions. "We basically have no clients," Zhu Yuan, the chairman of Romen's Wedding Dress, speaking from her showroom where dozens of embellished ivory dresses were crammed against each other on clothing racks. "Out of a hundred only 10-20% survived," said of her client businesses, including bridal studios and exporters.

Suzhou Jusere Wedding & Evening Dress Co Ltd, one of Suzhou's largest gown manufacturers, tried to mitigate the downturn by ramping up direct sales to brides and travelling to their customers. But the escalation of the virus to a global pandemic saw foreign orders, which used to account for a tenth of the company's sales, all but disappear. "I hope that the epidemic abroad can get under control which will allow wedding dress studios to reopen. That can in turn drive consumption," said founder Xu Chuanhai. The China Wedding Expo 2020, an annual event that draws wed-

ding gown resellers, exporters and bridal studios descend went ahead in Shanghai last month but exhibitors said there were few visitors.

Jiang Xin, a representative of Hermosa Trading, said increasing costs of transportation because of the pandemic made exporting gowns expensive. "The tariff is fixed but transportation costs rose because many flights were cancelled," he said. "The ordering cycle is longer so costs are rising." Elsewhere in Shanghai, Wei Jiawen and her husband Pan Wenjun celebrated their nuptials with their family and friends in mid-August in a ceremony that was downsized from their originally planned celebration in February. "We were under pressure both physically and mentally for half a year because of the delayed wedding," said Wei, who gave birth to a daughter while waiting to reschedule the wedding. — Reuters

Lifestyle | Features



Remains of the two millenia-old site of Jabal Maragha that was ravaged by gold hunters are scattered on the sand in the desert of Bayouda, some 270 kms (170 miles) north of the Sudanese capital Khartoum. — AFP photos



A makeshift mosque, consisting of stones lined up by gold hunters is pictured at the two millenia-old site of Jabal Maragha in the desert of Bayouda.

GOLD-HUNTING DIGGERS DESTROY SUDAN'S PRICELESS PAST

When a team of archaeologists deep in the deserts of Sudan arrived at the ancient site of Jabal Maragha last month, they thought they were lost. The site had vanished. But they hadn't made a mistake. In fact, gold-hunters with giant diggers had destroyed almost all sign of the two millenia-old site. "They had only one goal in digging here-to find gold," said shocked archaeologist Habab Idriss Ahmed, who had painstakingly excavated the historic location in 1999. "They did something crazy; to save time, they used heavy machinery." In the baking-hot desert of Bayouda, some 270 kilometers (170 miles) north of the capital Khartoum, the team discovered two mechanical diggers and five men at work.



Mahmoud Al-Tayeb, a former expert from Sudan's antiquities department, speaks during an interview with AFP.

They had dug a vast trench 17 meters (55 feet) deep, and 20 meters long. The rust-coloured sand was scarred with tyre tracks, some cut deep into the ground, from the trucks that transported the equipment. The

site, dating from the Meroitic period between 350 BC and 350 AD, was either a small settlement or a checkpoint. Since the diggers came, hardly anything remains. "They had completely excavated it, because the ground is composed of layers of sandstone and pyrite," said Hatem al-Nour, Sudan's director of antiquities and museums. "And as this rock is metallic their detector would start ringing. So they thought there was gold."

Escape justice

Next to the huge gash in the ground, the diggers had piled up ancient cylindrical stones on top of each other to prop up a roof for their dining room. The archaeologists were accompanied by a police escort, who took the treasure-hunters to a police station-but they were freed within hours. "They should have been put in jail and their machines confiscated. There are laws," said Mahmoud al-Tayeb, a former expert from Sudan's antiquities department. Instead, the men left without charge, and their diggers were released too. "It is the saddest thing," said Tayeb, who is also a professor of archaeology at the University of Warsaw.

Tayeb believes that the real culprit is the workers' employer, someone who can pull strings and circumvent justice. Sudan's archaeologists warn that this was not a unique case, but part of a systematic looting of ancient sites. At Sai, a 12-kilometre-long river island in the Nile, hundreds of graves have been ransacked and destroyed



Archaeologist Habab Idriss Ahmed (right) and Mahmoud A-Tayeb, a former expert from Sudan's antiquities department, inspect stones stacked up on top of each other to prop up a roof for a dining room to be used by gold hunters.

by looters. Some of them date back to the times of the pharaohs. Sudan's ancient civilizations built more pyramids than the Egyptians, but many are still unexplored. Now, in hundreds of remote places ranging from cemeteries to temples, desperate diggers are hunting for anything to improve their daily lives.

Gold fever

Sudan is Africa's third largest producer of gold, after South Africa and Ghana, with commercial mining bringing in \$1.22 billion to the government last year. In the past, people also tried their luck by panning for gold at the city of Omdurman, across the river from Khartoum, where the waters of the White and Blue Niles meet. "We used to see older people with small sieves like the ones women use for sifting flour at home," Tayeb said, recalling times when he was a boy. "They used them to look for gold."

But the gold they found was in tiny quantities. Then in the late 1990s, people saw archaeologists using metal detectors for their scientific research. "When people saw archeologists digging and finding things, they were convinced there was gold."

'Reason for pride'

Even worse, local authorities have encouraged the young and unemployed to hunt for treasures while wealthy businessmen bring in mechanical diggers alongside. "Out of a thousand more or less well-known sites in Sudan, at least a hundred have been destroyed or damaged," said Nour. "There is one policeman for 30 sites... and he has no communication equipment or adequate means of transport." For Tayeb, the root problem is not a lack of security, but rather the government's priorities. "It's not a question of policemen," he said. "It is a serious matter of how do you treat your history, your heritage? This is the main problem."

But heritage is not a high priority for the government, so what can one do? The destruction of the sites is an extra tragedy for a country long riven by civil war between rival ethnic groups, destroying a common cultural identity of a nation. "This heritage is vital for the unity of the Sudanese," Nour said. "Their history gives them a reason for pride." — AFP



Archaeologist Habab Idriss Ahmed (right) and Mahmoud Al-Tayeb, a former expert from Sudan's antiquities department, inspect stones stacked up on top of each other to prop up a roof for a dining room to be used by gold hunters.



A vast trench dug by gold hunters is pictured at the devastated two millenia-old site of Jabal Maragha, in the desert of Bayouda.



Dried out tree trunks are pictured at the two millenia-old site of Jabal Maragha in the desert of Bayouda that was ravaged by gold hunters.



Remains of the two millenia-old site of Jabal Maragha that was ravaged by gold hunters are scattered on the sand in the desert of Bayouda.



Creditors take control of struggling Cirque du Soleil

A group of Cirque du Soleil creditors has announced it will take control of the heavily indebted Canadian circus troupe. Suitors had until today to better the proposal of the dozen lenders, led by the Canadian fund Catalyst Capital Group. The world's most famous circus troupe, placed under the protection of the courts, later said that the proposal-estimated at more than \$1.2 billion-had not been topped, according to Canadian media. The creditors' offer will still have to be validated by the Quebec courts in the coming weeks. According to the Globe and Mail, the creditors will inject \$300 million to \$375 million into the circus and also agree to reduce the circus's guaranteed debt from \$1.1 billion to \$300 million. Gabriel de Alba, managing director of Catalyst, welcomed the "great result for Cirque", its employees, artists and partners, in an email sent to AFP.

"Now with the company's recent missteps put behind, we are eager to close the transaction quickly and support the company as it rekindles the magic and artistry that have made Cirque du Soleil an iconic global brand and creative force," he said. Founded in Quebec in 1984, the troupe of acrobats had to cancel 44 productions around the world in March, due to the coronavirus pandemic. It has laid off 4,679 acrobats and technicians, 95 percent of its employees. The agreement with the group of creditors, announced in mid-July, replaces the takeover offer that it concluded at the end of June with its current shareholders, the American TPG and Chinese Fosun, as well as the Caisse de deposit and placement of Quebec (CDPQ).— AFP

SPIRITED AWAY: SAFE FULL OF CASH VANISHES FROM JAPAN'S NINJA MUSEUM

They came in the dead of night; no one saw them and nobody knew they were there. Moments later, the Japanese ninja museum was missing a safe full of cash. Under cover of darkness, thieves vanished with the 150-kilogramme (330-pound) strongbox containing around \$9,500, paid as

admission fees to the Iga-ryu Ninja Museum in central Japan. The museum is dedicated to the legend of the ninja — the covert martial arts masters and agents of sabotage who prowled the shadows in feudal times, and were famous for secrecy and stealth. But police called to investigate the crime

found that the culprits had been less than subtle — having forced their way into the museum office with a crowbar, Kyodo News agency reported.

The safe, which was stolen in the early hours of yesterday, contained takings from around 1,100 weekend visitors, the Asahi Shimbun daily reported. The museum, in Iga, features a traditional ninja house and offers interactive experiences, allowing visitors to learn about ninja skills, throw star-shaped weapons, and watch ninja shows. Iga, which is 350 kilometers (220 miles) southwest of Tokyo, is home to one of the two most famous ninja clans. The city's Mie University set up the world's first research Centre devoted to ninja in 2017, and opened a graduate course a year later. — AFP



In a crime worthy of the legendary ninja, a safe containing more than \$9,500 has been stolen from a Japanese museum dedicated to the martial arts experts.— AFP

Sports

Photo of the day



Wind surfer Tom Bridge performs in the United Kingdom. — Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

Bruins edge Lightning in series opener

BOSTON: Brad Marchand and David Pastrnak each collected a goal and an assist to lead the Boston Bruins to a 3-2 victory over the Tampa Bay Lightning on Sunday in Toronto to kick off their Eastern Conference semifinal series.

Goaltender Jaroslav Halak made 35 saves for the Bruins, who will look to extend their lead in Game 2 today in Toronto. The Bruins controlled the bulk of play to start and were rewarded when Charlie Coyle opened the scoring with 68 seconds remaining in the opening frame. Brandon Carlo sent a high point shot that Coyle deflected up and over Lightning goaltender Andrei Vasilevskiy.

Pastrnak doubled the Boston lead 4:34 into the second period when he finished off a surgical power play. David Krejci showed great patience to find a seam for the cross-ice pass, and Pastrnak blasted a one-timer from the left faceoff dot for the tally.

The Lightning, on the verge of letting the game get out of hand, regrouped and started generating chances of their own, but in the second period alone Halak came up with a handful of key saves, notably on Brayden Point and Nikita Kucherov during one scramble, and then late in the frame against Barclay Goodrow.

Marchand struck a big blow to any Tampa Bay comeback hopes with an early third-period tally to make it 3-0. Patrice Bergeron stripped the puck from Ryan McDonagh, sent it to Pastrnak and he slipped it to a wide-open Marchand for the easy tap-in tally 77 seconds into the final frame. Marchand collected his 92nd career playoff point, which ties him for Bobby Orr for the seventh-most in Bruins history. — AFP

Japan's Sato holds off Kiwi Dixon to win second Indy 500 crown

Rossi penalized and sent to the back of the field

WASHINGTON: Japan's Takuma Sato held off Scott Dixon over the final 20 laps Sunday to capture the 104th Indianapolis 500, taking his second Indy 500 victory after his first front-row start. The 43-year-old from Tokyo, who also won in 2017, kept New Zealand's Dixon at bay down the stretch before a crash by Spencer Pigot with five laps remaining brought out yellow flags and the race finished under slow-speed caution conditions.

"It's unbelievable,"

Sato said. "It's great. I'm proud to win again." Sato, who started from the outside of row one, drove his Honda-powered Dallara across the finish line after 200 laps around the 2 1/2-mile (4km) Indianapolis Motor Speedway oval just ahead of Dixon and American Graham Rahal in third in a ceremonial finish.

Ten minutes earlier, Dixon was racing just behind Sato on the same straightaway desperately trying to pass him but unable to get by. "I knew Scott was coming right through," Sato said. "Coming out of turn four he was screaming. I just held him off."

Sato car owner Bobby Rahal, the 1986 Indy 500 winner, was worried when the winner came upon slower traffic with nine laps remaining. "Takuma ran hard all day long," the elder Rahal said. "I was worried when he ran into that traffic but he got through it pretty good. And then the accident. Who knows what would have happened the last five laps?"

That's the haunting question facing Dixon, who led 111 laps but settled for his third runner-up finish at Indy after 2007 and 2012 — all three of them coming under caution. "It's definitely a hard

one to swallow for sure," Dixon said. "It's hard when it slips away like that."

"Congratulations to Sato. He drove his pants off today," Sato, the first Asian driver to win the Indy 500, waved the Japanese flag on the winner's platform. "I hope this gives a little boost for their energy," Sato said. "Thanks for the support." The oval classic was moved from its usual late May date due to COVID-19 concerns that delayed the start of the season until June and prevented spectators from attending. The race hung on a knife's edge after Sato passed slower traffic but any closing drama was ended when US racer Pigot crashed in the fourth turn and skidded into the end of the barrier at the edge of the track where pit row begins.

Pigot was awake and alert and walked from the car but was hospitalized for observation.

The race was finished under caution rather than halted and restarted as Dixon hoped might happen. "Fuel mileage, I can't see how they were going to make it," Dixon said. "They just decided to go and run it. I thought they were going to throw a red flag. We would have had an interesting five laps."

Dixon led after a restart with 28 laps remaining but a few laps later, Sato made the crucial pass on the outside on the front straightaway and Dixon could never overtake him. "We had the mindset and the fuel to get to the end," Dixon said. "But you let it slip and that's what happens." Pole-sitter Marco Andretti settled for 13th with two-time Formula One champion Fernando Alonso of Spain finishing 21st and 2019 winner Simon Pagenaud of France in 22nd.

said. He gained the lone break of the second set when Anderson double-faulted on break point in the eighth game, and finished off the match on his second match point when Anderson sailed a return of a second serve long.

Tsitsipas was the first of the top eight men's seeds to see action as all enjoyed first-round byes. World number one and top seed Novak Djokovic was scheduled to open his campaign on Monday against qualifier Ricardas Berankis.

The Serbian star remained on Monday's slate despite pulling out of doubles on Sunday citing pain in his neck. US star Serena Williams, seeded third, is also set to open her campaign on Monday with a second-round clash with Arantxa Rus — a 6-2, 6-3 winner over Alison Van Uytvanck.

Tsitsipas, seeking his sixth ATP title, next faces either 16th seeded American John Isner or Australian John Millman, both first-round winners on Sunday.

Isner beat his doubles partner Hubert Hurkacz of Poland 7-5, 6-4. Millman rallied to beat France's Adrian Mannarino 4-6, 6-4, 7-6 (7/2). In other first-round action, Argentina's Diego Schwartzman defeated Casper Ruud 7-6 (7/2), 6-3 to advance.

While the tournament is being played without fans — as well as without line judges with the electronic "hawk-eye" line calling system making all the calls — Schwartzman still found himself waving out of habit to the non-existent crowd after the win.

"Obviously it's a different feeling, going on court without people," Schwartzman said. The tournament normally played in Cincinnati is being



INDIANAPOLIS: Takuma Sato of Japan celebrates winning the 104th running of the Indianapolis 500 at Indianapolis Motor Speedway in Indianapolis, Indiana. This year's race was run without fans in attendance due to the global Covid-19 pandemic. — AFP

ROSSI UNDONE BY PENALTY

Dixon passed pole-sitter Marco Andretti on the outside of the first turn of the race and dominated early. A crash by Spanish rookie Alex Palau sent leaders to the pits on lap 125, with Dixon out first. Rossi nudged Sato as both tried to exit pit row. Rossi, the 2016 Indy 500 winner, was penalized and sent to the back of the field for what the

chief steward ruled "an unsafe release." "I don't even want to talk about the penalty," Rossi said. "I'm going to have a long talk with somebody about that. It's obviously frustrating." Fast-charging Rossi crashed 12 laps later on the outside of turn two. "We were never planning on being that far back. We just lost it," Rossi said. "A lot of dirty air back there." — AFP

Pliskova, Kenin crash out of Western & Southern Open

NEW YORK: Top-seeded Karolina Pliskova and No. 2 Sofia Kenin crashed out of the Western & Southern Open on Sunday, falling in their opening matches at the National Tennis Center in New York. Russia's Veronika Kudermetova, ranked 41st in the world, toppled world number three Pliskova of Czech Republic 7-5, 6-4 in their second-round clash.

France's Alize Cornet notched her first win over a top-five player in two years when she shocked Australian Open champion Kenin 6-1, 7-6 (9/7) to reach the round of 16. It was a stunning turn of events on a day that saw men's fourth seed Stefanos Tsitsipas lead the way into the round of 16 with a 6-1, 6-3 victory over two-time Grand Slam finalist Kevin Anderson.

Greece's Tsitsipas needed just 69 minutes to subdue Anderson, pressuring the towering South African's second serve as he broke four times. He didn't face a break point himself until the fifth game of the second set, when Tsitsipas fell into a 0-40 hold but won five straight points to escape the jam.

"That was a crucial game, being able to come back there and maintain the focus that I needed to be back in the match and not be a break down, that was a very good effort from me," Tsitsipas

held at the US Tennis Association's Billie Jean King National Tennis Center, allowing players to remain in a controlled environment to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

The US Open will begin at the venue on August 31. Pliskova, the 2016 US Open runner-up, can only hope she can regroup by then. Kudermetova, who labored to a three-set first-round victory over Australian Ajla Tomljanovic on Saturday, rallied from a 1-4 deficit in the first set, and reeled off the last three games of the match to score the upset.

"I tried to not think about the score. I tried to fight, tried to continue play every ball," Kudermetova said. "I tried just to fight and enjoy it." Pliskova had seemed in full control when she held at love for a 4-1 lead. The big-serving Czech peppered Kudermetova with 11 aces but still faced 13 break points in the match.

PRAYING FOR THE BEST

Cornet almost let her chance against Kenin get away. Up 6-1, 5-2, she squandered two match points before pulling off the upset in the tiebreaker. "Somehow I let it go a little bit, and I got really tight, so I never thought I could win the set the way I did," said Cornet. "In the tiebreak, oh my God, I was just praying for the best on every single shot."

Kenin, the world number four who shot to prominence with her Australian Open win in January, next faces either two-time Australian Open champion Victoria Azarenka or French compatriot Caroline Garcia, who defeated 2017 US Open champion Sloane Stephens 6-3, 7-6 (7/4) in a first-round clash. — AFP

Djokovic pulls out of doubles in New York

NEW YORK: World number one Novak Djokovic withdrew from doubles Sunday at the Western & Southern Open in New York, citing neck pain. The top-seeded Serbian was still scheduled to open singles play on Monday against qualifier Ricardas Berankis of Lithuania after a first-round bye.

Djokovic had been entered in doubles with compatriot Filip Krajinovic, but he pulled out before their scheduled opener on Sunday against Tommy Paul and Frances Tiafoe of the United States.

The tournament normally played in Cincinnati, Ohio, is being held this year in a quarantine bubble at the US Tennis Association's Billie Jean King National Tennis Center, where the US Open will start on August 31.

Djokovic won the title in Cincinnati in 2018 to become the only player to win all nine of the ATP's elite Masters 1000 tournaments. He reached the semi-finals in Cincy last year.

The 33-year-old has won five of the past seven men's singles Grand Slam titles, taking his tally to 17 — three shy of Roger Federer's record 20. — AFP

14 Japan's Sato holds off Kiwi Dixon to win second Indy 500 crown



15 Dustin Johnson romps to 11 shot win at Northern Trust



15 Rizwan adamant Pakistan can save third Test



LISBON: Bayern Munich's German goalkeeper Manuel Neuer (C) celebrates with teammates and the trophy after Bayern won the UEFA Champions League final football match between Paris Saint-Germain and Bayern Munich at the Luz stadium in Lisbon. —AFP

Bayern worthy winners of Champions League

Scores arrested as PSG fans riot after defeat

LISBON: It will be remembered as the strangest of Champions League seasons but it has ended with a familiar name on the trophy after Bayern Munich got the better of Paris Saint-Germain in Sunday's final in Lisbon, with their deserved success the result of the remarkable job done by coach Hansi Flick.

There was tickertape at the trophy ceremony and the usual celebratory songs playing over the loudspeakers at the Estadio da Luz as the Bayern players savoured the moment after Kingsley Coman's goal saw them defeat PSG 1-0.

But it was a bizarre spectacle with the 65,000-seat stadium empty, supporters having been barred from attending the biggest match in club football. The coronavirus pandemic killed the Champions League as we know it, at least temporarily, and UEFA was forced to come up with a new 'Final Eight' format in order to make sure its flagship competition was completed.

Almost 150 people were arrested as Paris Saint-Germain fans set cars ablaze, smashed shop windows and clashed with police in the French capital after the team's Champions League final defeat to Bayern Munich, police said yesterday.

The violence occurred around the Parc des Princes stadium and on the Champs-Elysees avenue during and

after the match on Sunday night, police said on Twitter. Thousands of supporters had gathered at the Parc des Princes to cheer on PSG, lighting flares and chanting as they watched the 1-0 defeat in Lisbon on a big screen.

Meanwhile, UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin told AFP in an interview in Lisbon that the format was likely to be a one-off, and some will be tempted to say that this Champions League should always have an asterisk next to it.

But, against first-time finalists PSG, Bayern were worthy winners of their sixth European Cup, their third in the Champions League era.

They won all their 11 Champions League matches this season, an unprecedented feat. They scored 43 goals in that time on a run that included a 7-2 win at Tottenham Hotspur and the stunning 8-2 demolition of Barcelona in the quarter-finals in Lisbon.

They just had the better of the final, even if they were fortunate at times up against the French side's formidable attack of Neymar, Kylian Mbappe and Angel Di Maria.

In Manuel Neuer, Jerome Boateng, David Alaba and Thomas Mueller, Bayern's line-up featured four survivors from their last final victory, against Borussia Dortmund in 2013. But this was also about the new faces, such as 19-year-old left-back Alphonso Davies, the Canadian inter-

national. "Moments like these you dream of as a kid," he told DAZN. "I honestly can't believe it, winning the Champions League is the top level."

WINNING FORMULA

Flick deserves great credit. A year ago Bayern were dumped out by Liverpool, the eventual winners, in the last 16, and under Niko Kovac looked a long way off being contenders to win the trophy again.

But Flick replaced Kovac in November, initially as caretaker, and has gone on to win a treble. "It's such a huge joy, it feels like we have come a long way since November," said Mueller, a player reborn under Flick.

"I don't know how it looked from outside, but it felt like we deserved it in the way we played." As for changing coach mid-season, it is a formula that has worked for clubs at this level in the recent past.

Flick is the third coach in the last decade to win the Champions League having been appointed during a campaign, after Roberto di Matteo with Chelsea in 2011/12 and Zinedine Zidane with Real Madrid in 2015/16. Zidane went on to win the next two as well.

'NOT THE FOOTBALL WE KNOW'

It remains to be seen how Bayern will fare next sea-

son, which is just around the corner, with the Bundesliga starting on September 18 and the Champions League group stage in October. They will be a formidable force again, but so will their rivals, including PSG, who need not be too downbeat in defeat.

"Over the last few weeks we have shown everything you need to win every title going," said PSG coach Thomas Tuchel. "We lost 1-0 in the final against one of the strongest sides in Europe. We must maintain the same quality to carry on this road."

The format of one-off matches in the quarter-finals and semi-finals may have helped PSG more than anybody else, given their struggles in knockout ties in recent years.

But, as long as the health crisis does not worsen again, the Champions League will return to normal in the new campaign, and that includes seeing at least some fans return to stadiums.

Istanbul is in line to host the 2021 final, having had this season's showpiece taken away, and hopefully the winning team will be able to celebrate with their supporters. As Flick said: "It's a pity that the fans couldn't be here with us today. Perhaps they can be back again in the future. A game like this without supporters is not the football that we know." —AFP

Warholm edges closer to 400m hurdles record

STOCKHOLM: Norway's two-time world champion Karsten Warholm blasted to the second fastest 400m hurdles time ever at the Diamond League in Stockholm on Sunday after sleeping in a motor home.

Despite clipping the final hurdle, the 24-year-old clocked 46.87 seconds, bettering his own European record of 46.92sec and moving within touching distance of American Kevin Young's long-standing world record of 46.78, set back in 1992.

Warholm and his coach Leif Olav Alnes drove from Norway in a camper van and the pair slept in the vehicle before the meet to reduce health risks

due to the coronavirus. "The perfect description of our relationship would be raw, tough love," Warholm said.

"I like it like this. Last year he told me I was too fat, so I replied 'you are too fat as well'. Suddenly we both lost weight." World 200m champion Noah Lyles said he was stunned Warholm had missed out on Young's record.

"I'm not even surprised that @kwarholm PR'd. I'm actually more shocked he didn't break the world record," he tweeted. For good measure, Warholm returned to the track 90 minutes later to win the 400m in 45.05 sec.

Another world champion shone at an empty stadium in accordance with COVID-19 health and safety protocols, with the American Donovan Brazier timing Imin 43.76sec to win the 800m ahead of Canada's Marco Arop.

Elsewhere men's pole vault world record holder Armand Duplantis took victory on home soil by jumping 6.01 metres in a global best for the virus-

affected season. In the men's 1,500 men, Kenyan world champion Timothy Cheruiyot won in 3min 30.25sec ahead of Norway's Jakob Ingebrigtsen and Stewart McSweeney of Australia.

Britain's Laura Muir won the women's 1,500m in a time of 3:57.86 and Ukraine's Yaroslava Mahuchikh clinched the women's high jump with a world leading two metres. Sunday's meet also showcased a new-look long jump format.

Instead of the traditional format of the winner being decided by the best jump from six rounds, the top three after five rounds contested a one-jump final. It was not a popular idea.

"I don't like it because I feel like it's getting unfair because especially outdoors with the different winds, like one jumper can have plus meanwhile the other jumpers can have minus," said Sweden's Khaddi Sagna, who was third in the women's event behind Ukraine's Maryna Bekh-Romanchuk. "I feel like that is unfair, but I do like the thinking of just like putting all the attention on one event." —AFP



STOCKHOLM: Norway's Karsten Warholm celebrates his new European record, 46.87 in the men 400m hurdles event during the Diamond League Athletics Meeting at Stockholm stadium. —AFP