



5 Syrians lose children, jobs and homes in Beirut blast



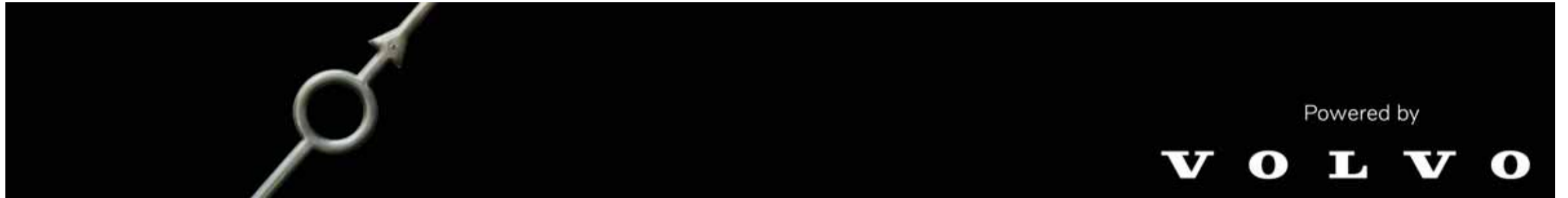
13 Egypt's blossoming trade in fragrant jasmine flowers



14 Sprint king Bolt tests positive for coronavirus



16 Ronaldo released from detention after five months



Interior minister expected to survive no-confidence vote

Unconfirmed: MoI may extend residencies, visas for 3 more months

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Interior Minister Anas Al-Saleh is expected to survive a no-confidence motion against him in the National Assembly today following a grilling last week in which he was accused of violating the law and benefiting from his post. Ten opposition lawmakers filed the motion after MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri charged that the minister's company won more government contracts after he joined the Cabinet. The minister categorically denied the allegations. Votes of at least 25 elected MPs are needed to unseat the minister.

Following the grilling, Kuwait was rocked by a

leak of sensitive videos allegedly taken in the offices of the secret service in 2018. The videos show top officials plotting to spy on people's social media accounts. The government yesterday referred the entire case to the public prosecution for investigation. The interior minister has suspended the state security agency chief along with seven secret service officers pending the completion of investigations.

Meanwhile, Al-Rai newspaper, quoting unnamed interior ministry sources, has reported that the interior ministry may extend residencies and visit visas of expats for three more months from Sept 1. Kuwait Times spoke with interior ministry officials

who could not confirm the information as of time of publication. The interior ministry had earlier extended residencies and visas until Aug 31 amid speculation that no further extensions will be made.

Opposition MP Mohammad Al-Mutair yesterday asked the interior minister if top former officials were involved in the so-called interior ministry's hospitality scandal in which the criminal court last week sentenced a number of top officials to lengthy jail terms and fined them tens of millions of dinars. Mutair asked the minister if the state security agency submitted a report to him showing that a number of top former officials and former ministers were involved in the scandal but were not among

those who were tried in court. He asked the minister about the legal measures he adopted if he had received the report.

MP Riyadh Al-Adasani yesterday said the Cabinet has withdrawn the so-called economic document which proposed a series of measures to raise public charges on citizens and impose taxes on them. Adasani, who grilled the finance minister twice over the proposed measures, welcomed the Cabinet's decision and its intention to restudy the economic conditions and the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. The lawmaker insisted that he will oppose any government plan if it is based on taxing citizens to raise government revenues.

US city burns over shooting of black man

KENOSHA, United States: Arsonists set buildings ablaze and torched much of the black business district during a second night of unrest in Kenosha, Wisconsin, triggered by the wounding of a black man shot in the back by police as his three young sons looked on. Smoke billowed over central Kenosha after police in riot gear clashed with protesters as they defied a dusk-to-dawn curfew on Monday night and yesterday morning, blocks away from where police gunned down Jacob Blake on Sunday.

Blake, 29, survived the shooting, which was captured on video, and was in stable condition following surgery, his father said.

Blake had been attempting to break up a fight between two women and was shot in front of his three young sons, civil rights attorney Ben Crump said. Video shows Blake walking toward the driver's side door of his car, away from two officers who were pointing guns to his back. After he opens the door, seven shots ring out with one of the officers tugging at his shirt. It remains unknown what the officers may have seen inside Blake's car.

But the incident, the latest in a litany of cases to focus attention on police treatment of African Americans, unleashed outrage in the lakefront city of Kenosha, located north of Chicago and south of Milwaukee. The shooting occurred three months after the death of George Floyd, a black man in Minneapolis who was pinned to the street under the knee of a white police officer, sparking nationwide protests against police brutality and racism.

Unrest flared again elsewhere in the US

with overnight clashes reported in Portland, Seattle and Minneapolis, while in New York City a group of marchers swarmed the Brooklyn Bridge, social media video showed. Portland, Oregon, has been the scene of weeks of protests following Floyd's death that have sometimes turned violent. Police there once again declared a riot late on Monday and arrested several demonstrators after fires were lit at the offices of a police union. Seattle police said demonstrators set multiple buildings on fire, resulting in at least one arrest and one officer injured.

In Minneapolis, protesters including one man armed with a long gun stopped an armored police vehicle in the street until officers cleared the way with tear gas. Basketball star LeBron James, who has emerged as a national leader on issues of race, lent his voice to the protests, telling reporters covering the NBA playoffs

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KENOSHA: A flag flies in front of a department of corrections building after it was set ablaze during a second night of rioting on Monday. — AFP

Trump gets nod, claims election is being rigged



CHARLOTTE: US President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence give a thumbs up after speaking during the first day of the Republican National Convention on Monday. — AFP

CHARLOTTE, United States: US President Donald Trump opened his bid for a second term after securing the Republican nomination Monday in typically combative fashion by claiming Democrats want to "steal" the election that polls currently show him losing. Minutes after the party completed the nomination vote confirming Trump as the candidate on November 3, he appeared at the convention in Charlotte, North Carolina, to deliver a rambling, often dark speech lasting close to an hour.

From the opening words, he told Republicans to be on alert for what he claimed was a Democratic plan to rig the

contest through increased use of mail-in voting - a measure Democrats say is needed to protect people from catching COVID-19 in crowded polling stations. "They are trying to steal the election," he told party delegates. "The only way they can take this election away from us is if this is a rigged election."

Opponents say Trump's increasingly extreme resistance to expanded mail-in voting - a method already used widely in the United States - is an attempt to suppress voter turnout, while setting up an excuse to challenge the result if he is defeated.

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Indian rescuers pull child from building rubble

MAHAD, India: Rescuers in India pulled a four-year-old boy from the rubble of a collapsed building to loud cheers yesterday, hours after the five-storey apartment block came down "like a house of cards", killing 11 and burying up to 60 others. The accident late Monday in the western town of Mahad led three disaster-response teams and sniffer dogs to work through the night, combing tin sheets, twisted metal and broken bricks.

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MAHAD, India: Rescue workers carry a four-year-old boy after he was pulled out from the rubble of a collapsed five-storey apartment building yesterday. — AFP

Pompeo in Sudan on tour to boost Israel's Arab ties

KHARTOUM: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo visited Sudan yesterday on a tour urging more Arab countries to normalize ties with Israel, following the US-brokered Israel-UAE agreement. Pompeo, the first American top diplomat to visit Sudan since Condoleezza Rice went in 2005, arrived on a historic "first official non-stop flight" from Tel Aviv, he tweeted from the plane.

Israel remains technically at war and has no formal diplomatic relations with Sudan, an East African country which for years supported hardline Islamist forces under its former strongman Omar Al-Bashir. But its new joint civilian-military

transitional government has vowed to break with the Bashir era following his ouster last year amid enormous pro-democracy protests.

Pompeo met Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok and Sovereign Council chief General Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan for talks the State Department had said would express US "support for deepening the Sudan-Israel relationship". Sudan, which has launched sweeping social and political reforms, hopes Washington will soon take it off its blacklist of state sponsors of terrorism as it seeks to fully re-integrate into the international community.

Hamdok wrote on Twitter that he and Pompeo had a "direct & transparent conversation regarding delisting Sudan" from the terror list, on bilateral relations and US government support. "I continue to look forward to positive tangible steps in supporting the glorious Sudanese revolution," Hamdok wrote.

Hamdok also told Pompeo his gov-

ernment had no mandate to normalize ties with Israel and that any such move would come after the transitional period, a spokesman said. "The Prime Minister clarified" to Pompeo "that the transitional period in Sudan is being led by a wide alliance with a specific agenda - to complete the transition, achieve peace and stability in the country and hold free elections." Sudan's government spokesman Faisal Saleh said in a statement.

"It does not have a mandate beyond these tasks or to decide on normalization with Israel," Hamdok was quoted as saying. The transitional government, which took power last year after Bashir was ousted by the army following mass protests, is set to remain in office until elections in 2022. Hamdok urged the US not to link "the subject of lifting Sudan from the State Sponsors of Terrorism list and the subject of normalization with Israel." — AFP

Local

Deputy Amir receives cable from Bhutan's King, call from Iraqi official

Sheikh Nawaf receives commendable letters for his speech

KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday a cable from King of Bhutan Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, who inquired about the health of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and wishing him life-long good health and wellbeing. His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince expressed gratitude on sincere gesture and wished him health and welfare.

His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince

also received on Monday a telephone call from Ammar Abdulaziz Al-Hakim, the head of the Iraqi National Al-Hekmah Trend, who inquired about His Highness the Amir's health, and expressed good wishes. His Highness the Deputy Amir expressed heartfelt gratitude and appreciation for the sincere sentiments.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince received messages from National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, Deputy Chief of Kuwait National Guard Sheikh Meshaal Al-

Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, in which they commended his speech delivered on Sunday.

In his speech, His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince spread confidence among citizens that Kuwait is a state of institutions and law, with the cohesion and cooperation of its people and is

able to overcome all obstacles, they said in their letters, asking Allah Almighty to bless His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. His Highness the Deputy Amir sent letters of gratitude in response, confirming his confidence in the cohesion of the noble Kuwaitis and their keenness on their national unity, which enables them to face any repercussions that hinder the benevolent path of the country, hoping for a rapid recovery to His Highness the Amir and to sustain the security, safety and prosperity countrywide. — KUNA

Foreign Minister meets assistants to discuss COVID-19

KUWAIT: Foreign Minister and Acting Defense Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah and Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah met yesterday with Foreign Minister Assistants to discuss efforts taken by diplomatic missions abroad to confront the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), as well as regional and international developments.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Dr Ahmad received Belgium's new Ambassador to Kuwait Leo Peeters and Iraq's new Ambassador to Kuwait Al-Manhal Hussain Al-Safi, who presented a copy of their credentials. Sheikh Dr Ahmad wished them best of luck in their new mandates, and that bilateral relations witness further progress. The meetings were attended by Jarallah, Assistant Foreign Minister for Protocols Dhari Al-Ajran and Deputy Assistant Foreign Minister for the Minister's Office Ahmad Al-Shuraim. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Iraq's new Ambassador to Kuwait Al-Manhal Hussain Al-Safi presents a copy of his credentials to Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Mohammad Al-Sabah. — KUNA photos



KUWAIT: Belgium's new Ambassador to Kuwait Leo Peeters presents a copy of his credentials to Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Mohammad Al-Sabah. — KUNA photos

Ambreen Mustafa takes over IWG Presidency



KUWAIT: The International Women's Group (IWG) held a board meeting for the board members of IWG and in the presence of Honorary President Shaikha Hanouf Al-Sabah. Former President Anita de Vogel, wife of the Ambassador of the Netherlands to Kuwait, handed over the presidency to Ambreen Mustafa, spouse of the Ambassador of Pakistan to Kuwait.

In her outgoing message, Vogel said, "My presidency for the season

2019-2020 has turned out to be completely different than I had expected. So many plans for events and excursions that the board and I had prepared suddenly had to be cancelled in March due to COVID-19."

"Not only my term as president has ended, but also my stay in Kuwait will soon come to an end," she added. "After five years, I will leave this amazing country with my heart filled with many memories of the good times that we shared."

US city burns over shooting...

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that "we are scared as Black people in America... We are terrified." "Why does it always have to get to a point where we see the guns firing," said James, adding he believed police had ample opportunity to subdue Blake.

Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden called for a transparent probe into the shooting. "Yesterday, Jacob Blake was shot seven times in the back by police. His kids watched from the car. Today, we woke to grieve yet again. We need a full and transparent investigation," he said.

Wisconsin's Lieutenant Governor Mandela Barnes said the shooting of Blake reflected a pattern of police violence nationwide against African Americans. Kenosha police pushed back at criticism,

and urged the public to wait for the results of an investigation by the Wisconsin Department of Justice.

Civil rights attorney Benjamin Crump, who represents the families of Floyd and other black victims of police violence, said Blake had been trying to break up a fight between two women. "We will seek justice for Jacob Blake and for his family as we demand answers from the Kenosha Police Department," Crump said in a statement.

Black Lives Matter activists are demanding the immediate firing or arrest of the Kenosha officers, who have been placed on administrative leave. Hours into the curfew, the mostly peaceful demonstration turned violent with some protesters setting off fireworks in front of police. Commercial and government buildings were set ablaze, along with vehicles in car dealership lots. Local police who had support from National Guard troops fired tear gas, rubber bullets and smoke bombs to disperse the crowd, which grew to several hundred, according to protester Porche Bennett, 31, of Kenosha. — AFP

LAPA concludes 'Al-Jawhaer' program



KUWAIT: Lebanese media figure Rania Barghout recently concluded a workshop she presented with the 'Al-Jawhaer' program organized by the LOYAC Academy for Performance Arts (LAPA). Commenting on the workshop, Barghout said that it focused on developing TV interviewing

skills as well as some training to help TV presenters develop their own characters. "We managed to understand body language, voice significance, asking questions, introducing guests and the steps followed to produce a good TV show," Barghout explained, noting that due to COVID-19,

the workshop was presented through the Zoom application, though she wished it had been done face to face. Barghout also hailed the youth taking part in the workshop as well as the programs Al-Jawhaer offers, including workshops supervised by media stars in the Arab world.

Indian rescuers pull child from...

Continued from Page 1

Officials said many residents of the 47 flats inside the building were spared because they had already fled the town to escape the coronavirus pandemic. The cause of the accident was not immediately clear but building collapses are common during India's June-September monsoon, with old and rickety structures buckling after days of non-stop rain.

National Disaster Response Force spokesman Sachidanand Gawde told

reporters that locals and emergency workers had retrieved the bodies of 11 victims in addition to the little boy who survived the collapse. Video of the rescue effort showed onlookers applauding and cheering as the child was plucked out of the wreckage and hauled up on a stretcher.

Estimates of the number trapped ranged from 20 to 70 yesterday morning after dozens managed to flee when the building began to shake. "No one knows how many people are actually stuck inside," a Mahad police official told AFP on condition of anonymity, adding that authorities had initially feared much worse, with early estimates as high as 200.

Mahad legislator Bharat Gogawale told AFP that many of the building's occupants appeared to have been out shopping when the accident occurred around 7:00 pm.

Others had left the town altogether, preferring to wait out the pandemic in their home villages. "Many families were not residing in the building as they went to their native places due to the coronavirus-induced lockdown," district official Nidhi Choudhari told the Press Trust of India.

As emergency workers made their way through the wreckage, looking for survivors, distressed relatives watched, desperate for news of their loved ones. "Three people from my family are stuck under the rubble - my mother, my sister and my nephew," said Gazala, a doctor who preferred to give only her first name to AFP.

Mustafa Chafekar, a resident who had been in home quarantine after testing positive for the virus, told the Mumbai Mirror that he and his family of five initially thought they were experiencing an earthquake. — AFP

Trump gets nod, claims...

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Polls show Trump losing to Democratic candidate Joe Biden, who had his Democratic convention last week, as Americans turn on his handling of the coronavirus pandemic and subsequent economic chaos.

Trump hopes the convention, which concludes tomorrow with his formal acceptance of the nomination, will shift voters' attention from the coronavirus to what he says is the "super-V" shaped economic recovery. As a veteran of reality TV, Trump is convinced that the more he gets on stage the better for

changing the narrative in his favor.

So while incumbents usually keep away from their party conventions until the final night, Trump immediately took over the event in Charlotte, which had been drastically scaled back due to COVID-19 precautions. He then flew to the North Carolina town of Mills River with his daughter Ivanka to give another speech, declaring "the great American comeback is underway".

Trump is expected to make more live television appearances on each of the four days of the convention ahead of his acceptance speech at the White House. His children, including Ivanka and right-wing firebrand son Don Jr, will also be giving convention speeches. First Lady Melania Trump was to address the nation from the White House's Rose Garden yesterday.

In addition to suffering from broad unpop-

ularity, Trump is weighed down by ever-growing turmoil and scandal around his administration. Former chief strategist Steve Bannon was arrested last week on fraud charges and a current top advisor, Kellyanne Conway, announced late Sunday that she is stepping down shortly to spend time with her family.

The Republican insists, however, that he can replicate his surprise 2016 win - and hopes the convention will put the wind in his sails. "This week we will take our case to the American people," Vice President Mike Pence told delegates ahead of Trump's arrival, promising to "make America great again - again." Trump's use of the White House as a setting for the acceptance speech will be a dramatic show of political muscle, but it tramples over the custom of separating political campaigns from the office of president. — AFP

Local

Cabinet works on implementing Deputy Amir's instructions

Teams to address anti-graft effort, economic reform, demographic restructuring

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti Cabinet held its weekly meeting at Al-Seif Palace on Monday under the chairmanship of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. The Cabinet members reviewed the contents of the address delivered by His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Sunday, Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Anas Al-Saleh said following the meeting. The fatherly speech reflects His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince's care for the security, stability and status of the country. The speech of His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince focuses on:

1- The need of protecting the citizens' freedom and privacy against any encroachment or attempts to sow the seeds of sedition among the public.

2- Commending the public awareness and keenness on protection of the country's stability and security.

3- Cautioning against the risks of chaotic deviations by some social networking websites, including the promulgation of sensational allegations and groundless accusations.

4- Asking the ministers to speed up the efforts to root out all kinds of deviations of social media and protect the unity of the society.

5- The urgency of legislative-executive cooperation to counter the risks facing the country and address the crucial issues, such as education, youth, administrative and economic reforms, demographic restructuring and services.

6- Scaling up the combat against corruption and tasking the executive and legislative authorities to enforce the necessary measures to end all manifestations of corruption.

7- Upholding the rule of law and making sure that there is no immunity for any corrupt person whatever their positions might be.

8- Materializing the national unity and solidarity with the leadership in order to overcome any challenges.

9- Making the public feel reassured about the prosperous future of the country.

Necessary measures

The Cabinet, taking pride in the wise instructions of His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince, stated full commitment to their implementation with a view to protecting the national unity and development in all fields under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince, Saleh revealed.

His Highness the Prime Minister urged the ministers to respond promptly to the instructions of His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince and adopt the necessary measures to realize their objectives. Consequently, the Cabinet adopted the following decisions:

1- Cooperation with the National Assembly: The Cabinet will form a government team, led by His Highness the Prime Minister, to communicate with Speaker of the National Assembly and the competent parliamentary committees with a view to translating into action the instructions of His Highness the Deputy

Amir and Crown Prince and speeding up the passing of necessary legislations.

2- Anti-graft effort: The Cabinet will set up a higher committee, led by His Highness the Prime Minister, to promote the national strategy for transparency and anti-corruption combat. The committee will work to activate the interagency cooperation to study the reports of irregularities at state bodies in collaboration with the State Audit Bureau (SAB). It will oversee the implementation of measures to retrieve the possible usurped state funds whether inside or outside the country.

3- The security leaks: In the light of the great importance attached by His Highness the Deputy Amir to the leaked videos from the security institution, the Cabinet members heard a presentation by Saleh on the issue and the administrative and legal measures adopted so far in this regard. The deputy prime minister



Ministers briefed on security leaks

and minister of interior noted that a fact-finding committee was promptly formed and finalized a report within less than a couple of days. Based on the report, the minister decided on Thursday, August 20, 2020, to suspend the director general of the state security service and seven officers. All persons involved in the case and the related information were referred to the Public Prosecution. Other measures were adopted to ensure non recurrence of such loopholes or any future infringement on the public freedoms and privacy or violation of the rules of work.

4- Economic reform: A government team, led by Sheikh Dr Meshaal Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, has been mandated to scrutinize the impacts of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on the state financial revenues and of the oil prices. The team will also follow up the efficacy of measures to address the imbalances in the national economy, and the draft measures to cut down expenses. They will also work out an integrated plan of action for financial and economic reforms with emphasis on anti-graft combat and enhancement of economic growth.

5- Demographic restructuring: A team, led by Ahmad Khaled Al-Kolaib, is mandated to identify the aspects of demographic imbalances and the legal loopholes that lead to excessive numbers of expatriates. The team will review the laws regulating the employment of foreign workers and the punitive measures set forth in the residency law for traders in residences.

6- Social networking websites: The Cabinet has formed a team led by Chairman of the Communication and Information Technology Regulatory Authority



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah (center) chairs the Cabinet's weekly meeting.

(CITRA) Eng Salem Muthib Al-Othainah, to scrutinize the misuse of social media and the deviations of hoax accounts that aim to tarnish the reputation of some people or destabilize the country through groundless allegations. The team will also draw on the experiences of other countries in addressing the technical loopholes without infringing on the public freedoms in the framework of the rules of the constitution.

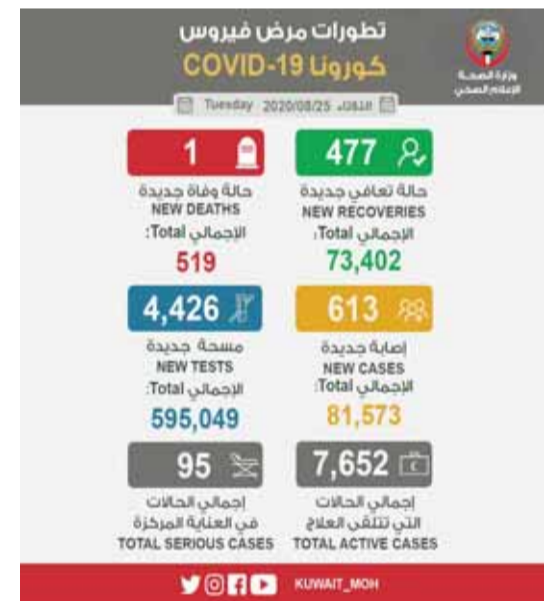
COVID-19 developments

Minister of Health Sheikh Dr Basel Humoud Al-Sabah briefed the Cabinet on the latest developments of the COVID-19 pandemic, including the figures of infections, recoveries and fatalities as well as the medical and logistical services. The Cabinet members also

reviewed issues relating to the National Assembly, including the interpellations and no-confidence motions raised by some MPs and the outcomes of last week's parliamentary session. They expressed confidence in the ability of Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Anas Al-Saleh to win the vote of confidence slated for Wednesday, August 26, based on the satisfactory answers he made during the grilling raised by MP Shuaib Al-Mowazri and 10 other MPs. They also reviewed regional and international issues and welcomed the recently-reached ceasefire agreement in Libya. They mourned the passing away of Dr Dawood Al-Saleh, the former governor of Hawalli and the Capital city, and paid homage to his numerous national contributions. — KUNA

Kuwait: 613 people test positive for COVID-19

KUWAIT: Up to 613 people tested positive for the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in Kuwait in past 24 hours, the Ministry of Health official spokesman said yesterday. Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad revealed that the overall number of infected cases jumped to 81,573, adding that there was also a single death due to COVID-19 during the past 24 hours, with the caseload of mortalities reaching 519. The new cases were recorded in the health zones as follows: 162 in Al-Ahmadi, 135 in Hawalli, 130 in Al-Jahraa, 104 in Farwaniya and 82 in the capital. The health ministry had announced earlier yesterday that 477 people recovered from COVID-19 in the last 24 hours, bringing the total to 73,402. The number of the patients who receive medical care at intensive care units has reached 95, with the whole count of patients who continue to receive treatment amounting to 7,652. The number of swab tests conducted during the past 24 hours reached 4,426 with the total number of such tests hitting 595,049, Dr Sanad added. — KUNA



News in brief

Officials prosecuted

KUWAIT: Minister of Services and Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs Mubarak Al-Harees referred three senior officials in the Directorate General of Civil Aviation to the Public Anti-Corruption Authority, Al-Jarida reported yesterday. This came after a fact-finding committee found out that they failed to provide necessary legal documents to the state's lawyer in a recent court case that DGCA lost and was subsequently fined KD 8 million for.

Baby formula

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Commerce announced changes to the mechanism to distribute baby formula to Kuwaitis covered by the subsidized food distribution system. Instead of requiring a health ministry certificate to authorize the distribution, citizens are now required to register their newborns on eapp.moci.gov.kw to receive the baby formula.

Border checkpoints

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia announced that it allows entry of non-Saudi family members as well as accompanying domestic workers through land borders from neighboring countries. Saudi custom authorities had previously announced allowing Saudi citizens to return home via land checkpoints from neighboring countries.

Oil price down

KUWAIT: The price of Kuwaiti oil dropped 19 cents during Monday's trading to \$45.14 per barrel (bp) compared to \$45.33 pb last Friday, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said yesterday. Globally, the price of the Brent crude gained 78 cents to \$45.13 pb and the West Texas Intermediate edged 28 cents higher to \$42.62 pb.

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KRCS praises hotel owners' donation to Lebanon

KUWAIT: Kuwait Red Crescent Society praised yesterday the donation by Hotel Owners Association to support KRCS' efforts to help the Lebanese people recover in the wake of the Beirut Port huge explosion. In a press statement, KRCS secretary general Maha Al-Barjas said that all institutions in Kuwait support the society efforts to help the Lebanese government and people in the aftermath the deadly explosion of Beirut port. She added that KRCS received many generous donations from citizens, residents, and the private sector, expressing gratitude for this "unsurprising donation" from the people in Kuwait. She referred to a campaign initiated by KRCS that "aims to collect all donation from Kuwait society to brothers in Lebanon."

These donations included urgent aid supplies, health and food supplies, and other means of assistance, noting that most of these relief supplies have reached the Lebanese people. Barjas explained that the intervention plan undertaken by the KRCS was divided into several stages in which urgent food and medical supplies were offered. The KRCS field team worked in full capacity to provide aid to the Lebanese people, she noted. Barjas called on all philanthropists to donate everything possible to help the devastated people in Lebanon through the KRCS's website or to visit the society's headquarter. —KUNA

Public Prosecutor orders impounding high-profile influencers' properties

KD 500,000 worth of drugs seized in Shuwaikh Port



KUWAIT: Workers remove bags containing drugs from a container in Shuwaikh Port.



The drugs after being removed from a container in Shuwaikh Port.

KUWAIT: Kuwait local daily Al-Rai learnt that Public Prosecutor Derar Al-Assoussi issued a decision to impound the funds and real estate properties owned by two high-profile social media influencers in Kuwait over charges of suspicions related to money laundering. The two new names add to a growing list of several social media influencers in the country who are under investigation for alleged money laundering and corruption.

Meanwhile, informed sources said the public prosecutor rejected all grievances filed by social media celebrities concerning impounding their funds and assets. The sources said the defendants justified their demands by claiming that their money is legitimate and that the impounding decision had caused them considerable harm.

Smuggling foiled

In a collaboration between drug control detectives and customs inspectors, the latter foiled an attempt to smuggle 12 kilos of the "ice" drug comprising of 101 rolls hidden in 20 fodder sacks shipped in two containers arriving from Iran at Shuwaikh Port. The drugs' market value is estimated at KD 500,000.

A statement issued by the interior ministry's relations and security media department said narcotic detectives were tipped off concerning the activity of someone importing and trading in drugs, who was later arrested red-handed while selling drugs to an undercover agent. On searching his vehicle, detectives found 250 gm of the "chemical" drug. The suspect, who is in his forties and has a criminal record, confessed and told detectives that he had imported two 40-foot containers from Iran via Shuwaikh Port. On searching the containers, detectives found the drugs.

A case was filed and the suspect was referred to relevant authorities.

Meanwhile, customs inspectors foiled two other attempts to smuggle drugs into the country, said security sources. In the first case, customs inspectors suspected three mail parcels arriving from Turkey separately that allegedly contained hair vitamins. On checking them, inspectors found they contained 21,140 Lyrica pills, sent to a Kuwaiti who was later arrested and referred to relevant authorities. In the second case, customs inspectors found 12 parcels containing an anesthetic banned in Kuwait, which was



COVID-19 patient commits suicide

concealed inside a shipment of garments imported from Italy. A case was filed pending further measures against the importers.

Suspected suicide

A Nepalese man quarantined after being infected with COVID-19 was found hanging dead inside the quarantine center near Jaber Stadium, said security sources. Preliminary investigations indicate that the man died of suicide. Further investigations are ongoing.

Fatal crash

A Syrian man was instantly killed and a compatriot sustained several injuries when a truck and crane collided in Wafra, said security sources. The injured person was rushed to hospital for treatment. A case was filed.



Some of the Lyrica pills that arrived in three mail parcels from Turkey.

Traffic offenders arrested

Two Kuwaitis were arrested after one of them violated traffic rules by over-tinting his vehicle's windows, refused to present his civil ID when a traffic police officer requested it, ran over the police officer and sped away, before his own family handed him over. Case papers indicate that two police officers stopped the suspect's vehicle in Firdous and asked for his ID to file a ticket for shading the windows, but the driver refused and drove off, running over one of the officers. The driver then dropped his companion before escaping. The suspect's family called the police saying that their son had told them what happened and that he was present at home. A police patrol was dispatched to arrest him. A case was filed.

65% of Kuwaitis blame expats for spreading COVID

KUWAIT: A field academic study by Kuwait University, which was prepared by the Director of the Gulf and Peninsula Studies Center Dr Faisal Abu Slaib, showed 64.77 percent of those surveyed believed the reason behind the spread of COVID-19 are expatriates, while 76.25 percent agree on deporting these expats from the country. The survey said 39 percent of respondents said expats do not have the right to be treated free of charge in government hospitals, 63.67 percent believe the commerce ministry did not succeed in controlling prices during the crises, 39.12 percent believe the government

responded as required, while 38.12 percent said the curfew had positive results in fighting the coronavirus. The study added 50.10 percent believe the health ministry is transparent. The sample size was 1,000 individuals.

Teachers stuck in limbo

Separately, the education ministry has stopped renewal of residency permits of teachers stuck abroad in coordination with the interior ministry, reported Al-Qabas daily. Informed sources said the reason behind this action is due to posting links on social media where teachers could pay their visa renewal fees, which forced the ministry to suspend the renewal temporarily out of fears the links might be hacked. The sources said the education and interior ministries are coordinating to find an alternative that allows teachers with expired residency permits to enter the country instead of renewing them online while abroad.

Govt spokesman confirms gradual plan for expats' return

KUWAIT: Head of the government's communication center and the Cabinet's official spokesperson Tareq Al-Merzam confirmed a report Al-Rai published on Thursday concerning a government plan on the gradual return to Kuwait of expatriates with valid residencies. Speaking to the press after the Cabinet meeting, Merzam said that some state departments have filed requests to the COVID-19 supreme committee to allow their stranded expat employees to return from certain countries.

Merzam linked lifting the ban on receiving returnees from 32 countries to health authorities' instructions, noting that resuming flights from the countries listed on the ban list is primarily up to the health ministry's opinion. Responding to a question about opening land borders, Merzam also referred the matter to health authorities. "We are still waiting for health ministry instructions and how ready it is to reopen land borders," he added, noting that land borders are already open for incoming trade and food imports.

Responding to a question on whether he was optimistic with the approach of lifting the partial curfew from Sunday, Merzam stressed everyone

should remain cautious, especially since global statistics show the virus is still spreading and the number of infections is starting to accelerate once more. "Therefore, we call for total caution and implementing all precautionary measures and urge all citizens and residents to contribute in achieving this," he concluded.

One week quarantine?

While the total number of countries from which passengers are banned from directly flying to Kuwait increased to 32 after adding commercial flights from Afghanistan, informed health sources told Al-Rai daily that the health ministry is considering cutting the mandatory quarantine period for arriving passengers to one week instead of 14 days. The sources added that the proposal is being studied by the health ministry's relevant bodies and expected the final decision to be made by next week.

Meanwhile, the sources explained that the health ministry's decision to suspend the salaries of some medical staff members stranded abroad only applies to those were deliberately late in returning to Kuwait, and are thus considered absent without due or legal cause. "Therefore, related rules and provisions about employees who fail to show up to work without permission apply to these staff members," the sources added, noting that the health ministry has already started listing staff members abroad and filing for exemptions to allow them to return.

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Mladic: Ruthless Serb crusader dubbed the 'epitome of evil'

After UAE-Israel deal, which Arab nation will next forge ties?

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JAKARTA: Motorists commute past an installation depicting a coffin, a mannequin wearing personal protective equipment, and a board showing COVID-19 coronavirus infection statistics for the area, in Jakarta. —AFP

Virus lockdowns limit IS attacks

Threat of cybercrime as funding source has increased

UNITED NATIONS: Coronavirus lockdowns appear to have reduced the threat of Islamic State group attacks in many countries, but the risk is greater in Iraq and Syria, a UN official said yesterday. While IS is now a shadow of the organization that occupied swathes of Iraq and Syria just a few years ago, it still has an estimated 10,000 fighters between those two countries. However, movement curbs against the virus pandemic have reduced IS's ability to launch raids elsewhere.

"Measures to minimize the spread of COVID-

19, such as lockdowns and restrictions on movement, seem to have reduced the risk of terrorist attacks in many countries," said Vladimir Voronkov, under-secretary general for counter-terrorism. He did not specify which nations, but IS has claimed attacks in countries ranging from France to the Philippines. Voronkov said the pandemic's impact on the group's recruitment and finances is unclear, though the threat of cybercrime as a funding source has increased as more people are online due to the contagion.

He added there is evidence IS jihadists are regrouping in conflict zones like Iraq and Syria. Yet for the moment, authorities have not seen a clear indication of a strategy change under new leader Amir Mohammed Said Abd Al-Rahman Al-Mawla, who replaced Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi after his death in a raid by US special forces in October. A former officer in the army of Saddam Hussein, Mawla joined the ranks of Al-Qaeda after the US invasion of Iraq and Hussein's capture in 2003, according to the Counter Extremism

Project (CEP) think-tank.

Voronkov also provided an update on the group's activities elsewhere, saying IS has an estimated 3,500 fighters in West Africa, and has continued to build ties with local jihadist groups. In Libya IS jihadists number only in the hundreds, but the group remains a threat to the region. It also has capacity to launch devastating attacks in parts of Afghanistan, despite the arrest of some leaders and the loss of some of its territory, Voronkov said. — AFP

Syrians lose kids, homes, jobs in Beirut blast

BEIRUT: Ahmad had saved his family from Syria's brutal war by bringing them to Lebanon, but then Beirut's massive blast ripped his wife and two of their daughters away forever. Weeks later, looking at the rubble of his former home near the port, he recounted how the explosion in one horrific moment upended his life. "I feel like I've lost my mind. I closed my eyes, and when I opened them everything around me had changed," said the man, aged in his forties. "I lost everything in an instant. We were a family of six people, but now it's just me and my two daughters."

Ahmad, from the Syrian province of Idlib, had worked hard in Lebanon for years, holding various jobs to send mon-

ey home. Three years into Syria's war, as fighting intensified in 2014, he decided to bring his family to Lebanon. Then the August 4 disaster struck, Lebanon's worst peace-time disaster. After hundreds of tons of ammonium nitrate exploded at the Beirut port and sent shockwaves across the city, Ahmad rushed home to Beirut's Karantina neighborhood.

He was first to find the body of his 22-year-old daughter Latifa, who had been thrown against what remained of a wall. With the help of neighbors and civil defense workers, he also pulled from the rubble the bodies of his 13-year-old daughter Joud and 40-year-old wife Khalidiyeh. They managed to save another daughter, Diana, 17, after she had been trapped for 11 hours under the debris, screaming as both her legs were severely injured. Only 14-year-old Dima survived unscathed and now spends her days by Diana's hospital bedside.

'Somewhere safe'

Ahmad says all he hopes for today is

to leave. "I wouldn't dream of returning to Syria while it's not safe," he said. "I'm trying to find a way to travel abroad," he said. "I want to live somewhere safe with them." The working class neighborhood of Karantina was one of the most damaged by the blast that killed more than 181 people, wounded thousands and ravaged large parts of the city. Twenty-year-old Syrian Uday Qattan and his extended family, most of whom have lived in Lebanon for years and worked at the port, also lost their home. In what remained of it, walls have cracked or collapsed, ceilings caved in, and most furniture has been destroyed except for the odd television or mirror.

An adjacent shack shared by the bachelors in the family has been reduced to splintered wood. After the explosion, which the family says they survived by a "miracle", the married men sent their wives to other parts of Lebanon to live with relatives. Remaining family members now sleep in the courtyard in between the rubble, behind a washing line strung up with



BEIRUT: A Syrian national sleeps on a sofa near heavily damaged buildings in Beirut's Karantina neighborhood after a massive explosion at the city's port shook the Lebanese capital. —AFP

clothes. "We no longer have any work or home," Qattan said. "We sit here all day with nothing to do." They cannot return to Syria, where they lost their homes in Hama province in the war, and risk being detained over dodging military service.

Qattan joined his relatives a year ago from Syria's Idlib, where a fragile cease-

fire has barely stemmed a regime offensive on a rebel bastion. But he and his family say the Beirut blast was like nothing they even witnessed during the war. "In Syria, if we heard the sound of a war plane, we'd hide then stand back up after the strike, brush off the dust, and continue our lives," Qattan said. — AFP

Navalny medical tests 'indicate poisoning'

BERLIN: The Berlin hospital treating leading Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny said Monday that test results indicated he had been poisoned, although Russian doctors quickly responded that they had not found the toxin in question. The revelation prompted German Chancellor Angela Merkel to call for the Russian authorities to ensure those responsible are held accountable.

The 44-year-old opposition leader and anti-corruption campaigner was brought to the German capital on Saturday after falling ill in Siberia last week with what Russian doctors blamed on a metabolic disorder. But on Monday, Berlin's renowned Charite hospital said its clinical tests on Navalny "indicate poisoning with a substance from the group of cholinesterase inhibitors".

Cholinesterase is an enzyme needed for the central nervous system to function properly. Its inhibitors are used to make medicines and insecticides, but also nerve agents such as sarin. "Alexei Navalny's prognosis remains unclear: the possibility of long-term effects, particularly those affecting the nervous system, cannot be excluded," the hospital said on Twitter. Navalny is being treated in intensive care and remains in medically induced coma, it said, adding: "While his

condition is serious, it is not currently life-threatening."

'Investigate thoroughly'

He was transferred to Berlin by a German NGO after Merkel had extended an offer to treat him in the country. "In view of Mr Navalny's prominent role in the political opposition in Russia, the authorities there are now urgently called upon to investigate this act thoroughly - and to do so with full transparency," she said in a joint statement with Foreign Minister Heiko Maas. "Those responsible must be identified and held accountable." Navalny's spokeswoman Kira Yarmysh said on Twitter that his poisoning was "no longer a hypothesis but a fact."

The European Union's diplomatic chief Josep Borrell called on the Russian authorities to launch an "independent and transparent investigation" into the apparent poisoning of Navalny. "The European Union strongly condemns what seems to be an attempt on Mr Navalny's life," Borrell said in Brussels. Navalny, Russia's most prominent opposition figure, was rushed into intensive care in Siberia on Thursday after his plane made an emergency landing in the city of Omsk. His support-

ers have said they believe he was poisoned by something in his cup of tea at the airport before he took off, pointing the finger of blame at President Vladimir Putin. But Alexandre Sabayev, the chief toxicologist at Omsk Emergency Hospital No 1, told Russian agencies that they had tested Navalny for "a broad range of narcotics, synthetic, psychotropic and medicinal substances including cholinesterase inhibitors." "The results were negative," he said. — AFP

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Our prayers and heartfelt condolences to his family & relatives

International

US Secretary of State Mideast trip: Diplomacy or show for US voters?

Trump seeks to use Mideast diplomacy for political advantage

WASHINGTON: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo was accused Monday of using US foreign policy to support President Donald Trump's reelection bid after embarking on a trip to the Middle East, where he plans to remotely deliver an address to the Republican National Convention. Pompeo suddenly flew out for a six-day trip to Israel, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Sudan on Sunday, with the precise itinerary still uncertain, the reason for the urgency unclear and only one reporter in tow, when normally there are several.

"The US commitment to peace, security, and stability in Israel, Sudan, and among Gulf countries has never been stronger than under President Trump's leadership," the State Department said, announcing the trip. Pompeo was meeting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other officials on the first stop in Jerusalem on Monday. Officially, the mission was to herald the "historic" accord between Israel and the United Arab Emirates which Trump has called a success of his administration's Middle East peace efforts.

The administration says it is optimistic other Arab countries will follow suit and recognize Israel, and Pompeo's trip appears aimed to step up pressure on Bahrain and Sudan towards that end. But with polls showing Trump well behind Democratic rival Joe Biden in the race, critics say the Republican president is seeking to use Middle East diplomacy to his domestic political advantage. He is particularly aiming at building more support among Jewish and evangelical Christian voters with his groundbreaking recognition of the holy city of Jerusalem as Israel's capital in 2017.

Foreign policy 'stain'
But Pompeo's trip, which coincides with the opening Monday of the Republican convention to officially designate Trump the party candidate in the November 3 election, has raised questions among



Pompeo out for a 6-day Mideast trip

diplomacy experts and especially Democrats. While on his fifth visit to Israel, Pompeo will reportedly record an address to the convention to be shown Tuesday. "Secretaries of state have long taken pains to avoid mixing diplomacy with domestic politics," said Democratic Senator Bob Menendez. "Doing so puts a stain on our nation's foreign policy and our electoral process," he said on Twitter.

Halie Soifer, director of the Jewish Democratic Council of America, called it "unprecedented and highly unethical" for Pompeo to address the Republican fest while on a diplomatic mission. With Pompeo's trip, she said, "Trump is once again using Israel to score political points." She pointed to Trump's statement last week that he had controversially moved the US embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem only to impress conservative American



JERUSALEM: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo (left) and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu bump elbows during a press briefing in Jerusalem. — AFP

Christians, a core group of his support base. "We moved the capital of Israel to Jerusalem. That's for the evangelicals," Trump said. "The evangelicals are more excited about that than Jewish people," he added. Pompeo's staff had no comment on the criticisms, some of which cited a law, the Hatch Act, which bans officials from engaging in electoral politics while undertaking official duties. The State Department said Pompeo will address the convention in his personal and not official capacity.

"No State Department resources will be used. Staff

are not involved in preparing the remarks or in the arrangements for Secretary Pompeo's appearance," an official told AFP in a statement. The official added that, even as it happens during an official trip, the State Department would not "bear any costs" associated with the statement. Some critics suspected the entire trip was arranged as a show for the convention, which will see Trump and top Republicans appearing on television for four nights straight to extol his record. Normally a secretary of state would appear in person to deliver a powerful message for an incumbent president. — AFP

News in brief

Tropical storm lashes Cuba

HAVANA: Tropical Storm Laura pounded Cuba with heavy rains Monday as it barreled toward the US, where forecasters predicted it would strengthen to a hurricane after leaving 24 people dead and a swath of destruction in the Caribbean. "Strengthening is expected when the storm moves over the Gulf of Mexico, and Laura is forecast to become a hurricane," the US National Hurricane Center said, predicting it would make landfall in the US state of Louisiana later in the week. Meanwhile Tropical Storm Marco—which also churned through the Gulf of Mexico—was downgraded from a hurricane overnight and was forecast to hit Louisiana later Monday, weakening to a tropical depression on Tuesday. — AFP

Uganda recalls Denmark envoy

KAMPALA: Uganda on Monday recalled its ambassador to Denmark and her deputy, after the pair were recorded apparently plotting in a Zoom meeting to steal funds meant to deal with the COVID-19 crisis. During the meeting, a video of which circulated on social media, the Ambassador Nimisha Madhvani, her deputy and other staff members are heard devising a plot to share out money which was meant to aid stranded citizens. They appear to suggest that instead of registering the money for COVID-19 use, it should be apportioned as an allowance over eight days for the diplomats. "Give yourselves \$4,000... deputy ambassador Elly Kamahungye is heard to say, admitting there would be "jumbled accounts" while recalling how diplomats were able to bribe auditors to shelve a previous probe into embassy accounts. — AFP

Fire guts Durban mosque

JOHANNESBURG: A large fire ripped through the 139-year-old Grey Street Mosque in South Africa's southeastern port city of Durban Monday, emergency services and religious leaders said. The blaze at the mosque, one of the largest in the southern hemisphere, also damaged three adjacent buildings in the city's central business district, emergency services spokesman Robert Mckenzie said. Videos posted on Twitter showed crowds looking on as curtains of flame raged through the upper floor of the building. Firefighters managed to bring the fire under control in about two hours, before it reached the prayer area on the ground floor. The cause of the fire was not immediately clear, but South African Muslim Network (SAMNET) chairman Faisal Suliman said it was believed to have started in one of seven staff flats located above the mosque and may have been caused by an electrical fault. — AFP

1100 Nigeria villagers killed

LAGOS: More than 1,100 villagers have been killed this year by armed gangs in several states across central and northwest Nigeria, where raids have escalated, Amnesty International said in a report Monday. "The Nigerian authorities have left rural communities at the mercy of rampaging gunmen who have killed at least 1,126 people in the north of the country since January," the rights watchdog said, giving a tally until the end of June. The killings, during attacks by "bandits" or armed cattle rustlers, and in clashes between herders and farming communities for access to land, have been recurrent for several years. Amnesty said it had interviewed civilians in Kaduna, Katsina, Niger, Plateau, Sokoto, Taraba and Zamfara states, who reported living in fear of attacks and abductions. — AFP

Mladic: Ruthless Serb crusader dubbed the 'epitome of evil'

BELGRADE: Ratko Mladic, the former Bosnian Serb commander whose appeal opened yesterday, saw himself as a crusading defender of the Serbs but he was dubbed the "epitome of evil" for the mass killings his troops carried out during Bosnia's 1990s war. The 78-year-old was sentenced to life in prison in 2017 for genocide and other war crimes that judges in The Hague said were "amongst the most heinous known to humankind". The atrocities, including the massacre of some 8,000 Muslim boys and men in Srebrenica, were carried out by Mladic's forces as they tried to rid Bosnian territory of Croats and Muslims in pursuit of a Serb-only state.

The UN rights chief Zeid Ra'ad al Hussein described Mladic as "the epitome of evil" after his conviction. Captured in 2011 after 16 years on the run, he is now an ailing shadow of his former self, dogged by ill-health. He remains a hero to many



THE HAGUE: Bosnian Serb ex-general Ratko Mladic, who has been sentenced to life imprisonment, arrives before the international UN tribunal in The Hague where he is appealing his conviction. — AFP

Serbs, who deeply distrust the international courts which have meted out justice for the communal violence that ruptured former Yugoslavia. But to the families of war victims, he will forever be associated with the bloody 44-month siege of Sarajevo and the 1995 massacre in Srebrenica, considered the worst bloodshed on European soil since World War II.

After Mladic's troops overran Srebrenica, a Muslim enclave under UN protection, in 1995, he arrived on the scene in footage that shows him con-

gratulating troops and assuring locals they would be safe. The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia found him guilty on 10 counts including genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during the 1992-1995 conflict that killed 100,000 people and displaced 2.2 million. Mladic has denied all charges, describing them as "obnoxious" at his first court appearance in 2011. "I defended my country and my people," he said.

Born in the village of Bozanovici in eastern Bosnia, Mladic's life was struck by bloodshed and tragedy as a toddler, when his father was killed in battle with the Ustasha, Croatia's fascist World War II regime. Mladic followed his parent's military path and was a colonel in the Yugoslav army when the federation began to crumble in June 1991.

He was sent to organize the Serb-dominated army in Croatia, and the following May he was made commander of Bosnian Serb forces, tasked with seizing land across Bosnia for Serbs. Former Yugoslav army spokesperson Ljubodrag Stojadinovic once described Mladic as "narcissistic, conceited, vain and arrogant". In 1994, at the height of the war, Mladic's only daughter Ana committed suicide in Belgrade, aged 23, with her father's favorite pistol. — AFP



MINSK: Opposition supporters rally to protest against disputed presidential elections results in Minsk. — AFP

Belarus authorities arrest two leading opposition figures

MINSK: The authorities in Belarus arrested two leading opposition figures on Monday and called a Nobel laureate in for questioning, a day after thousands of people defied the army to march demanding the downfall of President Alexander Lukashenko. Two weeks after an election which his opponents say he rigged, Lukashenko has shown little sign of bringing a halt to the demonstrations, the biggest threat to his 26-year-old rule.

The president, who has called the protesters "rats", said last week he ordered police to put down any demonstrations in Minsk. But tens of thousands took to the streets on Sunday in one of the biggest demonstrations since the election, and dispersed peacefully. In a sign of the peril to an already shaky economy, several banking sources told Reuters most banks had effectively run out of foreign currency to meet surging demand from residents trying to sell the Belarusian rouble. Queues have become common at exchange points.

A board member at the Belarus central bank told Reuters the issue was a technical one involving the physical availability of banknotes, and did not signal liquidity problems. A spokesman for

the Coordination Council, an opposition body set up last week, told Reuters two of its highest profile members, Olga Kovalkova and Sergei Dylevsky, had been detained on Monday near a factory entrance.

Separately, Belarusian Nobel laureate author Svetlana Alexievich has been called in for questioning by state investigators over a criminal case against the Council, the spokesman said, and is due to meet them today. Alexievich, who won the 2015 Nobel literature prize, is a member of the Council, which was set up with the stated aim of promoting a peaceful handover of authority and comprises dozens of public figures including the former head of the main state drama theatre.

The government has launched a criminal investigation, calling the Council an illegal attempt to seize power. Many leading opposition figures are in jail or have fled the country. "Belarus has changed and authorities will have to talk to us," one of the council members, Maria Kolesnikova, told reporters.

Central bank board member Dmitry Murin told Reuters any shortage of foreign currency at exchange points "has a technical nature - there is an issue with physical availability of the banknotes. Banks do not have forex liquidity shortages as of now." Banking sources described what appears to be a serious shortage of hard currency despite an infusion of cash last week. "There is panic now, demand for foreign currency cash is very high," one currency dealer in Minsk told Reuters, speaking on condition of anonymity. — Reuters

Gun couple warns GOP convention

CHARLOTTE: Were they exercising their constitutional rights, or recklessly asserting their white privilege? The couple who brandished guns at protesters and were rewarded with speaking slots at the Republican convention embody the culture wars gripping America. And in their few minutes in the TV spotlight they painted a dangerous, dark vision of America, where suburbanites will be under threat if President Donald Trump is not re-elected.

Mark and Patricia McCloskey made world headlines in late June when they pointed guns at Black Lives Matter protesters peacefully marching past their columned mansion on a private St. Louis street as part of demonstrations against racial injustice. Video of the barefoot couple went viral, and the McCloskeys, both in their early sixties, were charged with felony unlawful use of weapons.

The McCloskeys have become key exhibits in a tense national debate involving race and the widening socio-economic divides, and Trump invited them to speak Monday on his party's largely virtual convention's opening night. Instead of arguing in good faith about American gun rights, they parroted the president's fearful messaging that a Biden administration would unleash an invasion of the suburbs.

"What you saw happen to us could just as easily happen to any of you who are watching from quiet neighborhoods around our country," Patricia McCloskey, sitting next to her husband, warned viewers in video remarks. "Make no mistake: No matter where you live, your family will not be safe in the radical Democrats' America." The decision to feature them at the convention has drawn both praise and revulsion. The McCloskeys are law-abiding heroes to those who see them as die-hard supporters of 2nd Amendment gun rights defending their home against potential trespassers. But many view them as villains—wealthy white lawyers who threatened violence against people who did not look like them.

"I thought we were going to die," Mark McCloskey told Kimberly Guilfoyle, a senior advisor to the Trump campaign, on her podcast last month. "We did nothing wrong and we're not going to back down." The confrontation occurred during a wave of demonstrations over police brutality and racism prompted by the police killing in Minneapolis of an unarmed black man, George Floyd. Trump has branded himself the "law and order" president in a bid to claw back ground against Democrat Joe Biden, who leads in polling. — AFP

International

Hong Kong: The first 'proven' case of COVID-19 reinfection

Immunity for coronavirus infection 'not lifelong'

PARIS: Researchers in Hong Kong Monday identified what they said was the first confirmed case worldwide of COVID-19 reinfection, raising questions about the durability of immunity, whether acquired naturally or with a vaccine. "Our study proves that immunity for COVID infection is not lifelong-in fact, reinfection can occur quite quickly," said Kelvin Kai-Wang To, a microbiologist at Hong Kong University's Faculty of Medicine and lead author of a forthcoming study that details the findings.

"COVID-19 patients should not assume after they recover that they won't get infected again," he told AFP in an interview. Even people who have shaken off the virus should practice social distancing, wear masks and practice hand washing, he advised. They should also get tested if suspect symptoms appear. The case came to light when a 33-year old resident of Hong Kong passed through mandatory screening earlier this month at the Hong Kong airport on his way back from Europe. The so-called PCR swab test was positive.

This came as a surprise because the man had contracted and recovered from a COVID infection four-and-a-half months earlier, and was assumed to have immunity, especially after such a brief time since the infection. To find out whether he had suffered a relapse or had been infected anew, To and his team sequenced the two virus strains and compared their genomes, or genetic coding. The two viral signatures were "completely different", and belonged to different coronavirus lineages, or

clades. The first closely resembled strains collected in March and April, and the second strain matched the virus found in Europe-where the patient had just been visiting-in July and August. "The virus mutates all the time," said To. "It is very unlikely that the patient would have gotten the second virus during the first infection."

The fact that a blood sample-taken shortly after the positive test at the airport-showed no antibodies is a further indication that the second virus had not been lingering unnoticed for months. "This is certainly stronger evidence of reinfection than some of the previous reports because it uses the genome sequence of the virus to separate the two infections," said Jeffrey Barret, a senior scientific consultant for the COVID-19 Genome Project at the Wellcome Sanger Institute, commenting on the study.

Broader implications

Up to now, there have been many cases of suspected re-infection, but none were able to rule out the possibility that the virus has remained latent and reemerged after weeks or months. But experts differed as to how alarmed the world should be by the new findings, which will be published in the peer-reviewed medical journal *Clinical Infectious Diseases*. "This is a worrying finding for two reasons," said David Strain, a clinical senior lecturer at the University of Exeter Medical School.

"It suggests that previous infections are not protective. It also raises the possibility that vaccina-



HONG KONG: Medical staff wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) as a precautionary measure against the COVID-19 coronavirus approach Lei Muk Shue care home in Hong Kong. — AFP

tions may not provide the hope that we have been waiting for." If antibodies don't provide lasting protection, "we will need to revert to a strategy of viral near-elimination in order to return to a normal life", he added. In the same vein, To said that scientists developing vaccines should look not just at the immune response, but at the duration of protection

from infection. But other researchers suggested that the case uncovered was far more likely to be extremely rare.

"It is to be expected that the virus will naturally mutate over time," said microbiologist Brendan Wren of the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine. — AFP

News in brief

Madagascar prison break

ANTANANARIVO: Madagascar police have recaptured 11 out of 31 escaped prisoners one day after a breakout that ended in a deadly shootout, the justice ministry said Monday. Police opened fire on scores of inmates trying to flee Farafanga prison on Sunday, capturing 37 but killing 20 and wounding eight in the process. Thirty-one managed to escape the prison, located in the southeast of the Indian Ocean island, and were still on the run late on Sunday. The justice ministry said 11 of those escapees had since been caught and that one had been found dead, leaving 19 to account for. "Forty-eight inmates have been captured (in total) so far and another death has been recorded, bringing the number of fatalities to 21," the ministry said in a statement on Monday. Mass prison escapes are not uncommon in Madagascar. — AFP

Crews battle California fires

LOS ANGELES: Thousands of firefighters made small progress on Monday as they battled to contain historic wildfires in California, with potentially dangerous lightning storms proving milder than expected and temperatures easing. Governor Gavin Newsom said some 625 fires were burning throughout the state and had scorched more than 1.2 million acres - nearly the size of the Grand Canyon. Of those fires, 17 were considered major, he said, including the LNU Lightning Complex and the SCU Lightning Complex - which comprise several fires each and have become two of the largest blazes in the state's history as far as acreage burned. The LNU Lightning Complex which erupted north of San Francisco on August 8 was 22 percent contained Monday afternoon. The SCU Lightning Complex, which also erupted August 8 and is burning southeast of San Francisco, was 10 percent contained early in the day. — AFP

Tunisia announces new govt

TUNIS: Tunisia's prime minister-designate yesterday unveiled the country's second government in six months, which must now seek approval from lawmakers incensed by how the administration was formed. Hichem Mechichi had previously declared his intention to form a cabinet dominated by independent technocrats able to "present urgent solutions" for a country where a sluggish economy has been further battered by the coronavirus pandemic. The former interior minister's decision to bypass consultations with political factions had angered, among others, the powerful Islamist party Ennahdha, which has demanded a "political" government reflecting the balance of forces in parliament. But Ennahdha and other parties have also spoken of the need to approve the government to avoid dragging the already crisis-hit country into disruptive early elections. — AFP

Peru forces, traffickers clash

LIMA: Two Peruvian security force members were killed Monday in an armed clash with remnants of the Shining Path guerrilla movement in a key coca-growing region, the government said. A soldier and police officer were killed along with four guerrillas "during security activities against drug trafficking," in the southern Ayacucho region, Peru's defense and interior ministries said in a joint statement. The combined military and police unit was patrolling in the valley of the Apurimac, Ene and Mantaro rivers - collectively known as the Vraem river valley - when the violence broke out. The valley is one of Peru's largest coca growing areas and the scene of periodic clashes between the military and drug trafficking gangs. The statement said the man leading the rebel contingent was also killed. — AFP

After UAE-Israel deal, which Arab nation will next forge ties?

DUBAI: The UAE's decision to normalize ties with Israel has been welcomed by some Arab countries, but despite cheerleading from the US, others have rejected the idea and many approach it with caution. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who is on a Middle East tour that takes in Israel, Sudan, Bahrain and the UAE, expressed optimism Monday that more Arab nations will sign up. Analysts say that Khartoum and Manama are most likely to follow in the footsteps of the UAE, which became only the third Arab nation to have diplomatic ties with the Jewish state. Regional heavyweight Saudi Arabia, while not condemning the deal, has refused to normalize ties until Israel signs an internationally recognized peace accord with the Palestinians.

Bahrain

Contacts between Bahrain-the first Gulf country to welcome the UAE-Israel deal-and the Jewish state date back to the 1990s. Bahrain, like most other Gulf countries, shares with Israel a common enemy in Iran, which Manama accuses of instigating protests by the nation's Shiite Muslim community against the ruling Sunni Al-Khalifa dynasty. Manama is a close Saudi ally and is unlikely to establish official relations without Riyadh's blessing. But it could play an important intermediary role. "While Saudi Arabia cannot directly normalize relations amid a stalemate in the peace process, Bahrain could become a hub for Saudi-Israeli exchange," said Andreas Krieg of King's College London. A Bahraini government spokesperson echoed Saudi sentiment this week about the country's commitment to the Palestinian cause but added that Manama "makes its



MUKHAYYAM 'ASKAR: A youth peeks from behind the shoulders of armed members of the Fatah movement, during a rally against the US-brokered UAE-Israel deal to normalize relations, at the Askar camp for Palestinian refugees east of Nablus. — AFP

decisions based on its national and Arab principles, as well as its strategic security interests".

Sudan

Sudanese officials have issued contradictory comments regarding a normalization of ties, but a number of factors compel it to move in that direction. Foreign ministry spokesman Haider Badawi said he was in favor of such an accord, but foreign minister Omar Gamaledin said the issue "has never been discussed by the Sudanese government" and promptly fired the spokesman.

General Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan, who heads Sudan's transitional sovereign council, met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Uganda in February. Sudan, grappling with an acute economic crisis, seeks to be removed from a US blacklist as a state sponsor of terrorism, and normalization of ties with close US ally Israel could help. "They are extremely keen to have US sanctions lifted and they are under heavy UAE influence," said Cinzia Bianco, a research fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations.

Oman

Oman also quickly welcomed the UAE-Israel deal but said it was committed to "the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people who aspire to an independent state" with East Jerusalem as its capital. The country is a close US ally but also has good relations with Iran. It maintains a policy of neutrality and has over the years played a mediating role in regional conflicts. There have been several contacts between Oman and Israel, including in 2018, when the late sultan Qaboos received Netanyahu in Muscat. Sultan Haitham, who was sworn in January after the death of Qaboos, is "already treading lightly due to possible economic-related grievances and would not risk such a controversial move at this time", said Bianco.

Qatar

Qatar has not responded to the surprise announcement amid a protracted diplomatic standoff with the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Egypt-who accuse it of supporting Islamist movements and coniving with Iran. Doha, which is also close to the US, has an on-again, off-again relationship with Israel, after hosting an Israeli economic interests office from 1996 until 2000. It is also heavily involved in the situation in the Gaza Strip, managing and funding welfare payments to the Palestinian people of the impoverished coastal territory with Israel's blessing. "While Qatar cooperates with Israel in support of the Palestinian cause... it will not normalize relations as long as the peace process is stalled," Krieg said.

Kuwait

Kuwait, another close US ally, has also been silent on the Israel deal. The rich emirate is the only country in the Gulf with a genuine political and parliamentary life, and permits sometimes lively public debate. Some political groups and civil society organizations have condemned the UAE's decision to normalize ties with the Jewish state, while others have defended it. But formalization of ties with Israel is unlikely, as the National Assembly has capitalized "on hostility towards Israel to claim its place as the voice of the people", Bianco said. — AFP



CHRISTCHURCH: A man demonstrates to support the Christchurch mosque attacks victims outside the Christchurch High Court in Christchurch. — AFP

Victims vent fury at 'devil' New Zealand mosque shooter

CHRISTCHURCH: Two survivors of the New Zealand mosque massacre abandoned prepared statements to vent their anger directly at gunman Brenton Tarrant in a Christchurch court yesterday, drawing applause from fellow victims as they called him a terrorist who deserved to die. Tarrant-coming face-to-face with his victims for the first time-has admitted 51 charges of murder, 40 of attempted murder and one of terrorism over the attacks at two Christchurch mosques on March 15, 2019.

The 29-year-old-who is expected to be the first person jailed for life without parole in New Zealand-has maintained an impassive demeanor throughout the hearing, which began Monday, as the grief-stricken survivors unleashed their anger in an outpouring of emotion. "I did not see any regrets and

shame in the eyes of this terrorist and he does not regret anything, so I decided not to read my impact statement but to show him the pain I suffered," an incensed Mirwais Waziri told judge Cameron Mander on day two of Tarrant's sentencing.

White supremacist Tarrant did not flinch as the gallery applauded when Waziri turned to him and said: "Today you are a terrorist and us as Muslims are not terrorists." Zuhair Darwish, whose brother died in the attacks, told Tarrant: "You act like a coward and you are a coward. You live like a rat and you deserve that. You're going to die alone, like a virus everybody avoids being with. The fair punishment for him would be the death penalty. I know under New Zealand law they removed the death penalty for humans, but unfortunately he's not a human, he doesn't deserve to be judged like a human."

A witness whose name has been suppressed by the court appealed to the judge to give Tarrant "the highest punishment that you can."

I want you not to let this man see the sun, never, ever. "This man has to stay in prison forever. As his mother said, something in his head, he is a sick man, he is not a human being." — AFP

Coronavirus keeping Rohingya indoors on genocide anniversary

KUTUPALONG: Almost a million Rohingya refugees stuck in Bangladesh mark three years since escaping from Myanmar yesterday, with coronavirus forcing them to hold a day-long "silent protest" inside their flimsy, leaky huts. An August 2017 military operation - that has triggered genocide charges at the UN's top court - drove 750,000 Rohingya out of Myanmar's Rakhine state into neighboring Bangladesh, to join 200,000 who fled earlier. Three years later and with no work or decent education for their children, there is little prospect of a return to the country, where members of the mostly Muslim minority have long been treated as inferior intruders.

Myanmar's military "killed more than 10,000 of our people. They carried out mass murders and rapes and drove our people from their home", Mohib Ullah, a Rohingya leader in the camps said. For the second anniversary last year, Ullah led a rally of about 200,000 protesters at Kutupalong, the largest of the network of camps in southeast Bangladesh, where 600,000 people live in cramped and unsanitary conditions. But the Bangladeshi authorities, increasingly impatient with the Rohingya and who a year ago cut internet access in the camps, have banned gatherings because of the coronavirus pandemic. The sprawling camps have been cut off from the rest of Bangladesh, with the military erecting barbed-wire fences around the perimeters. Inside, movement has been restricted. Fears the deadly virus could spread like wildfire - because physical distancing is almost impossible - have not been borne out, with just 84 infections confirmed and six deaths. The Rohingya will mark "Genocide Remembrance Day" with silence and prayers in their rickety homes all day, Ullah said. — AFP

Business

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 26, 2020

China, US to 'push forward' phase one deal

Washington, Beijing hold trade talks amid rising tensions

BEIJING: Top Chinese and US negotiators spoke on the phone yesterday and agreed to "push forward" their phase one economic deal, amid soaring tensions between the two sides on several fronts.

The US and China signed the accord in January, bringing a partial truce in their lingering trade war and obliging Beijing to import an additional \$200 billion in American products over two years, ranging from cars and machinery to oil and farm products.

But the COVID-19 pandemic has put pressure on the agreement and China's purchases of those goods have been lagging. The two countries confirmed the talks in separate statements.

Washington said the parties "addressed steps that China has taken to effectuate structural changes called for by the agreement". Those changes, it said, would "ensure greater protection for intellectual property rights, remove impediments to American companies in the areas of financial services and agriculture, and eliminate forced technology transfer".

It added that both sides "see progress and are committed to taking the steps necessary to ensure the success of the agreement". Beijing's statement said a "constructive dialogue" between the two sides had "agreed to create conditions and atmosphere to continue to push forward the implementation of phase one of the China-US economic and trade agreement". The phase one deal called for officials to hold a "check-in" every six months.



China makes 'structural changes'

Mounting tensions
But US President Donald Trump in recent weeks has stepped up his rhetoric against China ahead of what is expected to be a tough re-election fight, raising questions about the deal's fate as well as the possibility of a phase two agreement. Tensions between the two countries have risen over a host of issues including blame for the coronavirus pandemic and China's policies in Xinjiang and Hong Kong.

And confirmation of the call came as TikTok-owned by Chinese parent company ByteDance filed a lawsuit challenging the US government's crackdown on the popular video app, which Washington accuses of being a national security threat. The Trump administration has given ByteDance a deadline to divest TikTok before the app is banned in the United States, arguing TikTok could be used

China to track the locations of federal employees, build dossiers on people for blackmail, and conduct corporate espionage.

The company says it has never provided any US user data to the Chinese government, and Beijing has blasted Trump's crackdown as political. The optimistic note sounded from the trade call comes ahead of a five-day trip to Europe by Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi, a visit likely to include discussions on China's role in 5G network construction and Chinese telecom giant Huawei.

Wang Yi criticized the US Monday in thinly-

can take unpaid leave for between one and three months from Sept 1 to Nov 30 owing to expected staffing requirements. Emirates, which in July asked pilots and crew to take four months of unpaid leave, also laid off some crew last week, two sources said, continuing a redundancy process that began in July.

An airline spokeswoman confirmed that unpaid leave had been offered but she declined to say how many crew had accepted. The spokeswoman did not address the layoffs. In an Etihad internal memo, staff were told that the airline has more crew than needed and that many are not being rostered on flights, which is not sustainable for the business.

Crew can take between 10 days to six months of unpaid leave from Sept. 16, the email said.

Etihad, which in March asked crew to take unpaid leave, did not immediately respond to an emailed request for comment. Emirates and Etihad have been

investments regarding the MIPS licensing deal. A 2019 CIP investor presentation, seen by Reuters, shows how the company was intent on using MIPS to help China catch up to the United States in advanced semiconductor technology, which is critical for everything from smartphones to sophisticated weaponry.

The MIPS license promises to provide "core technology" that will help China "implement the ambitious goal of Made in China 2025", the presentation stated, referring to a government program to achieve self-sufficiency in strategic industries. The United States has often cited the 2025 program as the reason for national security measures aimed at stopping China from accessing US technology. A June 2018 document from the White House Office of Trade and Manufacturing Policy, states: "In policy documents such as Made in China 2025, China has articulated the target list of technology sectors it seeks to dominate. Much of recent Chinese investment behavior appears consistent with this target list."

Increasingly mindful that it has triggered US backlash, Beijing began to downplay Made in China 2025, Reuters reported in 2018. Since Washington tightened restrictions on direct Chinese investments into US tech startups in late 2018, licensing agreements and offshore entities have become a popular avenue for technology transfer, according to Silicon Valley venture capitalists, lawyers, and tech startup CEOs interviewed by Reuters. That was also the case with MIPS.

The Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS), a US interagency panel led by the Treasury Department, reviews proposed transactions to ensure they do not harm national security. But licensing deals are not typically subject to CFIUS review and considered legal as long as they aren't designed to skirt regulations and comply with US export control laws, which regulate the shipment of strategically sensitive goods.

"China is using joint ventures or licensing agreements to transfer technology to China rather than work long-term with a US partner, and it will be important to examine those agreements more carefully to keep company

economists. "The decline in the Norwegian economy in the second quarter was the deepest ever recorded," SSB said in a statement. "Quarterly national accounts are available back to 1978."

It was Norway's second consecutive quarterly fall in GDP, with revised data for the January-March period showing a drop of 2.2 percent, Statistics Norway said, worse than the 2.1 percent drop initially reported. Still, European Union outsider Norway fared comparatively better than the eurozone, where GDP declined by 12.1 percent in the second quarter. It was weaker than neighboring Finland, however, which contracted by 3.2 percent, but did better than Sweden's 8.6 percent decline.

In Germany, Europe's leading economy, GDP shrank by a record 9.7 percent in the April-June quarter.



BEIJING: Buildings reflected in a glass panel at the top of the Beijing Olympic Tower in Beijing yesterday. Top Chinese and US negotiators spoke on the phone yesterday and agreed to "push forward" their phase one economic deal, amid soaring tensions between the two sides on several fronts. —AFP

veiled comments about "political manipulation" at a meeting in Beijing with the Hungarian foreign minister—the first European minister to visit China since the coronavirus outbreak began.

Earlier this month US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo undertook a five-day visit to central

Europe with a campaign urging nations to shun Huawei.

The Chinese tech firm is considered a threat by Washington and has become a pivotal issue in the geopolitical standoff between Beijing and Washington. —AFP

Emirates, Etihad ask crew to take more unpaid leave

DUBAI: Middle East airlines Emirates and Etihad Airways have again asked cabin crew to take voluntary unpaid leave as they try to manage the impact from the COVID-19 pandemic, according to internal memos and sources familiar with the matter. Aviation has been one of the worst-hit industries during the pandemic and Emirates and Etihad of the United Arab Emirates have cut thousands of jobs, sources have said.

In an internal memo, Emirates crew are told they

Tech war chronicles: How a Valley chip pioneer landed in China

SAN FRANCISCO: As the United States steps up its campaign to block China from acquiring key technological know-how, the winding journey of a pioneering Silicon Valley computer chip firm is showing just how tough a task that can be. Co-founded over 35 years ago by Stanford University professor John Hennessy, who is currently the Chairman of Alphabet Inc, MIPS Computer Systems Inc had developed a new approach to chip architectures that remains in wide use.

In late 2018 and 2019, as the US-China tech trade war was in full swing, the core technology of MIPS was licensed to a Shanghai-based firm, CIP United Co Ltd, via a complex series of transactions involving companies in the Cayman Islands and Samoa.

Today, CIP controls full MIPS licensing rights for all new and existing customers in China, Hong Kong and Macau, as well as the ability to develop new derivative technologies based on the MIPS architecture, according to four people with knowledge of the situation. "A license for all of mainland China has already been sold, lock stock and barrel," one of the people said. The deal was worth \$60 million. The details of the MIPS licensing deal and the transactions that preceded it - revealed in US bankruptcy proceedings involving MIPS' parent company, Wave Computing Inc, and interviews with nearly two dozen people - offer a rare glimpse into how foreign firms were able to gain access to one strategically important American technology.

CIP United declined to comment about the MIPS licensing deal. Wave, through a public relations firm, said the company and its law firms believe its new management team "is confident the company has complied and is compliant with" rules on export, import and foreign

Norway enters recession as Q2 GDP falls

OSLO: Norway's gross domestic product contracted in the second quarter at the fastest pace ever recorded as efforts to contain the coronavirus plunged the economy into a deep recession, data from the national statistics office (SSB) showed yesterday.

The mainland economy, which excludes oil and gas production, shrank by 6.3 percent in the April-June period from the preceding three months, lagging a forecast of minus 6.1 percent in a Reuters poll of



An Etihad plane stands parked at a gate at JFK International Airport in New York. —Reuters

resuming passenger services gradually since June after grounding flights in March. Etihad reported a \$758 million core operating loss in the first half of the year. Emirates' first half ends Sept. 30. —Reuters



technology onshore," said Michael Brown, a veteran tech executive who now heads an innovation unit at the US Department of Defense. CFIUS didn't reply to request for comment on this issue, or on any specifics related to the MIPS technology transfer.

Hennessy told Reuters he sold all his MIPS related shares by 2005 and was not aware of the details of licensing deals in China.

Complex deals

Wave filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in late April after it was forced to return \$40 million to an investor as a funding deal related to the acquisition of MIPS went sour, according to court documents. The agreement with CIP in China, however, remains in place, with numerous Chinese companies - including telecoms giant Huawei Technologies Co Ltd - licensing the MIPS technology from CIP, according to a former CIP engineer. Huawei has faced US accusations of pilfering tech secrets and using its own gear to help the Chinese government's spy network. Huawei has denied these allegations. Huawei confirmed to Reuters that it is a royalty paying customer, but declined to elaborate further. —Reuters

The Norwegian crown strengthened slightly against the euro to trade at 10.59 by 0705 GMT from 10.60 just ahead of the 0600 GMT data release. Invoking emergency powers, the government on March 12 closed a wide range of public and private institutions, imposing the Nordic nation's strongest-ever peacetime restrictions on civilians in order to stop the COVID-19 pandemic.

Restrictions have gradually been lifted, however, allowing a partial rebound, monthly data showed, with the economy growing by 3.7 percent in June from May, lagging expectations of 3.9 percent growth in the Reuters poll. "We continue to believe that it will take time for the economy to reach back up to pre-crisis levels; at least, it will take time to restore full capacity utilization," Handelsbanken Capital Markets wrote in a note to clients. —Reuters

Key Hyundai arm aims to muscle into EV market

SEOUL: As Tesla Inc accelerates the shift to electric cars, Hyundai Motor's loyal suppliers have increasingly turned to "outsiders" for parts - but now the South Korean carmaker's own supply company, Mobis, is plunging into the game. Hyundai Mobis is in talks with two global automakers to supply electrified parts, its executive told Reuters, as it hopes to boost volume and lower prices.

The move is a direct response to companies such as Volkswagen and Tesla muscling in with suppliers with whom Hyundai had worked for decades. "We were not able to supply to other companies because we were busy with keeping up with Hyundai's growth. Now this has changed," said Ahn Byung-ki, senior vice president of electric powertrain business at Hyundai Mobis.

"If we increase outside sales, overall prices will drop. This will benefit everyone - us, global companies and Hyundai," said Ahn, who previously developed eco-friendly cars at Hyundai Motor. Hyundai Mobis, in which Hyundai Motor Group chairman Chung Mong-koo is the biggest individual shareholder, gets more than 90 percent of its revenue from the mothership. Ahn said reducing electric vehicle (EV) costs is key to competing with cheaper gasoline cars without subsidies, especially as Chinese rivals undercut Hyundai, and Tesla accelerates the industry's shift to EVs. He said Mobis hoped to win orders from a couple of global automakers as early as this year, marking its first deal to supply electrified powertrains, although it has supplied other parts of EVs or gasoline cars to Fiat-Chrysler and others.

Hyundai suppliers can leverage Hyundai's long-time experience with developing eco-friendly cars, he said, which puts them ahead of European peers who have focused on diesel. Hyundai Motor and its affiliate Kia Motors ranked third in global battery electric vehicle sales last year, behind Tesla and Renault-Nissan, according to researcher LMC Automotive. Hyundai Motor Group's heir and de facto leader, Euisun Chung, recently said Hyundai is aiming to have more than 10 percent of EV global market share in 2025.

Logistics affiliate Hyundai Glovis Co Ltd, which counts Euisun Chung as its biggest shareholder, has also expanded customers from Hyundai to Tesla and Volkswagen to transport vehicles across continents.

Seeking survival

Like many of Korea's family-owned conglomerates, or chaebol, Hyundai Group is deeply invested in vertical integration, with affiliates making key parts and even steel. Family members, aides and others close to the company founded key suppliers. After years of breakneck growth, however, Hyundai-Kia's production volume began trending down in 2016, hitting suppliers and moving them to rely less on Hyundai.

"As growth slowed, Hyundai told suppliers to survive on their own," said Lee Hang-ko, senior researcher at Korea Institute for Industrial Economics & Trade. Hyundai supplier Hanon Systems, which supplies parts to Tesla Model 3 and Volkswagen's ID3, generates more than half of its revenue from non-Hyundai customers. —Reuters

Business

NBK ECONOMIC REPORT

Oil prices look for traction amid coronavirus-hit economic activity

Oil market seen tightening in 2H20 as demand growth outpaces supply growth

KUWAIT: Oil prices tested the upper limits of their near two-month trading ranges recently, with Brent and WTI futures touching five-month highs of \$45.46/bbl and \$42.9/bbl last week, respectively. Since hitting a low of \$19.3/bbl on 21 April, the international benchmark Brent has more than doubled in price (+135 percent), though it remains down over 31 percent so far in 2020.

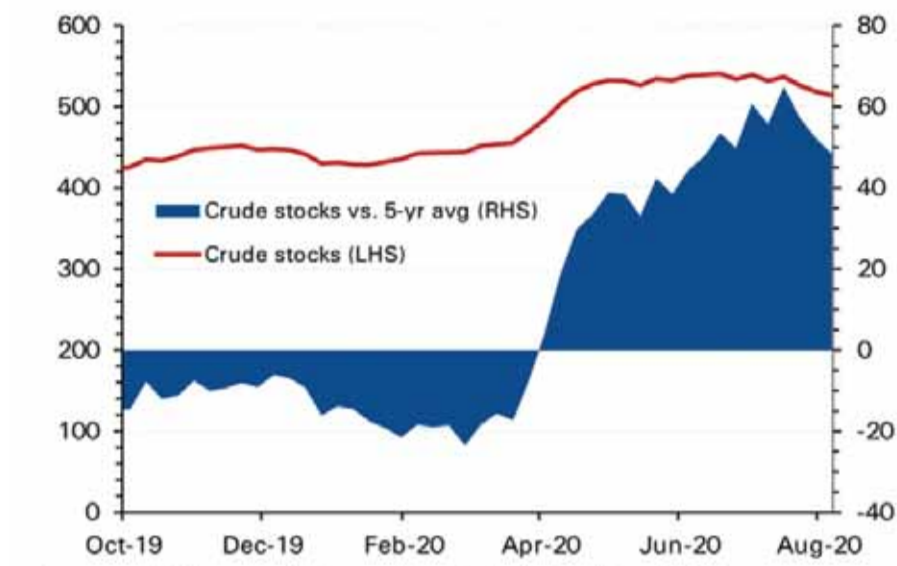
Oil's recent movements were catalyzed by a combination of better-than-expected US jobs data and a third consecutive week of US inventory drawdowns. The US Dept of Labor's employment release showed weekly initial unemployment claims falling from 1.19 million to 963,000 in the week ending (w/e) 8 August, the first time that they have been below 1 million since mid-March. In the same week, US commercial crude stocks declined by 4.5 mb to 514 mb (-5 percent from their record high of 540 mb in the w/e 19 June).

Stocks are still around 49 mb (10 percent) above the seasonal average but they are declining. They now provide around 35 days' worth of supply cover compared to a historic high of 42 days in early May. Gasoline and distillate stocks also fell. But crude refining activity continues to be sluggish amid resurgent coronavirus infections; while refinery crude demand has increased recently, at 14.7 mb/d, it is still down 15 percent y/y.

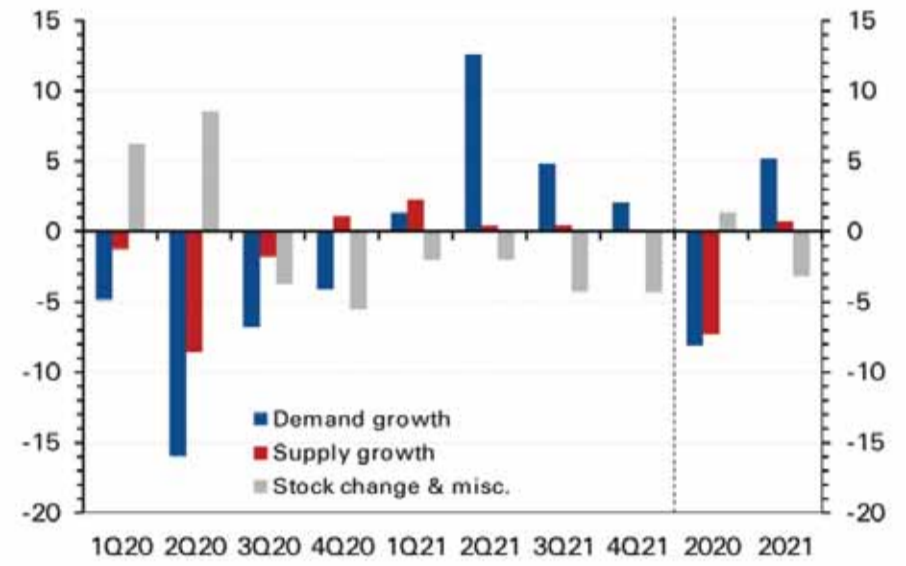
Spiking and persistent global COVID-19 infections continue to worry the markets, dampening economic activity and stoking oil demand fears. Prices may remain range-bound until major demand-side announcements are made. These could be additional fiscal stimulus, sizeable drawdowns in crude and petroleum stocks, accelerating economic activity in large, oil consuming economies such as China, or a vaccine break-through.

Markets had been hopeful that US congressional lawmakers would sign off on a trillion dollar plus coronavirus stimulus package, but partisan wrangling has delayed it. Lawmakers return from recess in September.

China's purchases of crude in recent months have helped tighten the oil markets. Imports in June reached a record 12.9 mb/d, according to the General Administration of Customs (GAC), breaking the previous month's record of 11.3 mb/d as China took advantage of the Saudi-Russ-



Source: US Energy Information Administration (EIA)



Source: IEA, OPEC, NBK est.—assumes full OPEC+ compliance

ian oil price war to load up on cheap crude. Refinery processing rates also set a record in July, jumping 12 percent y/y to 14.0 mb/d, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) reported.

Weak refining margins

Globally, refining margins (crack spreads i.e. the difference between crude feedstock prices and refined product prices) are under pressure due to crude demand growth overshooting refined products demand growth. While crude prices have gained over the last few months as supplies are curtailed and in anticipation of stronger economic activity, products prices—gasoline, diesel (gasoline) and especially jet fuel—more closely reflect consumption. The crack spread for gasoil in Singapore was still down at around \$6/bbl last week, having been as high as \$16.15/bbl last January, according to Platts.

Weak refining margins in Asia partly motivated the reduction in crude official selling prices (OSPs) for September by regional oil producers. Saudi Aramco and Kuwait's KPC cut the price of their Arab Light and Kuwait Export Crude prices

(KEC) (reduced the premium over the Oman/Dubai benchmark) by \$0.30-0.35/bbl.

The International Energy Agency (IEA), in its August oil market report, revised down its estimate of oil demand growth this year, by 140 kb/d to -8.1 mb/d, due to COVID-impaired mobility. This is the steepest annual contraction in oil demand in history, with overall global oil demand like to fall to 91.9 mb/d on avg. in 2020. Weak demand for jet fuel is especially concerning; the number of air kilometers travelled in July was still 67 percent down y/y. 2021 should see oil demand rebound by 5.2 mb/d to 97.14 mb/d—still almost 3 mb/d below the pre-pandemic level.

On the supply side, the ending of the first phase of the OPEC+ agreement on 1 August would have seen the producers' group begin to taper their cuts to 7.7 mb/d for the next five months from 9.7 mb/d. In practice, OPEC supplies already started rising in July due to the ending of the additional voluntary cuts undertaken by Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the UAE and Oman. OPEC-13 production increased by 978

kb/d (+4.4 percent m/m) to 23.17 mb/d in July, with OPEC-10 compliance falling to 96.7 percent from 112.8 percent in the previous month, according to OPEC.

Production boosted

Saudi Arabia increased output by 866 kb/d to 8.41 mb/d (103 percent compliance). Kuwait upped its production by 73 kb/d to 2.16 mb/d (102 percent) and the UAE raised its supplies by 98 kb/d to 2.43 mb/d (102 percent). Serial non-compliers Iraq and Nigeria again failed to honor their OPEC+ pledges to cut more than was required to compensate for three months of overproduction; Iraq pumped 3.75 mb/d in July (85 percent compliance), but now needs to make 850 kb/d worth of compensatory cuts. It earlier promised 400 kb/d of cuts this month and next. A Joint Ministerial Monitoring Committee (JMMC) meeting is currently taking place. No change in policy is expected, though.

With demand still weak, the prospect of increased OPEC+ supplies reaching still-saturated markets is bearish for oil prices. Perhaps partly mitigating this will be the fact that volumes will not reach the 2 mb/d due to compensatory cuts by Iraq and others. Saudi Arabia also explained that most of its 588 kb/d of extra August supply will be consumed domestically (for summer electricity needs) rather than exported.

US crude production, at 10.7 mb/d in

the w/e 7 August, is still struggling to recover. Output remains down 2.4 mb/d (18.3 percent) from its all-time high of 13.1 mb/d in February. The industry is suffering from low oil prices, a dearth of capital, reduced investor risk appetite and balance sheet repair by the oil firms. US oil rig counts have plummeted to 172, the lowest level since pre-shale boom 2005, Baker Hughes reported.

Recent noise about US shale producers bringing back idled oil wells has not yet shown up in the weekly figures at the aggregate level. Shale operators surveyed by Rystad Energy showed that most intended to restore almost all-shut in production by the end of September, but this is very much dependent on oil price recovery. Canadian and Brazil oil production, however, appears to have picked up, the IEA noted.

Expectations are that the oil market will tighten in 2H20, with demand growth outpacing supply growth. This should result in a drawdown in global inventories that should peak in 4Q20. Prices should therefore firm. This forecast comes with the important caveat that oil demand does not deteriorate due to worsening coronavirus infection rates. Moreover, OPEC+ discipline will need to be maintained. Libyan, Iranian and Venezuelan production remain wildcards with bearish price potential, given how far output has fallen below potential in these countries.



Saudi, Kuwait increase production

Qantas to axe 2,500 more jobs

SYDNEY: Australian flag carrier Qantas announced plans yesterday to cut almost 2,500 more jobs, just days after posting a huge annual loss as it reels from a collapse in demand caused by the coronavirus. Qantas and its budget offshoot, Jetstar, said they would outsource their ground handling operations at all domestic airports, pending a final review of the roles.

It comes on top of 6,000 redundancies already announced as the company undertakes a US\$10-billion cost-cutting blitz in response to "the most challenging period" in its 99-year history. Qantas Domestic CEO Andrew David said the proposal would save an estimated US\$72 million a year.

"Right now, our domestic capacity is at 20 percent of pre-COVID levels and international travel is expected to take years to recover," he said. "We know travel restrictions will lift eventually, but the market will be very different."

More than 200 Qantas planes have been grounded, David said, after the firm's revenues collapsed 82 percent between April and June. Qantas's main competitor, Virgin Australia, went into voluntary administration in April shortly after Australia closed its international borders and domestic travel plunged.



MELBOURNE: A Qantas logo adorns the side of the Qantas terminal at Melbourne Airport — AFP

Virgin has closed its budget subsidiary Tigerair Australia and axed 3,000 staff as it prepares to relaunch under the new ownership of US private equity giant Bain Capital. Parts of Australia—which has recorded roughly 25,000 cases of coronavirus and

525 deaths to date—remain in lockdown while travel between most states is restricted. Government officials have said the country will not reopen its international borders to travellers until a vaccine is found. —AFP

German economy contracts at record pace

BERLIN: The German economy contracted by a record 9.7% in the second quarter as consumer spending, company investments and exports all collapsed at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the statistics office said yesterday.

The economic slump was much stronger than during the financial crisis more than a decade ago, and it represented the sharpest decline since Germany began to record quarterly GDP calculations in 1970, the office said. Still, the reading marked a minor upward revision from an earlier estimate for the April-June period of -10.1 percent that the office had published last month.

Consumer spending shrank by 10.9 percent on the quarter, capital investments by 19.6 percent and exports by 20.3 percent, seasonally adjusted data

showed. Construction activity, normally a consistent growth driver for the German economy, fell by 4.2 percent on the quarter. "The second quarter was a complete disaster," VP Bank economist Thomas Gitzel said. "Regardless of whether it is about investments, private consumption, exports or even imports — everything was in free fall."

The only bright spot was state consumption, which rose by 1.5 percent on the quarter due to the government's coronavirus rescue programs, the office said. The German parliament has suspended the debt brake this year to allow the government to finance its crisis response and fiscal stimulus push with record new debt of 217.8 billion euros. The fiscal U-turn after years of balanced budgets means that the German state recorded a budget deficit of 51.6 billion euros from January to June, the statistics office said in a separate statement. That represents a deficit of 3.2 percent of economic output as measured by the EU's Maastricht criteria.

Employment edged down by 1.3 percent on the year to 44.7 million in as sign that the government's efforts to shield the labor market from the coronavirus shock with its short-time work program are paying off. The relatively mild impact of the crisis on

employment helped to stabilize income for many households, which together with the reluctance to consume, led to a considerable increase in household saving.

The savings rate almost doubled to 20.1 percent in the 2nd quarter compared to the previous year, the office said. The German central bank expects household spending to drive a strong recovery in the third quarter, though the economy might not reach its pre-crisis level before 2022.

The government's stimulus measures include a temporary VAT cut from July to December worth up to 20 billion euros, which Berlin hopes will give household spending an additional push. "The re-opening of the economy will give the German economy a strong boost in the period from July to September," Gitzel said, but he added that the moment of truth would come in the autumn and winter months, which could see a wave of bankruptcies.

"In addition, the negative consequences of structural change in the automobile industry are becoming increasingly evident," Gitzel said, pointing to many small suppliers in the sector that are struggling to adapt to digitization and electrification. — Reuters

Pandemic may fire up Japan's inflation: Expert

TOKYO: The coronavirus shock is boosting the amount of money flowing into Japan's economy and may fire up inflation, achieving what years of ultra-loose monetary policy failed to do, the central bank's former top economist, Hideo Hayakawa, said yesterday.

The Bank of Japan has been printing money aggressively for years as part of a policy of quantitative easing, hoping to spur consumption in the world's third biggest economy and reach an elusive inflation target of 2 percent. But most of the money piled up in financial institutions' reserves instead of spreading out across the economy, as risk-averse Japanese firms stayed wary of boosting spending.

After COVID-19 struck, however, the money printed by the BOJ is trickling down to households and companies, as the government ramps up spending and commercial banks boost lending to cash-strapped firms, said Hayakawa. "Money is flowing into companies and households, leading to a surge in savings," Hayakawa, whose views are closely tracked by incumbent policymakers, told Reuters. "Consumption could boom once the pandemic subsides, pushing up growth and inflation."

Even if that scenario is not reached for years, policymakers should not assume that persistent deflation will cap bond yields, allowing Japan to run a huge fiscal deficit at low cost forever, he said. "There's a strong belief among Japanese policymakers that prices will never perk up, and so it's okay to keep running a huge fiscal deficit," said Hayakawa, who is now a senior fellow at the Tokyo Foundation for Policy Research. "But you never know how COVID-19 could affect prices. The biggest fear for the BOJ is a steady rise in inflation," he said, adding that such an increase would force the bank to consider whittling down stimulus without sparking an unwelcome spike in yields.

Bank lending has hit a record high in recent months as companies hoarded cash to tide over the sweeping impact of the pandemic. Deposits also rose to a record 786 trillion yen (\$7.4 trillion) in June and surged 8.3 percent in July from a year earlier, as households saved some of the cash doled out by the government in its steps to cushion the disease blow. — Reuters

Business

KAMCO GCC Corporate Earnings report

GCC net profits drop over 60% in Q2-20 led by energy, bank and material stocks

Boursa Kuwait-listed companies report steep declines

KUWAIT: Earnings reported by companies listed on GCC exchanges reflected the real impact of the COVID-19 lockdowns during Q2-2020 that affected all economic activity globally as well as in the region. Around 76 percent of the listed GCC companies reported Q2-2020 earnings by the time we compiled this report with 55 percent or 275 companies showing a y-o-y decline in net profits. Moreover, a bulk of the companies in Bahrain reported only 1H-2020 results and did not report the quarterly split. As a result, we have excluded such companies from our quarterly analysis and are only included in the analysis of 1H-2020 numbers.

Aggregate profits for the GCC-listed companies that reported earnings plunged 60.7 percent y-o-y in Q2-20 to reach \$15.7 billion as compared to \$39.9 billion in Q2-19. In terms of q-o-q performance, earnings declined by 38.8 percent during the quarter. The decline in earnings was broad-based as all of the GCC exchanges reported a y-o-y decline during Q2-2020. Saudi Arabian companies reported the biggest absolute decline in earnings that fell by \$20.4 billion or 68.3 percent y-o-y to reach \$9.5 billion during Q2-2020. Excluding the quarterly net profit of Saudi Aramco that declined by 72.7 percent, aggregate profits for Saudi Arabia declined slightly less



million during Q2-2020 as compared to a profit of \$1.1 billion during Q2-19.

In terms of 1H-2020 earnings performance, the aggregate for the GCC declined by 46.3 percent to reach \$41.9 billion as compared to \$78.1 billion during 1H-2019. Saudi Arabia once again reported the biggest decline in earnings with a fall of 48.7 percent or \$27.8 billion to reach \$29.3 billion. Kuwait was next with a decline of 77.8 percent or \$2.6 billion to reach \$0.7 billion in aggregate 1H-2020 earnings, whereas the two UAE exchanges reported an earnings decline of 40 percent. The smallest decline was reported by Qatar at 19.7 percent or \$1.1 billion to reach \$4.3 billion during 1H-2020.

The decline in quarterly earnings for the Energy sector came primarily on the back of the historic decline in oil prices during the quarter that pushed down earnings across the board for the sector. Both crude oil and natural gas prices remained low during the quarter and touched decades low. Aramco's earnings declined by \$18.0 billion y-o-y and reflected the rout in oil prices due to a COVID-19 led demand slowdown. Around 11 out of 17 energy companies reported y-o-y decline in earnings during the quarter. In the Materials sector, SABIC reported the biggest drop in earnings to report a loss of \$592.9 million during Q2-2020 vs a profit of \$564.0 million during Q2-19 reflecting a fall in volume and selling prices.

Aggregate net income for listed banks reached one of the lowest on record during Q2-2020 after declining by 32.9 percent y-o-y to reach \$6.1 billion. The decline was

broad-based with the banking sector in all of the six exchanges (excluding Bahrain) reported double-digit drop in net profits during Q2-2020 led by provisions charges related to COVID-19. Telecom sector earnings declined by 8.2 percent y-o-y and 4.6 percent q-o-q during Q2-2020 to reach \$1.81 billion. The decline came after 12 out of 15 listed telcos reported a y-o-y fall in earnings. The biggest absolute y-o-y decline in earnings was reported by UAE's Du with its net profits declining by \$67.7 million or 53.6 percent to reach \$58.6 million due to a lockdown-led decline in the telco's topline.

Kuwait

Aggregate net profits for Q2-2020 for Boursa Kuwait-listed companies witnessed one of the biggest declines in the GCC shrinking by almost 90 percent to \$161.5 million compared to \$1.54 billion during Q2-19. The biggest absolute y-o-y decline in earnings were reported by Banks, Diversified Financials, Real Estate, and Transportation sectors with net profits for these sectors falling by \$1.1 billion during the quarter. On the other hand, smaller sectors like Food & Beverage and Healthcare Equipment Services reported y-o-y increase in profits during Q2-2020 due to the non-cyclical nature of spending in these sectors.

Net profits for the Kuwaiti Banking sector plunges 88 percent to \$102 million in Q2-2020 against \$817 million in Q2-19 as all the banks posted a decline in the net profit led by higher COVID-19 led provision charges.

The Diversified Financials sector reported the second biggest loss during the quarter at \$140 million

with Q2-2020 loss at \$75.9 million as compared to a profit of \$64.1 million during Q2-19. The Real estate sector was one of the biggest contributors for dragging the profitability of the exchange. The sector reported a net loss of \$89 million in Q2-20 as compared to a net profit of \$45 million in Q2-19. Among the top three real estate names in Kuwait, Salhia Real Estate Co posted the biggest increase in absolute profits in the sector that reached \$60 million for Q2-20 compared to a profit of \$14 million in Q2-19. Meanwhile, Mabaneer reported a net loss of \$25.6 million for Q2-20 compared to a profit of \$46.3 million during Q2-19 due to the loss of the revenues as the management gave relief to tenants through rent waivers. Tamdeen Real Estate Co posted a loss of \$38.5 million in Q2-20 compared to a net profit of \$5.3 million in the previous year primarily due to decrease of operating revenue and net income from investments. Munshaat Real Estate and Al-Arabiya Real Estate also reported significant losses during the quarter at \$6.2 million and \$15.9 million respectively.

In the Food, Beverage & Tobacco sector Mezzan Holding Co. posted a net profit growth of 55.2 percent in Q2-20 by achieving a net profit of \$11.5 million on the back of increased scale of operations during the pandemic. However, in the Food & Staples Retailing sector, Sultan Center and Al-Eid Food Co reported decline in profits by 35 percent and 13.6 percent, respectively. Livestock Transport & Trading Co. was the only company in the sector that reported a y-o-y growth in profits that reached \$4.2 million vs \$2.2 million in Q2-19.



Kuwait banks' profits slip on provision charges

by 47.4 percent y-o-y during Q2-2020. Companies in Dubai and Kuwait were next with declines of \$1.41 billion and \$1.37 billion, corresponding to y-o-y percentage declines of 50.6 percent and 89.5 percent, respectively. Companies listed in Abu Dhabi reported the smallest y-o-y decline in earnings during the quarter at 12.7 percent reported at \$2.29 billion.

In terms of sector performance, Energy stocks once again led the y-o-y declines posting \$18.2 billion or 73.1 percent y-o-y fall in earnings that reached \$6.7 billion during Q2-2020. Banks were next with a decline of \$2.99 billion or 32.9 percent to reach \$6.1 billion whereas Material stocks reported an aggregate loss of \$719.6

NBK reveals winner of KD 125,000 in Al-Jawhara Draw

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) continues to reward its customers with an outstanding array of draws, prizes and offers all year round. In this context, the bank announced Mohamed Abduljawad Ahmed Abduljawad as the winner of Al-Jawhara monthly prize worth KD 125,000 for August 2020.

Al-Jawhara Account gives customers the opportunity to enter draws and win prizes of KD 5,000 weekly, KD 125,000 monthly as well as the grand prize of KD 250,000 quarterly. Every KD 50 deposited into Al-Jawhara Account gives the customer a chance to be one the next lucky winners, and if no withdrawal or transfers occur on the account during the holding period, customers will receive an additional chance to enter the draw for every KD 50 held in the account, doubling their chance to win.

Commenting on Al-Jawhara monthly draw, Hisham Al-Nusif, Deputy General Manager of Consumer Banking, National Bank of Kuwait, said: "Al-Jawhara Account is an outstanding means for customers to save and get a chance to win prizes, and we stress our keenness to reward our customers through weekly, monthly and quarterly draws. Additionally, we continue to offer our customers more exceptional rewards and campaigns to consolidate their distinction benefits from NBK's excellence and leadership."

Al-Nusif added: "We are continuously in touch with our customers to identify their needs, and also work on measuring their satisfaction with provided



Mobile Banking or NBK Online Banking, as part of our Digital Transformation Strategy that provides our customers with integrated banking experience by enabling them to make all their banking transactions without visiting branches."

On the other hand, NBK announced the names of the winners of Al-Jawhara weekly draws including: Bashayer Fareid Abdulmajeid Abdul Sayed, Dana Ali Sayed Hashem, Moham-mad Abdul-samad Abd Alnabi Abdulkaareem. The draw was held live on NBK Instagram page in the presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, as well as representatives from NBK, noting that Al-Jawhara monthly and quarterly draws are conducted in the presence of a representative from Deloitte. Since 2012, National Bank of Kuwait has rewarded loyal customers with a total worth of prizes amounting KD 2,200,000 in Al-Jawhara weekly, monthly and quarterly draws.

In addition to providing top-notch, cutting-edge and highly secure banking services, NBK is keen to give customers a variety of offers, rewards and prizes that suit their expectations all year round.

products, which shows noticeable increase in customer satisfaction with the services and benefits offered by the bank, which come as part of our commitment to enrich their banking experience." Al-Nusif affirmed: "NBK is keen on making the process of Al-Jawhara Account opening quick and easy by visiting the nearest NBK Branch, or simply through NBK

CBK announces Najma draw winners

KUWAIT: The Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) recently announced the names of the Najma Account weekly and the 'Your Salary & More' winners after draw which was held at CBK headquarters in the presence of MOCI representative, Ahmed Al-Basman. The winner of Al-Najma account weekly draw was Mansour Nasser Al-Hajri, who won KD 5,000 cash and the winner of the Your Salary & More campaign was Saad Salem Al-Azmi.

In addition, CBK explained that Al-Najma account offers the largest daily award in Kuwait of KD 5000, a monthly KD 20,000 award, a biannual KD 500,000 award then the Guinness world record largest annual award of KD 1.5 million.

CBK statement added that participants could open the account by depositing the minimum of KD 500 to enter all draws and that each KD 25 entitles account holder to an entry in daily draws after a week as of deposit and in mega draws after 3 months of deposit. "The more sums deposited, the bigger chances account holders will have to win one of the awards", the statement underlined. Further, CBK statement explained that the 'Your Salary & More' campaign is open to Kuwaiti employees with minimum KD 500 salaries who would enjoy getting instant cash gifts of up to KD 500 or interest free loans up to KD 10,000 in addition to entering weekly draws to win amounts equal to holders monthly salaries. Participants will also get 5-year valid Visa Signature cards free of charge with up to 3 percent cash back, E-gov. cards as well as enjoy CBK's creative payment and transfer solutions using T-Pay service.

TikTok sues over ban ordered by Trump

SAN FRANCISCO: Video app TikTok on Monday filed a lawsuit challenging the US government's crackdown on the popular Chinese-owned platform, which Washington accuses of being a national security threat. As tensions soared between the world's two biggest economies, President Donald Trump signed an executive order on August 6 giving Americans 45 days to stop doing business with TikTok's Chinese parent company ByteDance-effectively setting a deadline for a sale of the app to a US company.

TikTok argued in the suit that Trump's order was a misuse of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act because the platform-on which users share often playful short-form videos-is not "an unusual and extraordinary threat." The executive order "has the potential to strip the rights of that community without any evidence to justify such an extreme action," the suit contended.

"We believe the administration ignored our extensive efforts to address its concerns, which we conducted fully and in good faith even as we disagreed with the concerns themselves," TikTok said.

TikTok's kaleidoscopic feeds of clips feature everything from dance routines and hair-dye tutorials to jokes about daily life and politics. The app has been downloaded 175 million times in the US and more than a billion times around the world.

The Trump administration has separately given ByteDance a deadline to divest TikTok before the app is banned in the United States. Trump argues that TikTok could be used by China to track the locations of federal employees, build dossiers on people for blackmail, and conduct corporate espionage.

The company holds firm that it has never provided any US user data to the Chinese government, and Beijing has blasted Trump's crackdown as political. The US measures come ahead of November 3 elections in which Trump, behind his rival Joe Biden in the polls, is campaigning hard on an increasingly strident anti-Beijing message. "The administration failed to follow due process and act in good faith, neither providing evidence that TikTok was an actual threat, nor justification for its punitive actions," the company said. "We believe the administration's decisions were heavily politicized, and industry experts have said the same."

A lawsuit filed last week against Trump by a freshly-formed "WeChat Users Alliance" takes aim at a separate Aug 6 executive order banning the messaging app popular with Chinese speakers.

"The Executive Order singles out people of Chinese and Chinese-American ancestry and subjects them to disparate treatment on the basis of race, ethnicity, nationality, national origin, and alienage," the suit argued. The suit contends the order is illegal, and so vaguely worded that it is not clear whether people using the app to message friends or run businesses will be considered law-breakers. It also says no evidence has been shown that WeChat is a threat to US national security.

The alliance said it is not affiliated with WeChat owner Tencent, based in China.—AFP



An aerial view of a lake and forests in the vicinity of oil sands extraction facilities near the town of Fort McMurray in Alberta Province, Canada. The United States slammed a World Trade Organization ruling Monday that favored Canada in a longstanding battle over lumber imports, holding the case up as further justification for Washington's campaign to drastically reform the global trade body. — AFP

Dispute Settlement Body which arbitrates trade grievances among members.

The upheaval led to the resignation of WTO Director-General Roberto Azevedo. In a column last week, Lighthizer said the trade body and the dispute system needs major changes, and he blamed it for allowing "profound distortions to the world economy" caused by China. Returning to a strictly bilateral sys-

tem would be better than the current flawed structure, he wrote.

The WTO report upheld most of Ottawa's complaints against the US, saying Washington's claims the government was providing illegal subsidies to lumber producers were based on miscalculated prices and transactions like purchase of electricity that did not qualify as subsidies.—AFP

US blasts WTO ruling in Canada lumber dispute

WASHINGTON: The United States slammed a World Trade Organization ruling Monday that favored Canada in a longstanding battle over lumber imports, holding the case up as further justification for Washington's campaign to drastically reform the global trade body. The WTO's dispute settlement body-long a target of attacks by US Trade Representative (USTR) Robert Lighthizer-agreed with Canada's complaints that Washington had violated trade rules when imposing duties on lumber widely used in construction. Lighthizer called the findings "erroneous" and said they "prevent the United States from taking legitimate action in response to Canada's pervasive subsidies for its softwood lumber industry."

"This flawed report confirms what the United States has been saying for years: the WTO dispute settlement system is being used to shield non-market practices and harm US interests," he said in a statement. Under President Donald Trump, Lighthizer has led a campaign to reform the WTO, claiming it is unfair to the United States, and as a result the US has paralyzed the

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Toronto seeks to save oak tree older than Canada

In the shadow of Canada's largest cluster of skyscrapers, Toronto is looking to preserve a majestic, centuries-old oak tree-but efforts have been complicated by the pandemic. The towering 24-meter (79-feet) high Northern Red Oak is one of the oldest trees in these parts, having sprouted an estimated 300 years ago, around the time that French explorers set up a trading post on the nearby shores of Lake Ontario. The tree now finds itself in the back yard of a nondescript bungalow on a winding street in the heart of a residential North York neighborhood. Its huge trunk has a circumference of five meters and brushes up against the back of the 1960s house.

In summer, its long leafy branches shade the entire lot from the sun's rays. But in recent years, a new homeowner expressed concerns about being able to afford proper tree maintenance and its roots cracking the house's foundation. Neighbors also worry that this awesome specimen may one day be damaged by strong winds or felled in a storm. To protect it and make it accessible to everyone in this city of six million people, Toronto's city council voted in 2018 to buy the property, raze the house and turn the land into a small public park.

'Takes your breath away'

A deal was reached with the homeowner last year to sell the property to the

city. That outcome delighted Edith George, a local resident who lobbied over 14 years to preserve the oak tree, whose beauty she says "just takes your breath away." "It's the Rolls-Royce of heritage trees. No other tree in Canada has the heritage value that this tree has," the 68-year-old retiree told AFP. Experts say that with care and under the right conditions, the tree could live another 200 years or more. "A tree like this is expensive to maintain. If the lot is a public space, the city will be able to take care of it better than I can," says Ali Simaga, who purchased the home in 2015. "I don't want to be selfish and keep it to myself, either," he adds.

The deal, however, is not done yet. The city's purchase offer is conditional on private donations to cover half of the price tag for the property. Fund-raising started in December 2019, with a target of raising Can\$430,000 (US\$325,000) by the end of this year.

After a promising start, including a Can\$100,000 pledge by a couple of local philanthropists, contributions slowed to a trickle during the pandemic. As of mid-July, about Can\$125,000, or nearly 30 percent of the goal, had been collected. If the target is missed by the deadline, without an extension, the monies collected would be used to support tree planting across the city while the future of the historic oak tree would



Local North York resident Edith George stands next to an oak tree that she spent 14 years lobbying to preserve. — AFP photos



An oak tree estimated to be about 300 years old, or twice as old as modern Canada itself is viewed in North York, Ontario.

be in doubt.

Canadian heritage

The tree sits along a former Humber Valley trail used by indigenous peoples and later by European fur traders portaging between lakes Ontario and Simcoe—a leg of a trade route that spanned the continent from the Gulf of Mexico to the north shore of Lake Superior, according to historian Madeleine McDowell. Travellers used large trees as landmarks, she said. This oak was probably already

pretty big when the French lost the territory to the British, who established the Town of York—which would later become Toronto—in 1793.

It is "a wonderful tree," commented Manjit Jheeta, director of the City of Toronto Partnership Office. "It is part of Toronto's heritage, it is part of Canada's heritage and it tells the story of our country," she said. Last year, the city unveiled a plaque in its honor, a first for a single tree in the nation's largest metropolis. Its ecological value is no less: the oak tree

has absorbed and stored more than 11 tonnes of carbon from the atmosphere. "When bad things happen," said George, "I don't go to church, I come here because this is like my cathedral. "It's a survivor and it gives us hope for a planet that's in peril." — AFP

Stranded by virus, Japan couple become Cape Verde envoys

A pair of Japanese honeymooners stranded in Cape Verde by the coronavirus pandemic have been named unlikely ambassadors for the tropical paradise's Olympic team at next year's Tokyo Games. Rikiya and Ayumi Kataoka started a round-the-world trip in December in South Africa, and were working their way north in February when the scale of the pandemic began to become clear. They scrapped their plans to continue on to Europe and decided to



This handout picture provided by instagram@rikiya_trip shows Japanese couple Rikiya (left) and Ayumi Kataoka (right) at a local restaurant in the town of Santa Maria in Cape Verde. — AFP photos

fly to Cape Verde. "We thought staying in Cape Verde was the safest option," husband Rikiya, 29, told AFP in an online video interview from the island. "We felt fortunate that we were able to come here. The number of infections was rising

in Japan. Europe has also seen an explosive rise in cases. Honestly, I thought we got lucky for being able to come to a very peaceful place."

But when the country's airport shut down, they were stuck, and Rikiya, who runs a sharehouse business in Tokyo and works as a videographer, began producing videos and photos for local restaurants and resorts in exchange for meals and lodging. He also posted videos on his Instagram account, featuring everything from Ayumi strolling through the streets of Sal Island greeting waving residents to a local renovation and beautification project. Word gradually got out and local media picked up the story, catching the eye of the country's Olympic officials.

Promoting Cape Verde

Leonardo Cunha, Cape Verde's chief de mission for the Tokyo Games, decided to get in touch and propose a partnership. "We decided to invite them as our ambassadors because they were making a lot of high-quality videos of Sal Island and taking a lot of attention from it," he told AFP by email. "They were keen on promoting our country, even being in a difficult situation," he added. The request came out of the blue, said Rikiya. "I thought maybe the fact that we were stuck in Cape Verde... might attract media interest. But I never imagined that we would become Cape Verde's Olympic ambassadors," he laughed. Tiny Cape Verde, with a population of around 550,000 people, expects to send just a handful of ath-

letes to the Tokyo 2020 Games, which were postponed earlier this year as the pandemic exploded.

Cunha said the couple were in a unique position to promote the country. "We are only asking them to keep documenting their trip to Cape Verde and promote the images and the morabeza (traditional Cape Verde hospitality) that they are experiencing," Cunha told AFP. "We hope that from now on they can persist in this task of promoting our country and take the opportunity to do it as well during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games."

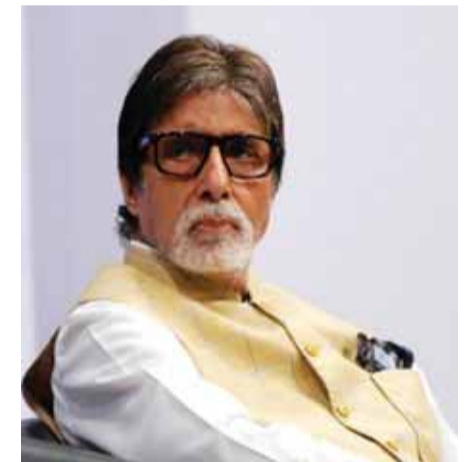
Giving back

Exactly what form that promotion will take during the Games, or when the couple will return to Japan, is unclear.



Japanese couple Rikiya (right) and Ayumi Kataoka (left) posing with the official Olympic Cape Verde uniform and national flag as a gift from the National Olympic Committee in Santa Maria in Cape Verde.

Cape Verde's airport is still closed, and Rikiya is not in any hurry to leave—he has plans to film the country's president and Olympic committee. "I don't think I will be so lucky to be given these great jobs again," he said. Cape Verde's Olympic committee has told the couple they will have tickets to watch the Games in Tokyo. But for now, Rikiya is focusing his work on promoting Cape Verde's tourist destinations and local businesses—when he is not enjoying a dip in the emerald waters with Ayumi. "In my past travels, I have never stayed in one place for such a long time, like we have in Cape Verde," he said. "Now, honestly, I think I want to do my part and give back to this country." — AFP



Amitabh Bachchan

BOLLYWOOD'S BACHCHAN BACK AT WORK AS INDIA RELAXES ON-SET RULES

Bollywood megastar Amitabh Bachchan is back at work filming India's version of "Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?" following a bout of COVID-19, while authorities eased coronavirus curbs on movie and TV shoots. A blanket ban on studio activity in March dealt a huge blow to India's cinema and TV industries, hitting not just Bollywood—the world's most prolific film factory—but also regional movie-making hubs and productions for television and streaming platforms. In June shooting was allowed again but with strict rules, including a ban on actors and crew aged over 65 — including Bachchan, 77 — until a court overturned that earlier this month.

Late Sunday the government eased the regulations but still insisted that common facilities be regularly sanitized, masks worn and social distancing "followed as far as possible". But the relaxation depends on individual Indian states, and Maharashtra, home to Mumbai and Bollywood and responsible for more than a fifth of India's virus cases, is sticking to the old rules for now. "We are careful and will review these decisions based on how the pandemic is evolving in the state," a spokesman for the state government told AFP. Shows such as "Kaun Banega Crorepati?" for instance, which Bachchan has hosted as quizmaster since 2000, will not be shot before a studio audience.

The veteran star, who spent much of July in a Mumbai hospital, shared a photo with his 22 million Instagram followers of crew members "in a sea of blue PPE", wearing full-body overalls and face masks. Maharashtra authorities have sought to combat the spread of infections by banning producers from filming elaborate dance numbers and fight sequences—a staple of popular Hindi cinema. Social-distancing norms also put a stop to kissing or embracing, meaning a return of styles from the more conservative 1980s, when Bollywood songs often cut to images of flowers brushing against each other—then a shorthand for romance.

In addition to providing crew members with medical and life insurance, producers in Mumbai are required to have a doctor, nurse and an ambulance on set. Members of the Bachchan dynasty have been among the country's highest-profile coronavirus patients. The superstar, his actor son Abhishek, actress daughter-in-law Aishwarya Rai, and granddaughter Aaradhya were all admitted to hospital last month. All four have since been released. — AFP

Berlin film fest to drop sex distinctions in awards

There will be no more separate Silver Bear awards for best actor and best actress at the Berlin film festival in future, organizers announced Monday, saying they want to eliminate forms of hierarchy between men and women. From next year, the German capital's Berlinale will only crown the best performances in a leading and a supporting role. The announcement follows years in which the film world has been shaken by MeToo sexual abuse and harassment scandals that spread far beyond Hollywood.

An end to sex-separated awards represents "a signal for a more gender-sensitive awareness in the film industry," the two festival directors Mariette Rissenbeek and Carlo Chatrion said in a statement. Alongside the Cannes and Venice film festivals, the Berlinale is one

of the European highlights of the annual cinema industry calendar. Cannes still singles out a best actor and actress, while Venice awards a Volpi cup to actors of each sex. Taking place in February, this year's Berlinale was squeezed in before coronavirus restrictions slammed down across much of Europe, while Cannes had to be called off. Venice's festival will go ahead next week under strict infection control measures. Next year's Berlinale is planned to take place "physically" from February 11-21, with measures "ensuring the greatest possibility for all guests", the organizers said. But changes in "the festival structure, the film programming and the total number of invited films" will be revealed in the coming weeks, they added. — AFP



Box Office: Russell Crowe's 'Unhinged' Off to Decent Start as US Theaters Slowly Reopen

After months-long cinema closures, the US box office has opened to the most significant degree since pre-pandemic times. Movie theaters in Florida, Texas, Georgia and other parts of the country that were able to safely reopen welcomed the first major theatrical premiere since March: Solstice Studios' "Unhinged," a thriller starring Russell Crowe. The film played in 1,823 venues in North America, marking the widest release yet since the pandemic hit. "Unhinged" pocketed more than \$4 million over the weekend, a promising result given the challenging environment. In normal times, that figure wouldn't be much to crow about. However, only a fraction of the nation's 6,000 movie theaters are currently in business—and major markets like New York, California and New Jersey are still closed without a set date to reopen. The biggest ticket sales for "Unhinged" came from drive-ins in Los Angeles, San Francisco and Sacramento, as well as multi-screen theaters in Dallas, Houston, Chicago, Atlanta and Orlando. Solstice plans to expand the film to more than 2,300 cinemas in North America by next weekend.

"All things considered, this is a subdued opening," said David A. Gross, who runs movie consultancy FranchiseRe. He gives Solstice credit for taking a bold move in being the first new movie to open. On one hand, it doesn't have much competition among ticket buyers. But on the other, studios and exhibitors have yet to determine how

eager audiences will be to return to the movies. For their part, movie theaters have taken rigorous and expensive steps to ensure customers feel safe. They are keeping space between seats, limiting the number of tickets sold per movie and encouraging people to buy tickets online to reduce contact. They've also made hand sanitizer more readily available and ensured theaters will be cleaned more regularly. And patrons will be required to wear masks.



Solstice's head of distribution Shari Hardison says the company's goal is to hit \$30 million at the box office by the end of its theatrical run in North America. After its performance this weekend, that is a benchmark she feels will be easily attainable. "Unhinged" cost \$33 million to produce, not including marketing or distribution fees. "We have a lot of stairs to climb, but the first steps are encouraging," she said. Solstice president and CEO Mark Gill repeated a mantra that many in the movie business are looking to during the global health crisis: "Slow and steady wins the race." — Reuters



Workers unload baskets filled with harvested jasmine flowers at a warehouse in the village of Shubra Beloula in Egypt's northern Nile delta province of Gharbiya. — AFP photos

EGYPT'S BLOSSOMING TRADE IN FRAGRANT JASMINE FLOWERS

At midnight, Eman Mehanna switches on her headlamp and begins her day's work picking jasmine flowers, as their powerful fragrance wafts far across the fields in Egypt's fertile Nile Delta. Egypt's Gharbiya region is the heartland of its jasmine harvest. The aromatic oils extracted for perfumes from here make up over half the global supply, according to international trade figures. "We have been picking jasmine since we were children," Mehanna said, gathering blossoms by hand in the village of Shubra Beloula, around 100 kilometers (60 miles) north of the capital Cairo. The white petals, plucked from densely-packed rows of chest-high green bushes of "royal jasmine"-*Jasminum grandiflorum*-burst out of her wicker basket.

During the harvest season from June until November, picking begins around midnight and finishes a few hours after dawn each day. It is a tough job, but a hard-working picker can harvest as much as five kilograms (11 pounds) of petals a day. While it is cooler to work after dark, the key reason harvesting is done at night is because it is only then that the flowers fully open. "You really need to concentrate on looking for the blossoming flowers," Mehanna said. "We leave the closed ones for the following day." After dawn, she swaps her headlight for a hat to shade her from the burning sun.

Petals to paste

Egypt and India dominate the production of jasmine extract for per-



A worker, mask-clad due to the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic, throws a handful of harvested jasmine flowers into a wicker basket.

fumes, making up around 95 percent of supply, according to the International Federation of Essential Oils and Aroma Trades (IFEAT). Jasmine trade is estimated to pull in some \$6.5 million annually for Egypt, providing income to around 50,000 people, IFEAT says. In Egypt, more than 90 percent of jasmine fields are in Gharbiya governorate, fed by the rich minerals and waters of the Nile, shortly before the river reaches the Mediterranean Sea.

Farming is concentrated in the neighboring districts of Qutur-where the village of Shubra Beloula is located-and Basyoun, otherwise famous as

the birthplace of Egyptian and Liverpool football star Mohamed Salah. On either side of a dusty road are lush green fields dotted with gleaming white flowers. Early in the morning, the pickers unload their baskets into crates, which are then stacked high onto pickup trucks and taken for processing. The Fakhry essential oils factory handles around 70 percent of the region's floral production. One of the first steps is to compress and grind the delicate blossoms down. From that paste, the precious scented oils can be extracted by distillation. "This was the first essential oils factory established in Egypt,"

factory floor manager Badr Atef told AFP, as he supervised the weighing and handing over of petal-packed crates.

Tough work

The scent of flowers is intense. According to Atef, factory owner Ahmed Fakhry was inspired to farm jasmine when, as a young student in the 1960s, he visited the town of Grasse, the birthplace of French perfumes, on the Cote d'Azur. Returning to Egypt, Fakhry introduced his new perfume knowledge and set up commercial jasmine farming and processing. "Now 20 tons of jasmine flowers are picked daily" in Egypt, Atef said, estimating that some 400 hectares (1,000 acres) of the scented plant are farmed in the Gharbiya region. From all those flowers, some five tons of dense jasmine paste is finally produced each year.

Egyptian farmers have long complained that the low production costs of their big rival India drive their prices down. But the economic impact of the novel coronavirus pandemic has been harder still, with demand dropping sharply, farmers said. Picking flowers is back-breaking work. "Stand in the sun for a couple of minutes, and you'll see how hard this job is," said 60-year-old picker Waafa, who refused to harvest flowers this year because prices were too low.

Even on a good year, some pickers earn little more than a couple of dollars a day for hours of work, income Waafa slammed as "measly." "Everything is expensive nowadays,"



A worker throws a handful of harvested jasmine flowers into a wicker basket.

she said. But others say that jasmine-picking season is a time they enjoy. "The sweetness is when we're all together picking," said Mehanna. "We swap stories and have fun." — AFP



A worker, mask-clad due to the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic, holds a wicker basket filled with harvested jasmine flowers.



A worker, mask-clad due to the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic, presents a handful of harvested jasmine flowers.



A worker holds a wicker basket filled with harvested jasmine flowers.



A worker, mask-clad due to the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic, holds a wicker basket filled with harvested jasmine flowers.

Tropical songbirds stop breeding to survive drought

Songbirds in tropical rainforests curtail their reproduction to help them survive droughts, according to a study Monday. Species with longer lifespans were better able to cope with this environmental volatility than previously thought, researchers found. With more record hot spells gripping parts of the planet and biodiversity threatened by human encroachment on habitats, a crucial question is whether species can adapt to these ever-harsher conditions. Droughts-expected to become more common because of climate change-confront birds with a trade-off between reproduction and their own survival, researchers said, because producing eggs and feeding chicks requires additional energy even as food becomes scarcer.

But the study, published in the journal *Nature Climate Change*, found that instead of trying to juggle the demands of new offspring and harsh environmental conditions, most of the songbird species studied opted to reduce their reproduction during drought. The research used data on 38 species in Venezuela and Malaysia from 17 years of fieldwork, including a period of drought in each country.

It found that reproduction was reduced by an average of 36 percent in the 20 Malaysian species and 52 percent in the 18 Venezuelan species. Birds with a longer lifespan had the biggest slowdown in breeding during dry spells. "In general, species that greatly decreased breeding during the drought (that is, longer-lived species) experienced increased adult sur-

vival," co-author James Mouton, of the University of Montana, told AFP.

"This was surprising as we were expecting droughts to reduce survival to some degree in all species." Birds with shorter lifespans-which could less easily afford to curtail reproduction-either kept breeding or only made minor cut backs. But they were also less likely to survive.

The authors then modeled how certain species might fare under three different climate change scenarios. They estimated that, while an increase in the frequency of droughts would reduce all bird populations studied, the longer-lived species were more resilient. —AFP

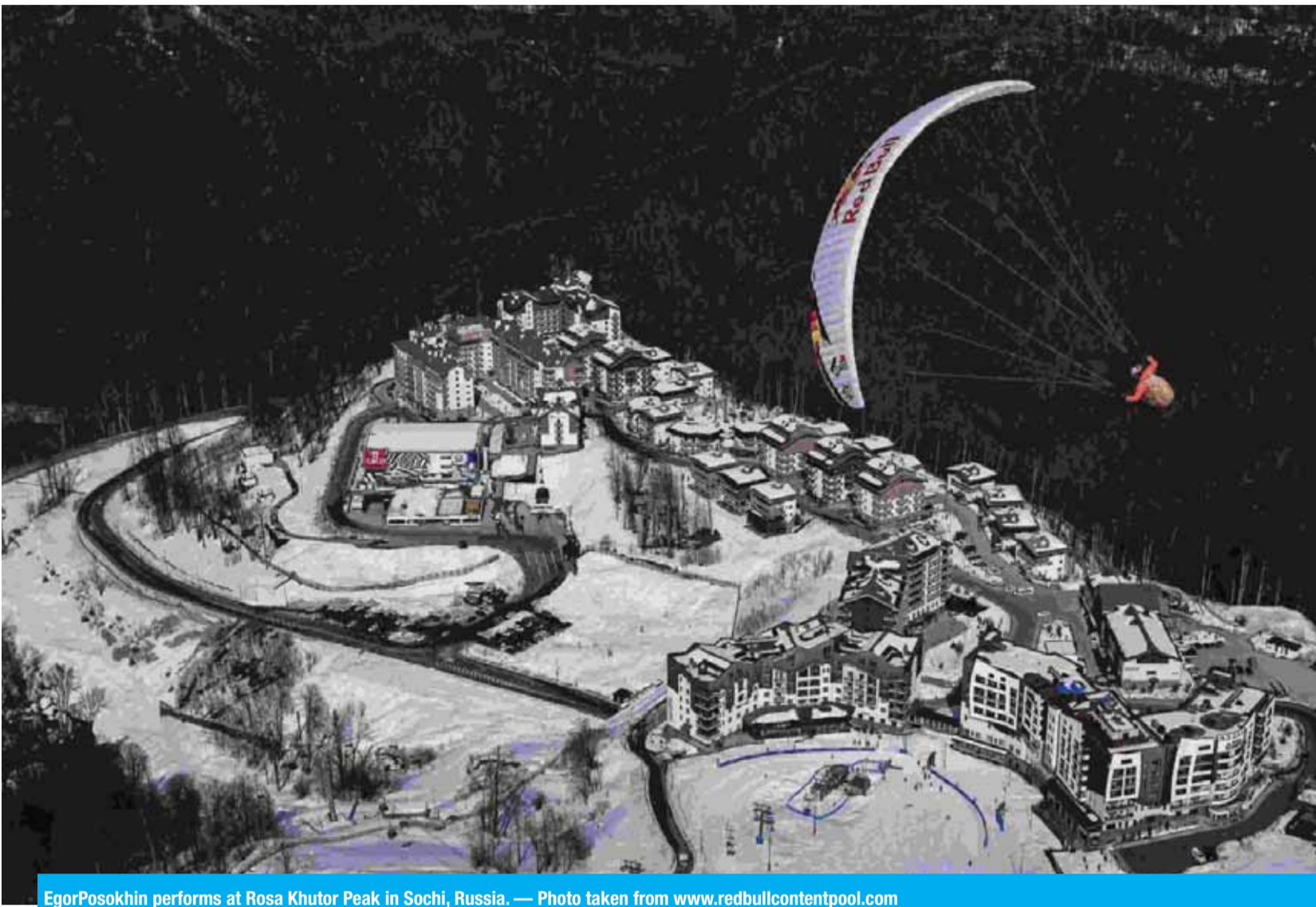
Greek island of Santorini gives free masks to tourists

Authorities on Greek tourist haven Santorini began handing out free face masks to tourists Monday, as the Mediterranean country faces an upsurge of coronavirus cases. Nationwide figures show Greece had identified a record number of new COVID-19 infections, even as restrictions designed to limit the spread have come into force-including on late opening for bars and restaurants beloved of holidaymakers. "We bought 30,000 masks, and today we handed out 500 for free to tourists as they were getting off ferries at the port," Santorini mayor Antonios Siglas told AFP. While masks

are only required indoors across Greece, Siglas hopes the free ones "will encourage tourists to wear them in places with lots of people", like the narrow alleys typical of the Cyclades island group.

Santorini, one of the most famous Greek tourist destinations, has so far reported a relatively low number of cases, with most concentrated in the capital Athens or Thessaloniki. Greek health authorities announced on Sunday 284 new coronavirus cases and two deaths, bringing the total to 8,664 infections and 242 deaths. Health officials attribute around 17 percent of new cases to tourists, saying that younger travellers may not have been sticking to infection control measures. The uptick in new virus cases has been observed since Greece reopened to tourism in mid-June, with Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis travelling to Santorini for the announcement. — AFP

Photo of the Day



EgorPosokhin performs at Rosa Khutor Peak in Sochi, Russia. — Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

Sprint king Bolt tests positive for coronavirus

NEW YORK: Usain Bolt was in quarantine on Monday as Jamaican media reported the sprint legend had tested positive for the coronavirus, just days after he celebrated his 34th birthday with a lavish party.

The retired 100m and 200m world-record holder didn't confirm his test result, but he urged anyone who had been in contact with him to go into quarantine. "I did a test on Saturday to leave (Jamaica) because I have work," Bolt said in a video posted on Twitter. "I am trying to be responsible so I am going to stay in and be safe."

"Also, I am having no symptoms, I will quarantine myself and wait on the confirmation to see what is the protocol and to see how I go about quarantining myself from the Ministry of Health. "Until then, I will call my friends and tell them once they came in contact with me to be safe, quarantine and take it easy," said Bolt.

According to the Jamaica Observer, health and wellness minister Christopher Tufton confirmed late on Monday that the eight-time Olympic champion had tested positive.

Jamaica's Prime Minister Andrew Holness also said police are investigating the circumstances surrounding Bolt's birthday party. "There are reports of an activity related to Usain Bolt," Holness told a virtual news conference.

"These matters are all being thoroughly investigated and the police will give a report on these matters in near future." Bolt last competed internationally at the 2017 World Championships in London. He and partner Kasi Bennet welcomed the birth of a daughter in May. —AFP

Silverwood urges England to finish strong, help get Anderson to 600th Test wickets

England are one up in a three-Test campaign

SOUTHAMPTON: England coach Chris Silverwood urged his side to "finish strong" and help get James Anderson to 600 Test wickets following a frustrating day against Pakistan at Southampton on Monday.

Anderson was left just one shy of becoming only the fourth bowler to reach the landmark figure as a combination of poor catching, bad weather and determined Pakistan batting thwarted him on the fourth day of the third Test.

Anderson, denied an early breakthrough when Jos Buttler dropped a routine chance to reprieve Shan Masood, returned for a third spell late in the day to have opener Abid Ali lbw for 42 after Masood had fallen lbw, playing no shot, to Stuart Broad.

Abid's dismissal took the 38-year-old Anderson to 599 Test wickets. But that was as good as it got for Anderson, who ended a day cut short by bad light and rain with 1-18 from 12 overs.

"It is a massive achievement," said Silverwood of Anderson's looming milestone. "To have two bowlers above 500 Test wickets (Anderson and Broad) and Jimmy closing in on 600 is an amazing feat."

England are 1-0 up in a three-Test campaign and on the verge of a first Test series win against Pakistan in a decade. They beat the West Indies 2-1 in the preceding series that marked international cricket's return from lockdown and are about to conclude a programme of six Tests in seven weeks, all played behind closed doors because of the coronavirus pandemic.

"I'm very proud of how they've handled themselves, being locked up for the best part of 10 weeks

in the 'bubble' — their attitude and effort has been fantastic," said Silverwood. "To finish strong tomorrow and see Jimmy get his 600th would be fantastic. I want to win the game. That's my first and foremost."

Pakistan following on, were 100-2 — still 210 runs behind England's first innings 583-8 declared — at the close. Azhar Ali, the Pakistan captain, was 29 not out following his first-innings century and Babar Azam unbeaten on four.

Abid, who faced 162 balls, said: "England have a world-class bowling attack but the plan was to bat longer and that's what I did. "I should have stayed longer."

"Azhar played a good knock in the first innings and Babar is there so we still have hope of finishing on a high," he added. No paceman has yet reached the landmark figure of 600 Test wickets.

The only bowlers ahead of the 38-year-old Anderson in the all-time list are three retired spinners — Sri Lanka's Muttiah Muralitharan (800), Australia's Shane Warne (708) and India's Anil Kumble (619).

Anderson started the day in sight of the select group after taking 5-56 — his 29th five-wicket haul in 156 Tests — during Pakistan's first-innings 273.

He might even have reached the landmark late on Sunday had not three catches been dropped off his bowling with the new ball.

Pakistan resumed a huge 310 runs behind a total built on Zak Crawley's 267 and Buttler's 152. Azhar's superb 141 not out kept England at bay after Pakistan collapsed to 75-5 on Sunday. And there was more frustration for England when Masood, on three,



SOUTHAMPTON: England's James Anderson (R) bowls on the fourth day of the third Test cricket match between England and Pakistan at the Ageas Bowl in Southampton, southern England. — AFP

edged Anderson only for the ball to hit Buttler on the thigh as he failed to get his gloves to a chance far less difficult than several catches he held on Sunday. "No one means to drop them," said Silverwood. "Last

night was gloomy but it's still not an excuse. "And Jos's wobbled horrible" as it came to him, Silverwood added. "We're out there every morning. So it's not like they're not working on it (catching)." — AFP

Australia's Harris joins Delhi Capitals as bowling coach

NEW DELHI: Former Australia quick Ryan Harris will replace compatriot James Hopes as Delhi Capitals bowling coach for this year's edition of the Indian Premier League, the franchise said yesterday. Hopes, who held the post during the last two tournaments, had opted out for personal reasons, the team said. "I am delighted to be back in the IPL," said Harris, who worked with Kings XI Punjab last year.

"This is a huge opportunity for me to contribute to the franchise's ambitions of lifting the coveted IPL trophy. "The Delhi Capitals side has an impressive bowling line up, and I can't wait to start working with them all," he added in a Capitals statement.

Harris played 27 tests before a nagging knee injury forced him into retirement in 2015. The 40-year-old has also held coaching roles with Australia's national team and Big Bash League side Brisbane Heat.

Compatriot Ricky Ponting is the head coach at the Capitals, whose fast bowling line-up includes South African duo of Kagiso Rabada and Anrich Nortje and veteran India pacer Ishant Sharma. This year's IPL will be played in the United Arab Emirates from Sept. 19 after being moved out of India due to the spread of the novel coronavirus. — Reuters

Don't burst virus bubble, Kohli warns IPL stars

DUBAI: India captain Virat Kohli has warned Indian Premier League players of serious "repercussions" for the tournament if they breach coronavirus safety rules. With all eight teams now in quarantine in the United Arab Emirates ahead of the September 19 start, the Royal Challengers Bangalore skipper said: "One mistake from us could literally spoil the whole tournament."

The IPL, originally scheduled to start in March, has been moved from India because of the coronavirus's raging spread across the country, now the third worst hit in the world. Kohli made the warning in a virtual meeting with players which was posted online by the Bangalore team. All teams are in quarantine in Dubai hotels for six days, during which each player will undergo three coronavirus tests.

Players can only start training for the behind-closed-doors tournament after passing the tests, and in the tournament bubble they will be barred from contact with anyone who hasn't undergone the quarantine period.

But concerns remain about players breaking the bio-security conditions before the seven-week tournament wraps up on November 10. Several sportsmen have found it tough to stay within coronavirus bubbles, including cricketers. England bowler Jofra Archer missed the second Test against the West Indies for a breach, and Pakistan's Mohammad Hafeez had to go into self-isolation after a golf outing during their tour of England.

The IPL is a massive earner for the Board of Control for Cricket in India, and a contract to be signed by each

player is understood to impose financial penalties for coronavirus breaches. RCB's director of cricket operations Mike Hesson warned players that any wilful breach of the team's safety precautions would be handled "very seriously".

"If somebody breaks this bubble that we have worked incredibly hard to put in place, it actually affects the whole tournament," Hesson said. "It's not just RCB, it is the tournament, it is the TV rights, so there will be strong consequences if players choose to do that." Kohli added that any player caught breaching the safety rules "is letting the whole team down." It might happen at a stage of the tournament where we cannot afford to lose that player. "If we get harmed by it, then the whole system, the whole team, the whole culture loses. I want everyone to understand the repercussions." The pre-IPL quarantine has been a culture shock for many of the top stars now in Dubai. South Africa paceman Chris Morris said he was "a little bit nervous" about linking up with Bangalore in Dubai.

Rajasthan Royals' Jaydev Unadkat said: "We are not allowed to go out of the room. We have been asked to stay inside our rooms. To kill time I have brought FIFA games."

Another unnamed player told the Indian Express newspaper of his surprise on entering the luxury Dubai hotel. "We thought it was rose water as we walked into the lobby, but it turned out to be sanitiser." Chennai Super Kings' Australian batsman Shane Watson said his room had a view of the world's tallest building, the Burj Khalifa in Dubai.

"Getting used to the room which has plenty to do, I have got a beautiful view of the Burj Khalifa which is going to be very special," Watson said in a video message. "Going to be doing exercises, walking up and down my room, listening to podcasts, plenty of T20 Stars stuff." The world's richest Twenty20 tournament will be held in Sharjah, Abu Dhabi and Dubai over 53 days. It is the third time the IPL has been held outside India, although previously it was moved to avoid clashes with elections. — AFP

Snyman set for long spell on sidelines

DUBLIN: RG Snyman, part of the South Africa side that won last year's Rugby World Cup, is likely to be out for several months after his Irish province Munster announced the second-row forward had torn a knee ligament on his debut for them over the weekend.

The 25-year-old suffered the injury just seven minutes into his first appearance for Munster in their Pro14 27-25 defeat by Leinster on Saturday. "It has been confirmed that the province's newest debutant, RG Snyman, sustained an ACL (anterior cruciate ligament) tear in the opening minutes of Saturday night's Pro14 encounter against Leinster," read Munster's statement.

"The lock will meet with the specialist next to discuss surgery and management." The 23-times capped Snyman, a towering presence at 2.05 metres (6ft 9in), featured in every game of South Africa's successful World Cup campaign. Snyman, who signed on a two-year contract from Japanese outfit Honda Heat, is one of two members of the Springbok squad to join Munster with centre Damian de Allende also signing post the quadrennial showpiece. Munster need to beat rival Irish province Connacht this weekend to secure a place in the Pro14 semi-finals. —AFP

Sports

Pujols, second in all-time RBIs, Brewers overpower Reds

Rockies edge D-backs, snap seven-game skid

HOUSTON: Framer Valdez struck out 11, Kyle Tucker hit a home run and Carlos Correa hit a three-run double as the Houston Astros returned home to end a three-game losing streak with an 11-4 victory Monday against the Los Angeles Angels. The Angels' Albert Pujols made history when he moved into sole possession of second place on the all-time RBIs list with 2,087. He broke a tie with Alex Rodriguez on the RBI list and settled in behind all-time leader Hank Aaron (2,297). After getting swept in a three-game series on the West Coast against the upstart San Diego Padres, the Astros opened a four-game series and a 10-game homestand on a positive note. Justin Upton hit a home run for the Angels, who rallied to within a run in the fifth, but still ended up losing for the 10th time in their last 12 games. Valdez (3-2) gave up four runs on six hits over seven innings, while throwing 113 pitches. Angels starter Patrick Sandoval (0-4) gave up his five runs on seven hits and two walks over 2 2/3 innings with one strikeout.



BLUE JAYS 6, RAYS 4

Randal Grichuk slugged a three-run homer in the seventh inning as Toronto rallied to salvage a series split with Tampa Bay in St. Petersburg, Fla. With his club trailing 3-2, Grichuk, who also doubled, pulled a drive over the short fence in left field to give Toronto its first lead in the final game of the four-game series — the only contest not decided by one run. Toronto starter Tanner Roark tossed a season-high 96 pitches but allowed three runs and six hits in five innings. Rays starter Blake Snell (5 2/3 innings, two runs) was in line for his third straight win, but Aaron Loup (3-2) lost for the second time in the series.

TWINS 3, INDIANS 2

Miguel Sano belted a two-run homer in the sixth inning to lift visiting Minnesota to a victory over Cleveland. Nelson Cruz launched his seventh homer

in 10 games for the Twins, who have gone deep eight times en route to winning four of the five meetings with the Indians this season. Kenta Maeda (4-0) allowed one run on five hits and a walk while striking out seven in five innings for his second strong performance against Cleveland this season. Cesar Hernandez led off the first inning with a homer in the second consecutive contest for the Indians, who have dropped three of four on the heels of a season-high six-game winning streak.

RANGERS 3, ATHLETICS 2

Isiah Kiner-Falefa hit a go-ahead home run in the second inning, and ace right-hander Lance Lynn and two relievers made the lead stand up as host Texas held off Oakland in Arlington, Texas, in the first of a four-game series between the two American League West teams. The Rangers snapped a season-high eight-game losing streak by beating Oakland for the first time in four games this season. The Athletics, whose 20 wins led the American League until the Twins matched that mark on Monday, have lost two of their past three games. Oakland is now 6-4 in games decided by one run.

Third loss in a row

BREWERS 4, REDS 2

Justin Smoak homered and drove in three runs, and Milwaukee ended a season-high four-game skid with a home win over struggling Cincinnati.

The Brewers handed Cincinnati's Trevor Bauer, who entered with a 0.68 ERA, his first loss of the year. It was the Reds' third loss in a row as Bauer (3-1) yielded four runs, seven hits and walked two while striking out eight in 6 1/3 innings. Omar Narvaez homered and Brett Anderson (2-2) allowed only a pair of solo home runs over six-plus innings as the Brewers earned a needed victory following a 4-6 road trip. Josh Hader pitched a scoreless ninth for his

sixth save, and he has yet to allow a run or a hit in eight appearances (8 1/3 innings) this season.

CUBS 9, TIGERS 3

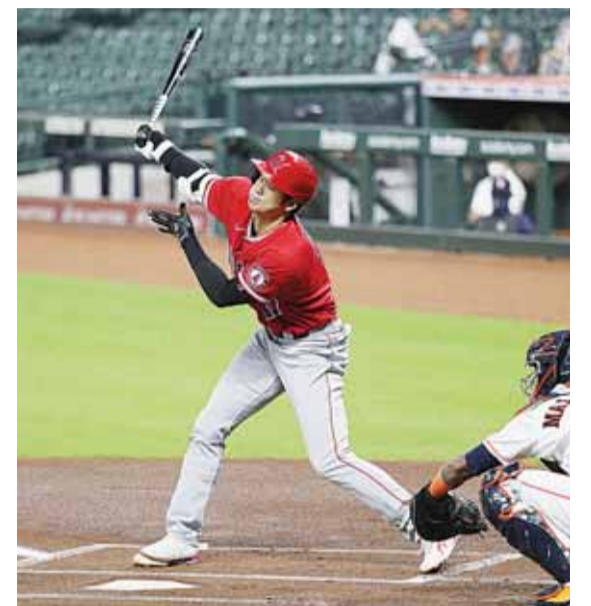
Javier Baez hit a pair of homers and drove in three runs, David Bote homered and finished with four RBIs, and Chicago downed host Detroit. Baez and Bote each had three hits, and Jason Heyward added two doubles and scored a run. Alec Mills (3-2) lasted seven innings and allowed three runs on seven hits with seven strikeouts. Christin Stewart hit a two-run homer for the Tigers, who have lost 11 of their last 13 games. Making his second major league start and first at home, Detroit right-hander Casey Mize (0-1) gave up four runs (three earned) on five hits and struck out two in 3 1/3 innings.

CARDINALS 9, ROYALS 3

Paul Goldschmidt and Paul DeJong drove in three runs each to power St. Louis past visiting Kansas City. Goldschmidt hit a run-scoring infield single and a two-run homer as the Cardinals won for the fourth time in five games. DeJong hit a sacrifice fly and a two-run double in his second game back from a bout with COVID-19. Cardinals starter Jack Flaherty (2-0) allowed just one hit in five scoreless innings to earn the victory. He did not walk a batter and struck out three. Royals starter Brad Keller (3-1) yielded five runs on six hits with three walks and four strikeouts in his four-plus innings.

MARLINS 11, NATIONALS 8

Jesus Aguilar produced three RBIs — two on a double in Miami's six-run fourth inning — and the Marlins defeated host Washington. Miami, which took three out of five games in the series, netted five singles, one double, one walk and one hit-by-pitch in the big inning. Marlins starter Pablo Lopez (3-1) earned the win, allowing six hits, two walks and three runs, none earned. He also struck out three. Nationals starter Austin Voth (0-3) gave up six hits, three walks and six runs in 3 2/3 innings. He fanned three. Washington's offense was led by Adam Eaton, who drove in four runs, and Juan Soto, who went 4-for-5 with two doubles and an RBI.



HOUSTON: Shohei Ohtani #17 of the Los Angeles Angels strikes out in the first inning against the Houston Astros at Minute Maid Park in Houston, Texas. —AFP

ROCKIES 3, DIAMONDBACKS 2

Trevor Story homered, Ryan Castellani returned to his hometown and earned his first major league win, and Colorado ended a seven-game losing streak with a 3-2 win over Arizona in Phoenix. The Rockies won without star outfielder Charlie Blackmon, who was scratched from the lineup before the game due to quadriceps tightness. The Diamondbacks lost their sixth consecutive game. Story raised his total to 20 career home runs in his 70 games against the Diamondbacks. Castellani (1-1) played youth and high school baseball in Phoenix before being drafted in the second round in 2014 by the Rockies. He pitched six innings Monday, allowing two runs on three hits with three strikeouts and three walks. — Reuters

Brailsford plots eighth Tour title

PARIS: Tough, unsentimental and dominant in cycling for more than a decade, Dave Brailsford wielded his axe ahead of the Tour de France this week and was then compared by one of his earlier victims to former Manchester United boss Sir Alex Ferguson.

Brailsford is the mastermind behind both British cycling's massive Olympic gold haul, and a staggering seven Tour de France titles in the past eight years, first with Sky and now under the name of the Ineos Grenadiers.

The 56-year-old began his run clinching the 2012 Tour de France with Team Sky's Bradley Wiggins, who he had already guided to multiple Olympic gold medals.

But jaws dropped the following season when Brailsford axed his popular star in favour of the shy but determined Chris Froome. For the 2020 Tour, Brailsford again took out his cleaver as he dropped Froome, who has four titles, and his other British star Geraint Thomas who won in 2018 and was runner up last year.

Once again Brailsford put his hopes in a young in-form rider, in this case the defending champion

Colombian 23-year-old Egan Bernal. "He manages Ineos like Sir Alex Ferguson," Wiggins said comparing Brailsford to the man who led soccer's Manchester United to 13 Premier League titles.

"Egan is clearly the man now," Wiggins said on his podcast this week. "But if Bernal is clearly the man they are putting their money on he's told the other guys, and found fresh challenges for them," Wiggins said.

WINNING IS THEIR NORM

Thomas has been named as Ineos captain for the Giro d'Italia and Froome at the Vuelta a Espana. "They want to win all three Grand Tour in a single year," Wiggins suggested. This kind of ambition comes as no surprise for the Brailsford, who introduced the concepts of 'Mission Clarity' and 'Marginal Gains Strategy' to cycling.

'Mission Clarity' means the team ignores stage victories at the Tour and focuses solely on winning the general classification. Bernal, for example, only took the yellow jersey on stage 19 of 21 in 2019. Marginal gains has become a little more controversial. "If you broke down everything you could think of that goes into riding a bike, and then improved it by one percent you'll get a significant increase," Brailsford explained.

Applying it to tactics, technology, communications, health and psychology the team overstepped the line according a British govern-

ment committee who described some of their prescription drug use as unethical.

The inquiry came after leaked reports of so called TUE's, therapeutic use exemptions, in this case cortisone injections for asthma. While the inquiry cast a cloud over British cycling and Team Sky's achievement, no legal lines were crossed.

His run at the top continues on Saturday as the 2020 Tour de France embarks from Nice over two months late with Ineos again the team to watch. "We've been looking at how we think we can win this race," said



Dave Brailsford

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the fluent French speaker who grew up in Wales.

"We've got some ideas about maybe a slightly different approach," he said. "We've got a good game plan and we think that these are the guys to deliver." "The decision we've come to, and what we're very excited about, is that we're going to get Egan and Richard (Carapaz) to target yellow," Brailsford said when unveiling his Tour roster.

Wiggins had a simple analysis. "Winning has become their norm," said the man who got it all rolling back in 2012. —AFP

Varlamov blanks Flyers in NHL series opener

LOS ANGELES: Semyon Varlamov posted his second straight shutout as the New York Islanders used a balanced scoring attack to beat the Philadelphia Flyers 4-0 in the opening game of their playoff series on Monday. Andy Greene, Jean-Gabriel Pageau, Anders Lee and Devon Toews each scored in game one of their best-of-seven Eastern Conference semi-final series in the NHL's quarantine bubble in Toronto.

Varlamov is the first Islanders goalie with consecutive shutouts in the playoffs. "We're playing well defensively," Varlamov said. "The guys played unbelievable again in front of me."

"It feels good to get back-to-back shutouts, but at this point it's not about shutouts. It's playoff hockey; the most important thing for me is to get the win and get ready for the next game." Varlamov made all 29 saves and

stretched his shutout streak to 136 minutes, 20 seconds. He made 21 saves in a 4-0 win over the Washington Capitals in game five of their first round series.

The second game of the best-of-seven series will be played Wednesday. Goaltender Carter Hart stopped 25 shots for the top seeded Flyers, who eliminated the Montreal Canadiens in six games in the first round.

"They were the better team in the first, we were the better team in the second and couldn't find a way to capitalize on some of our real good looks," Flyers coach Alain Vigneault said. "I believe if we get the same looks sooner or later we'll be able to put the puck in the net. But the third period got a little bit away from us. We lost a couple of battles that they were able to capitalize on."

The Islanders outshot Philadelphia 15-4 and scored once in the first period before igniting for three goals in the third. Pageau, with his fifth of the playoffs, beat Hart from the front of the net early in the third to make it 2-0. Lee, on a pass from Canadian star Mathew Barzal, and Toews, into an empty net late, rounded out the scoring in the final period. —AFP

Korea's top golf event moved to Vegas

SEOUL: South Korea's biggest golf tournament was moved to Las Vegas because of coronavirus restrictions yesterday, as the rest of the US PGA Tour's \$30 million 'Asian swing' also looked in doubt. The CJ Cup, originally due to take place on Jeju island from October 15-18, will now be played at Las Vegas's Shadow Creek course on the same dates, the PGA Tour and sponsors CJ Group said in a joint statement.

South Korea — which had brought its outbreak largely under control, but is now tackling several clusters of infections — has imposed strict limits on travel, with all arrivals required to spend two weeks in quarantine.

Separately, the PGA Tour said it was in talks over the fate of Japan's Zozo Championship and the WGC-HSBC Champions in Shanghai, which are scheduled to be held in consecutive weeks after the CJ Cup.

With combined purses of \$29.75

Ailing Djokovic advances, Serena claws out victory

NEW YORK: World number one Novak Djokovic battled through neck pain on the way to a 7-6 (7/2), 6-4 victory over Ricardas Berankis at the Western & Southern Open, where second seed Dominic Thiem crashed out.

Djokovic, who pulled out of doubles with a sore neck on Sunday, made it through to the round of 16 despite the ailment, for which he received treatment on court. "It's getting better," he said after the 7-6 (7/2), 6-4 win. "It's been four days. It's not yet where I'd like it to be but it's heading in the right direction."

That's good news with the US Open starting on August 31 on the same New York hardcourts hosting this week's tournament, which was moved from Cincinnati to establish a quarantine bubble for the upcoming Grand Slam.

Djokovic twice went down a break in the second set, but broke back both times. He let out a roar when he broke for a 5-4 lead then calmly served it out. He next faces American Tenny Sandgren, a 6-7 (4/7), 6-2, 7-6 (7/5) winner over 15th-seeded Canadian Felix Auger-Aliassime.

The upset of the day was at the opposite end of the men's draw, as 32nd-ranked Filip Krajinovic of Serbia toppled Austria's Thiem 6-2, 6-1.

Thiem, who pushed Djokovic to five sets in an Australian Open runner-up finish in January, couldn't find his rhythm in his first match since the ATP tour resumed after a five-month coronavirus hiatus. "It was just a horrible game by myself," Thiem said. Didn't play well at all, didn't get any rhythm. "I had really troubles with returning."

Krajinovic lined up a meeting with Hungarian Marton Fucsovics, who ousted 14th-seeded Bulgarian Grigor Dimitrov 7-5, 4-6, 6-2.

Former world number one Andy Murray also notched an upset, surprising world number seven Alexander Zverev 6-3, 3-6, 7-5 for his first win over a top-10 player in more than three years.

In women's action, third-seeded Serena Williams bucked the upset trend that saw top seed Karolina Pliskova and number two Sofia Kenin ousted on Sunday. The 23-time Grand Slam champion battled back from the brink against Dutch qualifier Arantxa Rus, dominating a third-set to win 7-6 (8-6), 3-6, 7-6 (7/0).

Williams dropped four straight games in the second set against the hard-hitting left-hander, who has never won a WTA title. After rallying from 0-40 down in the opening game of the third she looked to have turned the tide with a service break on the way to a 3-0 lead. Serving for the match at 5-3 in the third, Williams was broken to love, Rus winning the next two to give herself a chance to serve it out.

She was broken, and Williams crushed her in the tiebreaker to wrap up a bruising victory in two hours and 49 minutes. "That was tough. It was a real physical match out there," said Williams, who tried to pump herself up on the spectator-free Grandstand court with fist-pumping cries of "c'mon" and squeals of triumph and frustration. It was Williams' fourth three-set match since she returned at a tournament in Lexington, Kentucky, in the wake of the WTA's coronavirus shutdown. "I'm actually super fit and I'm super ready," she said. —AFP

14 Silverwood urges England to finish strong



15 Pujols, second in all-time RBIs, Brewers overpower Reds



15 Brailsford plots eighth Tour title



LAKE BUENA VISTA: Jimmy Butler #22 of the Miami Heat drives into T.J. Warren #1 of the Indiana Pacers during the second half of a first round playoff game at The Field House at ESPN Wide World Of Sports Complex in Lake Buena Vista, Florida. — AFP

Heat advance to Eastern semifinals

James, Lakers flatten Blazers, lead series 3-1

ORLANDO: Bam Adebayo collected a game-high 19 rebounds to go with 14 points Monday night, leading the fifth-seeded Miami Heat to a 99-87 victory over the fourth-seeded Indiana Pacers and a four-game sweep of their first-round Eastern Conference playoff series near Orlando.

The Heat advanced to the Eastern semifinals, where they await the winner of the first-round matchup between top-seeded Milwaukee and eighth-seeded Orlando. Kelly Olynyk's layup gave the Heat the lead for good in the fifth minute of the second quarter, and Miami went on to lead by as many as 13 points in completing its first-ever playoff sweep of Indiana.

Goran Dragic paced Miami with 23 points, while Tyler Herro added 16 and Olynyk had 11. Victor Oladipo led the Pacers with 25 points, and Myles Turner notched 22 points and 14 rebounds. T.J. Warren added 21 for Indiana.

LOS ANGELES LAKERS 135 - PORTLAND TRAIL BLAZERS 115

LeBron James scored 30 points on 10-of-12 shooting and also had 10 assists and six rebounds to help Los Angeles steamroll Portland in Game 4 of a Western Conference first-round playoff series. Anthony Davis had 18 points, five rebounds and five assists in 18 minutes before exiting in the third quarter due to back spasms as Los Angeles took a 3-1 lead in the best-of-seven series. Portland star Damian Lillard departed in the third quarter with a right knee injury and had just 11 points in 27 minutes. Kyle Kuzma scored 18 points and Danny Green added 14 as the Lakers cruised to the dominating, wire-to-wire victory. Dwight Howard had 13 points and Kentavious Caldwell-Pope 12 for Los Angeles. Jusuf Nurkic recorded 20 points and 13 rebounds and CJ McCollum scored 18 for the Trail Blazers.

MILWAUKEE BUCKS 121 - ORLANDO MAGIC 106

Reigning MVP Giannis Antetokounmpo totaled 31 points, 15 rebounds and eight assists, and fellow All-Star Khris Middleton caught fire late to push top-seeded Milwaukee past eighth-seeded Orlando to take a commanding 3-1 lead in the Eastern Conference first-round playoff series.

It was the most competitive the Magic have been since their Game 1 upset. Orlando hung around until the fourth quarter, when Milwaukee opened on a 20-5 blitz to open up a 102-83 advantage. Middleton scored 13 of his 21 points during the stretch, including three 3-pointers. Magic center Nikola Vucevic finished with 31 points, 11 rebounds and seven assists. Markelle Fultz added 15 points (including three go-ahead buckets in the third quarter), seven assists and five rebounds. Orlando also made 18 3-pointers, a necessary counter

to a stingy Bucks defense that focuses on protecting the rim.

OKLAHOMA CITY THUNDER 117 - HOUSTON ROCKETS 114

Dennis Schroder converted a key turnover into a layup and Oklahoma City evened its Western Conference first-round series with Houston with a victory in Game 4. Oklahoma City erased a 15-point, third-quarter deficit to post a second consecutive victory and square the series at two games apiece with Game 5 set for Wednesday. Schroder scored 30 points off the bench to lead the Thunder, while Chris Paul added 26 points, six rebounds and three steals. James Harden led Houston with 32 points, 15 assists and four steals, and Eric Gordon added 23 points. Houston attempted an NBA postseason-record 58 shots from 3-point range, converting 23. — Reuters

Ronaldinho released from detention after five months

ASUNCION: Former Brazil football star Ronaldinho was released on Monday by a Paraguayan judge after spending five months in detention over a forged passport. Judge Gustavo Amarilla also released Ronaldinho's brother Roberto de Assis Moreira, who likewise had been held for a month in jail and another four months under house arrest in a hotel in Paraguay's capital, Asuncion, for the same charge.

The 40-year-old former World Cup winner "is free to travel to whatever country in the world he wants but he must inform us if he changes his permanent residence" for a period of one year, the judge said.

"He has no restrictions except for the fulfilment of reparations for damage to society." Dressed in jeans, a black beret and black shirt, Ronaldinho accepted the terms of his release, which include payment of \$90,000 in damages. His brother, who is also Ronaldinho's business manager, must pay \$110,000.

The judge stressed that he was not issuing a "definitive dismissal" of the case but rather that Ronaldinho was benefitting from a "conditional suspension of the procedure." His brother, on the other hand, was given a two-year suspended sentence.

Prosecutors said they did not believe Ronaldinho took part in the plan to manufacture the fake Paraguayan passports but believed de Assis Moreira was aware that the passports were false. "They flagrantly used a public document containing false content," said Marcelo Pecci, one of the public prosecutors, who said it was a "very serious" offense.

De Assis Moreira must appear before a judge in Brazil every four months for two years and will have a criminal record. "Ronaldinho's situation is not the same as Roberto's. He has no obligation to appear before any Brazilian judicial authority. He must only report a change of address," said Amarilla, who accepted a recommendation by four prosecutors to avoid the need for an oral trial. Before Monday's trial the public prosecutor said that Ronaldinho displayed no "personal characteristics or criminal behavior that ... would put society at risk."

'DECEIVED VILELY'

The brothers arrived in Paraguay on March 4 with Ronaldinho, the 2005 Ballon d'Or winner, due to take part in an event in support of disadvantaged children. However, two days later, the pair were taken into police custody when investigators raided their hotel following the discovery they had fake documents.

Before the judge announced his decision, the defense issued a statement insisting on the innocence of both brothers. "They presented Paraguayan documents to migration authorities believing they were authentic," said the statement. "The people they trusted deceived them vilely."

After being held in a police station in Asuncion, where Ronaldinho celebrated his 40th birthday on March 21, the two men had been under house arrest for more than four months in a luxury hotel in the capital, on bail of \$1.6 million.

The investigation has since expanded into a case of possible money laundering and criminal association. Some 18 people have already been arrested in connection with the case, most of them immigration officials or police officers.

"The investigation found no indication that either participated in money laundering or criminal association," said the defense statement.

Ronaldinho, considered one of the greatest footballers of all time, was crucial in Brazil's 2002 World Cup win. He played for European giants such as Barcelona, AC Milan and Paris Saint-Germain during a hugely successful 10-year stint in Europe.

He won the Champions League and two La Liga titles with Barcelona and Serie A with Milan. After returning home to Brazil he won the Copa Libertadores — South America's equivalent of the Champions League — with Atletico Mineiro. — AFP



ASUNCION: Brazilian retired football player Ronaldinho arrives for his hearing at the Asuncion's Justice Palace, in Asuncion. — AFP