



4 ACK first to welcome back aviation students on campus



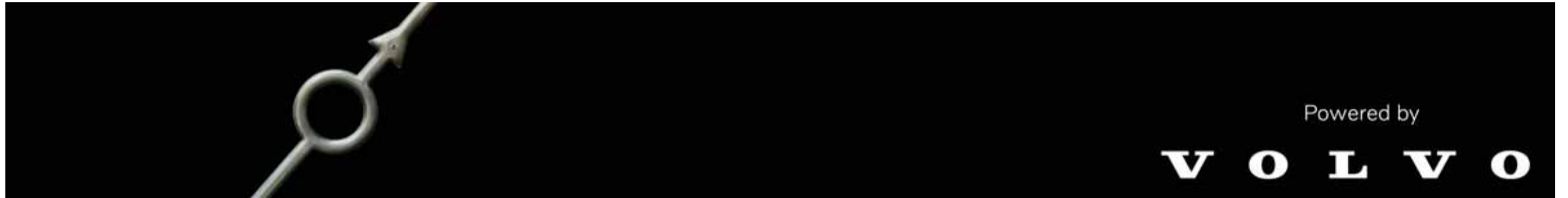
5 India battles black market in used gloves and masks



12 London Blue Plaque honor for Indian 'spy princess'



16 Djokovic struggles into final; reluctant Osaka also advances



UAE scraps Israel boycott, allows trade agreements

El Al to fly Israel's first commercial flight to UAE • F-35 hiccup on road to accord

DUBAI: The president of the United Arab Emirates scrapped an economic boycott against Israel, allowing trade and financial agreements between the countries in another key step towards normal ties, the UAE's state news agency reported yesterday. Israel and the UAE said on Aug 13 they would normalize diplomatic relations in a deal brokered by US President Donald Trump that reshapes the order of Middle East politics from the Palestinian issue to the fight against Iran.

President Khalifa bin Zayed Al-Nahyan issued a decree abolishing a boycott law as part of "the UAE's efforts to expand diplomatic and commercial cooperation with Israel, leading to bilateral relations by stimulating economic growth and promoting technological innovation," the WAM news agency said.

The announcement came as Israeli flag carrier El

Al Israel Airlines Ltd prepared to operate the country's first direct flight between Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion Airport and the UAE's capital, Abu Dhabi. An Israeli government delegation and top aides to Trump are due to travel on the flight on Aug 31, a US official said.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu tweeted a screen-shot of a news report on the flight Friday, saying: "This is exactly what peace for peace looks like." Jared Kushner, top aide and son-in-law to US President Donald Trump, has confirmed he will be on the flight, alongside National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien. Earlier this week, Netanyahu's office said National Security Advisor Meir Ben Shabbat will lead the "professional delegation".

Before the Aug 13 deal can be officially signed,

details must be agreed on issues such as the opening embassies, trade and travel links. Israel's Channel 13 TV said bilateral trade could initially be worth \$4 billion a year, a figure it said could soon be tripled or quadrupled. Government officials did not immediately confirm that estimate. Officials from the two countries recently said they were looking at cooperation in defense, medicine, tourism and technology.

In Tel Aviv, Israeli Agriculture Minister Alon Schuster said Israel was working on potential joint projects that could help improve the oil-rich Gulf nation's food security, such as water desalination and crop cultivation in the desert. "With their money and our experience, we could go a long way," he told a local radio station in an interview broadcast on Friday. "Our job is to ensure that this fantastic

mood is turned into reality." Due to the presidential decree announced yesterday, UAE citizens and businesses will be free to do business with Israel, including trade and financial transactions. "Following the abolition of the Israel boycott law, individuals and companies in the UAE may enter into agreements with bodies or individuals residing in Israel or belonging to it by their nationality, in terms of commercial, financial operations, or any other dealings of any nature," WAM quoted the decree as saying.

Still, Israel and the UAE do not yet have official air links, and it was unclear whether tomorrow's El Al flight would be able to fly over Saudi Arabia - which has no official ties with Israel - to cut down on flight time.

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News in brief

India records virus surge

NEW DELHI: India reported 76,472 new coronavirus cases yesterday, slightly lower than the record breaking numbers of the past couple of days, but extending a run that has made the country's outbreak currently the world's worst. India has reported a total of 3.46 million cases during the pandemic. India's death toll rose by 1,021 to 62,550, data from the federal health ministry showed, even as local media reported that some nationwide restrictions on travel could be eased from next week. — Reuters

14 killed in wake of Laura

LAKE CHARLES: At least 14 people were killed after Hurricane Laura slammed into the southern US states of Louisiana and Texas, authorities and local media said Friday. Louisiana's Governor John Bel Edwards confirmed at least 10 people had died in his state, half from using carbon monoxide-producing portable generators indoors in the aftermath of the storm making landfall Thursday. Four of the remaining deaths were caused by trees falling on people's homes, according to Edwards, while a man drowned after his boat sank in the storm. — AFP

Lightning kills 9 teenagers

KAMPALA: Nine teenagers have died after being struck by lightning in northwestern Uganda, the Red Cross said Friday. The thunderbolt struck in Arua, a city near the border with South Sudan, late Thursday where a group of 10 teenagers were playing football. "Only one child among the 10 playing survived," Irene Nakasiita, a spokeswoman for Red Cross Uganda, told AFP, adding the victims were aged between 13 and 15. It is believed the worst such accident of its kind in Uganda since 2011, when a lightning strike at a primary school killed at least 18 students and injured dozens more. — AFP

Canada extends entry ban

OTTAWA: Canada is extending a ban on most travellers entering the country until the end of September in order to limit the spread of COVID-19, the government announced Friday. Canadian citizens and permanent residents returning from abroad will still be subject to mandatory 14-day quarantine, Public Safety Minister Bill Blair announced on Twitter. Foreign nationals who show COVID-19 symptoms are barred from entering Canada. Shipments of goods continue. — AFP

Race for new PM after Abe resignation

TOKYO: The race to succeed Prime Minister Shinzo Abe kicked off informally yesterday, with several contenders announcing their plans to stand, a day after Japan's longest-serving leader announced his resignation. Abe said he was suffering a recurrence of ulcerative colitis, the condition that forced him to cut short his first term in office, but

that he would stay on until his successor is decided. Exactly how the process will unfold was still unclear, with local media reporting yesterday that several options were being considered.

Abe's ruling Liberal Democratic Party could opt for a more traditional leadership election, involving lawmakers but also members of the party nationwide. But the urgency of the situation, as well as the constraints imposed by the coronavirus outbreak, could see the party instead opt to poll only its lawmakers and regional representatives - a faster process.

A decision on how the election

will be held, and when, is expected early next week, along with more clarity on who will stand for the post. A few would-be candidates have already thrown their hats into the ring, including party policy chief Fumio Kishida, a mild-mannered former foreign minister considered Abe's personal choice for successor, and ex-defense minister Shigeru Ishiba, who is seen as more popular with voters but commands less party support than some other candidates.

Finance Minister Taro Aso, himself a former prime minister and long considered a likely

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TOKYO: Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe gestures during his press conference at the prime minister's official residence on Friday. — AFP

Property sharks circle ravaged Beirut homes

BEIRUT: Ever since a monster blast ravaged the arches and high ceiling of his family home in Lebanon's capital, Bassam Bassila says a real estate developer has been hounding him to sell. "The owner of a tower block nearby is trying to pressure me into selling him my home so he can raze it to the ground" and "build a tall tower" instead, the 68-year-old said in Beirut's Monot neighborhood.

A massive explosion at the Beirut port on Aug 4 that many blame on official negligence killed more than 180 people, wounded thousands and laid waste to some of the capital's most picturesque streets. With survivors still picking through the rubble, property sharks are moving in to take advantage of

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BEIRUT: A banner that reads "my house is not for sale" hangs on a street in the Gemmayzeh neighborhood in the Lebanese capital on Aug 21, 2020. — AFP

Musk meshes brains with computers

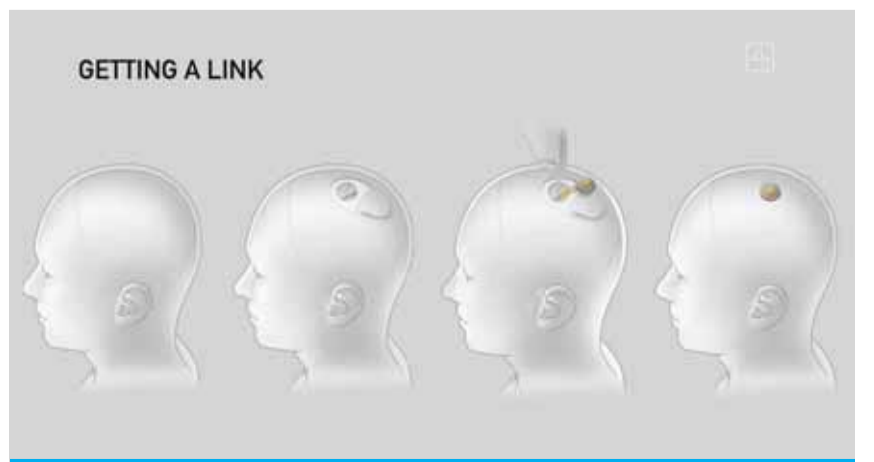
SAN FRANCISCO: Futurist entrepreneur Elon Musk late Friday demonstrated progress made by his Neuralink startup in meshing brains with computers, saying the work is essential to the future of humanity. Musk has long contended that a neural lace merging minds with machines is vital if people are going to avoid being so outpaced by artificial intelligence that, under the best of circumstances,

humans would be akin to "house cats".

"It's gonna be important from an existential threat standpoint," Musk said of the project. "That is what I think might be the most important thing that a device like this achieves." Members of the team shared a "wish list" that ranged from the technology returning mobility to the paralyzed and sight to the blind, to enabling telepathy and the uploading of memories for later reference - or perhaps to be downloaded into replacement bodies.

"Yes, I think in the future you will be able to save and replay memories," Musk said. "This is obviously sounding increasingly like a 'Black Mirror' episode, but I guess they are pretty

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This video grab made from the online Neuralink livestream on Friday shows a drawing of the different steps of the implantation of a Neuralink device. — AFP

Local

Kuwait reports three deaths, 646 new COVID-19 infections

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Health announced yesterday 646 new infections with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), raising the total to 84,224. Deaths reached 528 with the addition of three fatalities. Earlier, the Health Ministry announced the recovery of 673 COVID-19 patients, bringing the tally to 75,993. Official spokesperson of the

Ministry of Health Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad said that there were 92 patients receiving treatment at intensive care units, while patients still receiving treatment amounted to 7,703. The health authorities conducted 3,718 swab tests in the past 24 hours, raising the whole count to 611,639. Dr Abdullah Sanad added. — KUNA

Kuwait commercial flights travel guidelines

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

Lanka and Syria.

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation presented a set of rules for the safe resumption of air travel. The new rules mandate all travelers to wear protective facemasks and keep a hand sanitizer in their possession, besides strictly abiding by social distancing guidelines and keeping hand luggage to a minimum. Departing passengers are required to register to the 'Kuwait Mosafer' app, and provide negative COVID-19 test results before boarding their flights to destinations where such tests are required. Citizens are also required to obtain

travel insurance that covers COVID-19 treatment. Manual checks of tickets have now been scaled back as a result of the pandemic in favor of the more popular digital e-tickets, whose scanning requires no physical contact. Passengers must be present at the airport no less than four hours before departure to ensure a smooth and convenient journey.

Meanwhile, arriving passengers must register to the 'Shlonik' app before boarding, and obtain an accredited PCR certificate showing negative COVID-19 test results valid for 72 hours from the test's date. Passengers will have their temperatures checked before boarding the plane and upon arrival, while a random PCR test will be conducted for 10 percent of passengers on each flight. All arriving passengers must home quarantine for 14 days upon arrival.

COVID-19 and mental health hotlines

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Health has set the following hotlines to receive inquiries about the coronavirus 24/7: 24970967 - 96049698 - 99048619. Meanwhile, the Kuwait Center for Mental Health provides help through its suicide hotline: 24621770 (8 am - 5 pm). Furthermore, the Kuwait Psychological Association (KPA) is providing consultation through the phone for people suffering from the psychological impacts of coronavirus. Different doctors are working on the hotline in different timings as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

For information and other concerns, call 9401-4283.



KUWAIT: Kuwait Municipality announced intensifying state-wide cleaning campaigns to coincide with end of the curfew today. The campaigns include cleaning roads, sanitizing and replacing garbage containers, impounding abandoned vehicles and inspecting stores to make sure they follow regulations properly.

Race for new PM after Abe...

Continued from Page 1

successor to Abe, has announced he will not stand. Other possible candidates include powerful chief cabinet secretary Yoshihide Suga, viewed by many as a frontrunner, and current defense minister Taro Kono, a social-media-savvy former foreign minister who is seen as something of a longshot. One woman is among those expected to stand so far: Seiko Noda, a former cabinet minister whose chances are thought to be slim.

Whoever comes out on top, analysts said, little major shift in policy is expected. "Key policies - diplomacy and economic measures - won't be changed drastically," Shinichi Nishikawa, a professor of political science at Meiji University in Tokyo, told AFP. "His successor could be a caretaker," effectively, Nishikawa added, given that the LDP will hold another leadership election in September 2021, with general elections likely the following month.

Yoshinobu Yamamoto, an honorary professor of

international politics at the University of Tokyo, said Abe's successor would not produce any surprises but would face "big challenges". Most immediate will be the ongoing response to the coronavirus pandemic, with heavy criticism of Abe's government so far for policies viewed as contradictory and slow. But there are also diplomatic challenges on the horizon, including on relations with China.

Ties had been warming, but with rising tensions between Beijing and Washington and concerns domestically about issues including the coronavirus outbreak and the situation in Hong Kong, the next prime minister faces a balancing act. Abe is also leaving office with the issue of the Tokyo 2020 Olympics still unresolved. The Games were postponed by a year over the pandemic and are now scheduled to open in July 2021, but questions remain about whether the event can be held safely.

And the next prime minister will inherit an economy that had swung into recession even before the coronavirus crisis hit and may face further hits if additional waves of infection force business shut-downs again this winter. Tokyo markets slumped on Friday on news of Abe's resignation but recovered slightly before the end of trade, and economists said disruption would be minimal because economic policy was not likely to change. — AFP

Property sharks circle ravaged...

Continued from Page 1

distraught homeowners, sparking outrage over yet another disaster in the making, this time targeting the country's heritage.

Standing inside his living room turned balcony after the wall separating them was blown off, Bassila said the developer had first approached him some time before the blast, offering to buy his apartment after acquiring the ground floor of the same building. "Eventually you will leave," the developer threatened at the time.

And now he is back, ramping up pressure on Bassila to sell the home he inherited from his grandparents by refusing to prop up the ceiling of the flat below - meaning Bassila's apartment could collapse. A former photographer now eking out a living as a taxi driver, Bassila says he cannot afford to restore his family home without financial aid. But he is also determined not to give it up. "I was born in this house and my father was before me... I can't live anywhere else."

Of 576 heritage buildings surveyed in the wake

of the explosion, including 331 in the port's immediate vicinity, the culture ministry says 86 were severely damaged. Of those, 44 risk complete collapse, while a further 41 could partially fall down. In the days after the explosion, Bishara Ghulam, the mayor of the Rmeil district near the port, said he received an unexpected visitor among those flocking to his office to report damage to their homes.

"A man turned up who said he was a real estate broker. He said he wanted to buy houses damaged in the blast, and would pay whatever the owners wanted," Ghulam said. "I told him we weren't selling." The blast came as Lebanon was already suffering its worst downturn in decades, plunging a portion of the middle class into poverty, drastically weakening the local currency and trapping people's dollar savings in the bank.

Reports of developers now trying to snatch homes - sometimes in exchange for rare dollars - have sparked anger among activists. In the capital, banners have appeared reading "Beirut is not for sale". Political and religious figures have issued condemnations, with Maronite Christian Patriarch Bechara Al-Rahi warning against real estate "vultures" hovering over Beirut. The culture ministry has said damaged properties must be restored before transactions can take place, while the finance ministry banned the sale of any listed property without official permission. — AFP

UAE scraps Israel boycott, allows...

Continued from Page 1

Netanyahu has said Israel is "working to enable direct flights over Saudi Arabia", a US ally close to the Emirates, but with no official ties with the Jewish state. In May, an Etihad Airways plane flew from the UAE to Tel Aviv to deliver supplies to the Palestinians to help fight coronavirus, marking the first known flight by a UAE carrier to Israel.

But amidst all the diplomatic back-slapping, the Israel-UAE accord faces its first hiccup: The possible sale of American F-35s to Abu Dhabi that could challenge the Israeli technological edge in the Middle East. Netanyahu has denied reports that the UAE deal hinges on the sale of US F-35 stealth warplanes to the Emirates, saying he opposes a move that could

reduce Israel's strategic edge in the region. "This deal did not include Israel's acceptance of any arms deal," he said Monday.

Ever since the 1960s, the United States has guaranteed to maintain Israel's "qualitative military edge" in the region. The policy was enhanced two years ago with a law that Washington must ensure, when selling weapons to another country in the Middle East, that Israel retains the ability to defend itself if the arms were to fall into the wrong hands.

Israel has already received a first consignment of F-35s, a fighter also coveted by Gulf powers including the UAE. Abu Dhabi "has indicated that it wants the F-35. I think the first time was six years ago, so this is something on the table," the UAE minister of state for foreign affairs, Anwar Gargash, told US think tank the Atlantic Council. "Now the whole idea of, you know, a state of belligerency or war with Israel will no longer exist. So I think it should be... easier," he said. Experts believe a deal can be struck to the satisfaction of both Israel and the UAE, and ultimately Saudi Arabia, a longtime customer of US armaments. — Agencies

Musk meshes brains with ...

Continued from Page 1

good at predicting," he quipped, referring to a Netflix series that puts disturbing twists on near-future technology.

For now, Neuralink is being tested in pigs with the team working on the potential for clinical trials. A trio of pigs in pens took part in the demonstration: one of them named Gertrude was said to have been implanted with a Neuralink device wired to detect spikes in nerve activity in her snout. Gertrude happily focused on food, mostly ignoring Musk and others gathered for the event.

Musk said that since the first version of Neuralink was revealed slightly more than a year ago, the

device has been simplified and reduced to about the size of a large coin and the thickness of the skull. With the help of a surgical robot, a piece of the skull is replaced with a Neuralink disk, and its wispy wires are strategically inserted into the brain, the demonstration showed.

The disk registers nerve activity, relaying the information via common Bluetooth wireless signal to a device such as a smartphone, according to Musk. "It actually fits quite nicely in your skull. It could be under your hair and you wouldn't know." The purpose of the event was to attract engineering talent to the project, which has much work still to do on chips, software, robotics and more, according to Musk.

Experts and academics remain cautious about his vision of symbiotically merging minds with super-powered computing. Brain-computer interfaces have been done many times, and it is difficult to tell how successful the Neuralink project will be, according to University of Warwick biomedical engineering professor Christopher James. — AFP

Local

Vendors at Friday Market hurting over prolonged closure

Reopening helps sellers, customers struggling due to COVID-19

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: Almost six months without work in both his regular job as a tea boy at the Ministries Complex and his part-time job selling secondhand clothing and other items at the Friday Market, Sikandar from Bangladesh is broke. Other resellers, retailers and vendors at the Friday Market are also disappointed over the prolonged closure.

"I thought of going back to my country, but my boss told me to stay because I can start work at the ministry from September 1. So now I am waiting - the only hope was for the Friday Market to reopen. They said next week we can open, but nothing happened - we are waiting to reopen for a long time now," said Sikandar. "I am doing this so I can save money and finally go home to Bangladesh."

Sikandar's ministry job provides him a regular salary of KD 80. "That is not enough for my family, so after work I do odd jobs like cleaning the offices of a clinic. But my big source of income is from my four days of work at the Friday Market. However for five months now, the money I was earning selling stuff at the Friday Market is gone. I was making at least KD 200-250 a month," he added.

On March 13, the Municipality closed the Friday Market as a precautionary measure to stop the spread of the coronavirus. The brief reopening of the market on July 9 saw a huge crowd of people visiting the market, prompting municipal officials to close it on the same day. Until now, the Friday Market is closed, awaiting a green signal from the Municipality to reopen.

Nida, another Friday Market vendor, misses selling items at the market. "I normally occupy a small spot in block 9, 10 or 11. I used to bring my products



KUWAIT: This July 9, 2020 file photo shows a gate at the Friday Market closed with red tape shortly after the market was reopened briefly for the first time since March 13. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

every Wednesday evening in preparation for the Thursday opening. Anyone can get a permit to sell - you only have to get a permit from the office inside the Friday Market. They'll ask you what items you are selling, and if they think it's okay, they'll give you a permit," she said.

"I sell small items and old clothes of any type, shoes, bags, etc. If I have many products, I share it with people inside. I sell in wholesale - for example a bundle of used clothes for KD 5, which

will be retailed for 250 fils. Sometimes the KD 5 will realize KD 15 or KD 20 depending on how good the items are. I pay only KD 21 in rental charges for three days. But this is no longer possible because of COVID-19, and we are not selling since March," Nida said. "I hope they'll allow us to sell again. Life is becoming very difficult for everyone, so secondhand and cheap prices at the Friday Market can help, plus sellers can earn something too."

In my view

Police: Assurance or a scare



By Abdellatif Sharaa

local@kuwaittimes.com

Back in my early years, my mother used to threaten me with calling a policeman or taking me to the doctor if I did not stop being rowdy or causing too much noise! And I can tell you that did not work every time, yet the image of a policeman with a stone face remained looming.

I may have been lucky enough not to really have a genuine fear of policemen, and sometimes I played the role of a policeman in games whenever we had a chance in schools or the neighborhood, but that does not mean many children will remain in fear of policemen when they grow older.

A definition of police says: "Body of officers representing the civil authority of government. Police typically are responsible for maintaining public order and safety, enforcing the law and preventing, deterring and investigating criminal activities. These functions are known as policing".

The policeman is usually trained to help in emergencies, first aid and rescue. Policemen are usually the first responders to places where people are in need of help or sick. In many cases, policemen are the first responders to car accidents or fire, for example, before paramedics and firemen arrive at the scene. Lives and properties are protected by police who enforce the law, besides patrolling areas to prevent crimes from occurring.

Policemen rush to the help of an elderly man or a woman trying to cross the street, guide a blind individual to the right path towards a certain destination, and help a child find his parents on the beach, in a mall or even in a neighborhood.

Contrary to what many parents are doing to scare their children from policemen, they should inform them that when there is a problem, the first person you should refer to is a policeman. Because if this continues, children will remain scared even when they grow up, and this fear may extend to all uniformed personnel and not only police.

Yes, I understand that there are few, very few, bad apples, but that is the exception, and with their behavior, they are in violation of the law they are supposed to enforce and uphold, but this does not mean that all police are bad or evil. We must reconsider the way we raise our children, and keep them in touch with professionals that they may need one day, such as policemen, doctors, dentists and oh yes, teachers!

Final word: "My heroes are those who risk their lives every day to protect our world and make it a better place - police, firefighters and members of our armed forces." - Sidney Sheldon

No PCR test traps Kuwaiti on border for 22 hours

KUWAIT: In a most ironic event that mimics the Syrian movie 'The Borders', where the protagonist is trapped between two countries after losing his passport, Kuwaiti citizen Mohammad Mutlaq Al-Otaibi was recently trapped on the borderline between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia - between Nuwaiseeb and Khafji border exits - for 22 hours, after he had already stamped his passport out to depart to Saudi Arabia because his mother is a Saudi national, but he was denied entry because he did not have a PCR certificate. Ironically, when Otaibi decided to head back to Kuwait, he was also denied access because he did not have a Saudi PCR certificate.

Nuwaiseeb land border exit man-

ager Col Yousif Al-Muhaini told Al-Rai that Otaibi arrived at the border center in the afternoon requesting to depart to Saudi Arabia as his mother is a Saudi national. "After stamping his passport, officials at the Saudi Khafji land border exit refused him entry because he did not hold a PCR certificate from Kuwait as mandated by Saudi health authorities as part of precautionary measures taken to fight COVID-19," Muhaini explained.

Muhaini added that security forces at Nuwaiseeb land border exit were surprised the following morning by Otaibi showing up demanding to return to Kuwait, which was denied because he did not have a PCR certificate from Saudi Arabia. However, Muhaini said that upon instructions from the land border exits director Brig Eyad Al-Haddad, the Saudi border exit was contacted to make sure Otaibi had not entered the kingdom, then the Kuwait MoH was contacted because the doctor stationed at Nuwaiseeb rejected the citizen's return without a Saudi PCR certificate. Otaibi finally managed to enter Kuwait after over 22 hours.



KUWAIT: This August 12, 2020 file photo shows Finance Minister Barrak Al-Sheetan attending a National Assembly session. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Finance Minister says tendered resignation

KUWAIT: Finance Minister Barrak Al-Sheetan said that he had tendered his resignation to His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. The minister, who on Wednesday had denied tendering his resignation, made a new statement on Thursday, saying that he had put his resignation at the disposal of His Highness the Prime Minister, adding that his step "was a regular measure after the National Assembly renewed confidence in him twice." He indicated that he submitted the proposal to the prime minister to step down "to affirm that he is not dedicated to the post but to the public interest," noting that it was up to His Highness the Prime Minister to accept or turn down his request to leave the ministry. Moreover, the minister has affirmed that he is pursuing his duties in office as regular. — KUNA

News in brief

Homicide investigation in Jleeb

KUWAIT: The bodies of two women were found in Jleeb with traces of blood on them, Al-Rai reported quoting security sources who said that the bodies were found in a ground floor room in a building in the area. Initial investigations showed the bodies belong to a Bangladeshi mother and her daughter. A homicide case was filed and further investigations are in progress.

Man drowns

KUWAIT: A 63-year-old Kuwaiti man drowned while he was swimming in sea opposite to a chalet in Sabah Al-Ahmad Sea City on Friday. Forensics and criminal evidence department officers were called to the scene. The body was taken to the coroner as investigations went underway.

Left shoulder 'canceled'

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Interior officially announced that the left shoulders on main roads around the country have been converted to normal driving lanes in order to increase roads' capacity and improve traffic flow. Therefore, the ministry urged motorists to avoid making emergency stops on the left shoulder, and instead use the right shoulder for emergency parking.

Oil price down

KUWAIT: The price of Kuwaiti oil went down by 71 cents to \$45.33 per barrel Friday after it was at \$46.04 pb the day before, said the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) yesterday. Globally, the price of the Brent crude went down by four cents to \$45.05 per barrel, the same case with the West Texas Intermediate, which decreased by seven cents to \$42.97 pb.

Stay safe. Stay home. Stay informed.

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ACK, first to welcome back aviation students on campus

KUWAIT: The School of Aviation at the Australian College of Kuwait (ACK), has officially welcomed students back to campus. However, things look a bit different. The COVID-19 pandemic has urged the College to make some changes, including the combination of virtual and in-person training classes.

The re-opening strategy is in compliance with guidelines set by the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Higher Education, and upon the approval of the Private Universities Council (PUC), European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA), Directorate General Civil Aviation (DGCA) and General Civil Aviation Authority (GCAA) to physically attend only the practical training of the Aviation students by practicing the proper social distancing and the health and safety procedures. In addition, the College has set lots of precautionary measures to ensure everyone's safety.

The Health and Safety Department at ACK prepared the health, safety and security guidelines and procedures for the safe return of the students and faculty members. Mandatory protocols

are placed on ground to reduce the transmission of the communicable disease at the college, and a fully detailed booklet was shared with ACK community to enlighten them with the steps taken for reassurance.

The precautionary plan included a mandatory temperature check and mandatory personal protective equipment. All students entering the campus must be wearing masks and students were given face shields on their first day of resumption that will be part of their mandatory personal protective equipment. In addition, students were asked to practice social distancing and wash their hands regularly. To further raise awareness and ensure the safety of ACK's community, awareness signage were placed around campus, regular sterilization of ACK's buildings, increase supplies of sanitizer, increase the frequency of cleaning, and as a monitoring measure the College designated a COVID-19 Compliance Officer who is responsible to fully monitor the adherence of all staff and students in the aviation building to all of the mentioned new protocols.



"We understand that some students are concerned about returning to campus while the pandemic is still on. At ACK, we are working so hard and in compliance with all the regulations

issued by local authorities to ensure learning continues with the appropriate safety measures in place," says Captain Abdul Hameed Al-Refai, Senior Director - School of Aviation.

WHO Iraq lauds Kuwait's contribution to fight against COVID-19



IRBIL: A man holds a leaflet distributed during a COVID-19 awareness campaign initiated by Kuwait in Iraq. —KUNA

IRBIL: The head of the World Health Organization (WHO) in Iraq praised yesterday the Kuwaiti humanitarian initiative aiding Iraq and Kurdistan region against the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. In a statement to the press, the Head of WHO mission in Iraq Dr Adham Ismael expressed his gratitude to Kuwait and His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for the speedy response and providing necessary support to health institutions to cure the people infected with the virus. He added that Kuwait provided medical equipment, preventive materials and laboratory materials in addition to ambulances and awareness campaigns, appreciating Kuwait's courageous stance towards the Iraqi people and the World Health Organization. The Kuwaiti contribution to WHO helped in providing support to some 800,000 Suleimaniya governorate. —KUNA

National Guard honors retirees who helped against COVID-19

KUWAIT: Kuwait National Guard Undersecretary, Lieutenant General Hashem Al-Refai, on Thursday, honored the National Guard's retirees who have volunteered and have given much needed hand in the efforts against the novel coronavirus outbreak. The undersecretary, in a statement, expressed gratitude to the volunteering retirees for manifesting true meaning of patriotism and sacrifices for the homeland, backing up the National Guard personnel during the COVID-19 crisis. Their initiative has been deeply applauded by His Highness Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah, the National Guard Chief, his deputy Sheikh Meshaal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, as well as ordinary citizens who have seen these good-will efforts on part of the experienced former personnel. —KUNA



in my view

Muharram, a month of forgiveness and rewards

By Hassan Twaha Bwambale

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Dear reader, it is indisputable that Almighty God (Allah) is the creator of everything including time. He made some months, days, nights and moments better than others. To confirm this, He tells us in the Holy Quran what can be translated as: "And your Lord (alone) creates what He wills and chooses; not for them (who disbelieve in Him) was the choice. Exalted is Allah and He is high above whatever they associate with Him." (Al-Qasas 28: 68)

We are currently approaching the middle of the month of Muharram, the first month of the Islamic lunar calendar. Fasting in this month comes second only to Ramadan in terms of importance and reward. To confirm this, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said what can be translated as: "The best fast after the month of Ramadan is the month of Allah, Al-Muharram" (Muslim 1163). Connecting the name of Muharram to Allah's name in a genitive grammatical structure signifies its importance.

In this sacred month there is the day of Ashura, which the 10th day of Muharram. On this day, Almighty God saved Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) and the Children of Israel from Pharaoh's tyranny. In his book entitled, 'Zaad Al-Ma'ad,' Ibul-Qayyim reported that Almighty God had informed Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) of Prophet Moses' remarkable success in crossing the Red Sea after being pursued by Pharaoh and his army.

Aisha (Prophet Muhammad's wife) narrated that the Qur'aish used to fast on the day of Ashura (albeit for other reasons), and Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) used to fast on this day before immigrating to Medina. (Muslim 1126). Ibn Abbas (ra) reported that when Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) arrived in Medina, he found the Jews there fasting on the day of Ashura. Upon asking them, they said, "It is the day on which Allah granted victory to Moses and the Children of Israel over Pharaoh and we observe fast out of gratitude to Him." Upon this, the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said, "I am more entitled (than you) to love and honor Moses."

Prophet Muhammad fasted on Ashura and advised his companions to fast on this day." (Al-Bukhari 2040 and Muslim 1130). When he was asked about fasting on the day of Ashura, the Prophet (pbuh) said, "It expiates the sins of the preceding year." (Muslim 1162). Questions arise about fasting additional days before or after Ashura. There are three ways to fast Ashura:

1. The best way is to fast on the tenth of Muharram (Ashura), as well as the day before it and the day after it.

2. Fasting the tenth of Muharram as well as the day before it.

3. Fasting the tenth of Muharram only.

Abdullah bin Abbas (ra) said, "I never saw the Prophet (pbuh) keen to fast on a day he favored more than others, except this day (i.e. Ashura), and the month of Ramadan" (Al-Bukhari 2006).

Since Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said that the best fast after Ramadan is fasting in Muharram, let's not miss out on this meritorious season of abundant rewards. You can fast as many days as you wish so long as it is within the parameters of the teachings of Islam. Performing other acts of worship during this time and in your entire life is meritorious and encouraged.

KRCS supports ill Syrian refugees in Lebanon

BEIRUT: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) affirmed that it is proceeding with providing medical care for kidney patients among Syrian refugees in the eastern Lebanese border town of Ersal. The head of the KRCS mission in Lebanon, Dr Musaed Al-Enezi, said that the society is giving priority to the kidney patients among the Syrian refugees. Speaking during an inspection of the KRCS-run kidney dialysis center in the border town, Enezi, accompanied by the society field team, affirmed that a large number of patients benefited from the medical service provided by the Kuwaiti society in the town. The Kuwaiti delegation distributed foot rations and other materials to the Syrian refugees in Ersal during the visit. —KUNA

Housing project delivery Oct 6

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Dr Rana Al-Faris said the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) formed a committee to take delivery of the South Abdullah Al-Mubarak housing project on October 6. The minister said in a press statement that the formation of this committee is a prelude to distributing "To Whom It May Concern" certificates for the citizens allocated plots of land in this project. She indicated that the number of residential plots available for delivery to citizens will be 3,260 housing plots in the project. Faris praised the efforts of the Kuwaiti national cadres that worked during the last period to achieve high steps in the South Abdullah Al-Mubarak housing project. —KUNA

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Crushed by virus and war, jobless Afghans turn to opium for cash

Trump insults Biden, predicts reelection in New Hampshire rally

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WASHINGTON: People attend the "Commitment March: Get Your Knee Off Our Necks" protest against racism and police brutality on Friday at the Lincoln Memorial. — AFP

Anti-racism protesters flood US capital

'Say their names!' Crowds march toward Martin Luther King Memorial

WASHINGTON: Tens of thousands of protesters demanding an end to racial injustice and police brutality thronged the US capital Friday, signaling a renewed groundswell of anger gripping the nation following a white officer's shooting of African-American Jacob Blake. Crowds flooded the National Mall for a mass march marking the anniversary of Reverend Martin Luther King Jr's historic "I have a dream" speech on August 28, 1963.

Friday's demonstration was dubbed "Get Your Knee Off Our Necks," in reference to George Floyd, who suffocated beneath the knee of a white officer in Minneapolis in May, igniting the most widespread civil unrest in the country in decades. Al Sharpton, the civil rights activist who gave the eulogy at Floyd's funeral, told the crowd it was time for a "new conversation" with America. "We need to have a conversation about your racism, about your bigotry, about your hate, about how you would put your knee on our neck while we cry for our lives," he said.

Often fighting back tears, relatives of Floyd, Blake and Breonna Taylor - a black 26-year-old shot dead by police in her own apartment last March - took turns addressing the sea of people, who repeatedly called out the victims'

names in response. "Black America, I hold you accountable," said Blake's sister Letetra Widman. "You must stand, you must fight, but not with violence and chaos. With self love."

Like his father 57 years ago, Martin Luther King III stood on the Lincoln Memorial steps and urged Americans to keep fighting inequality - and to vote in November at all costs to defeat President Donald Trump. "We are taking a step forward on America's rocky but righteous journey towards justice," King, at times wiping sweat from his brow, told a crowd enduring muggy Washington heat.

M.L.K.'s granddaughter, 12-year-old Yolanda King, also spoke, telling the nation's youth they would "be the generation that dismantles systemic racism once and for all." "Baby girl, tell your people!" a woman cried out. Thousands of marchers, among them many families with children, streamed towards the event from dawn, with COVID-19 masks mandatory - but planned temperature checks were abandoned due to long queues.

Several sought shade under elm trees, waving hand fans. Some held signs that read "Racism Sucks!" and "Vote for Change". After the speeches, protesters marched toward the nearby Martin Luther King

Memorial. Karisha Harvey, 46 and black, held a poster depicting a weeping Statue of Liberty cradling a crying baby swaddled in an American flag. "Not coming wasn't an option," Harvey told AFP.

Her white friend Cortney Smith, also 46, said: "I'm sick of hearing about a black man getting killed in the street every week." After mass protests sparked by Floyd's death, outrage again swelled since Blake was shot multiple times in the back during a confrontation with police in Kenosha, Wisconsin. Blake survived and is hospitalized, but may never walk again, according to the 29-year-old's lawyer.

National anger

Authorities identified the officer who opened fire as Rusten Sheskey, saying police were attempting to arrest Blake and had tried to subdue him with a stun gun. They added that a knife had been found in his car. In the violent and chaotic protests that followed in Kenosha, two people were shot dead by someone wielding an assault rifle. Authorities arrested a 17-year-old in the killings and filed intentional homicide charges against him.

Major sports teams and leagues have called off matches to protest racism and police abuse, amid a rekin-

dling of anti-racism demonstrations that have convulsed the country all summer. Trump, who concluded the Republican National Convention Thursday with a combative "law-and-order" speech, trails in polls for the Nov 3 election. He has dismissed the wave of protests as criminal looting and violence - presenting himself a bulwark against social anarchy and a defender of the police.

"We will speak against the looting," Sharpton shot back at Trump, "but when will you speak against wrong police shooting?" The unrest has exploded into a critical election issue. Joe Biden's running mate Kamala Harris, the first woman of color on a major party ticket, addressed the march by video and recalled the previous generation's civil rights heroes. "If they were with us today, they would share in our anger and frustration as we continue to see black men and women slain in our streets, and left behind by an economy and justice system that have too often denied black folks our dignity and rights," she said.

Don Carlisle, a black man in his mid-50s attending Friday's march with friends, voiced similar frustrations. "We technically built this country and we are still treated unjustly," he told AFP. "We have been looking for 300-400 years for equality." — AFP



MEXICO CITY: A health worker takes a selfie with 'LaLuchy Robotina' robot at the November 20 National Medical Center on Aug 27, 2020. — AFP

Robot eases loneliness of virus patients

MEXICO CITY: A robot at a hospital in the Mexican capital is providing a lifeline for coronavirus patients separated from their relatives and reducing the risk of infection for medical workers. "Hi, I'm LaLuchy Robotina! What's your name?" the 1.4-meter-tall robot asks patients as it goes from room to room. It moves around on wheels and has a camera and display screen enabling relatives and doctors to chat with patients or staff in full protective gear in the coronavirus ward.

"It allows us to have a physical presence... but with zero exposure to aerosols within the Covid-19 area," said Lucia Ledesma, a neuropsychologist at the November 20 National Medical Center. The hospital robot, part of a global trend aimed at reducing the risk of infection during the pandemic, was even designated as a "co-therapist" for coronavirus patients in July. Since then, it has carried out around 160 missions with infected patients, their relatives and the mental health team. It can even make soothing sounds to reduce the stress caused by isolation. The robot "helps us with the mental health of the patient," said Sandra Munoz, who coordinates the hospital's strategy against the virus, which has killed more than 60,000 people in Mexico. The bot has computer vision enabling it to recognize people and sensors to help it to move around. It is a lifeline for patients like Rosa Maria Velazquez, one of more than half a million Mexicans who have been infected with the virus. —AFP

Myanmar Muslims, Hindus sidelined

MEIKTILA, Myanmar: One of Myanmar's five million young adults, May Thandar Maung had been excited to cast her ballot for the very first time in November's election. But the 18-year-old is Muslim and says that means she will remain voiceless. "My religion means I haven't been able to get an ID card," she tells AFP in her hometown of Meiktila in central Myanmar - and no ID means no vote.

She describes how local officials have obstructed her attempts for over a year, while Buddhist peers faced no such delays, in a town where memories of brutal inter-communal violence in 2013 are still raw. The majority-Buddhist nation is widely expected to return Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) party to power on November 8 in the second polls since Myanmar emerged from outright military rule in 2011.

The country's Rohingya Muslims - whether in Bangladeshi refugee shelters or confined to camps and villages in Myanmar - will nearly all be completely disenfranchised. But Myanmar also has many more Muslims of other ethnic heritage - about four percent of the population - whom the country, in theory, accepts as citizens. In practice, however, it can be very different. Muslims complained to AFP of systemic corruption, detailing how they are forced to pay backhanders of hundreds of dollars - exorbitant rates in a country where a quarter of the population lives in poverty. Three members of Maung Cho's family had to pay US\$370 each, the 53-year-old says, many times higher than the token sums of 'tea money' demanded of Buddhists.

'Mixed bloods'

Their experiences are echoed by Muslims across the country, says Yangon-based analyst David Mathieson. "Anti-Muslim sentiment is ever-present with discrimination in schools, the workplace and access to government jobs," he says. Challenges continue even for those who obtain an ID in a country where these cards state the holder's ethnicity. Many Muslims say false ethnic identities, usually from South Asia, are increasingly being foisted on the community.

Maung Cho's family has lived in Myanmar for generations, yet when his renewed ID card came back, it labelled him as "Indian-Muslim". "It must have been my beard," he tells AFP, ruefully. Like other so-called "mixed bloods", he now faces extra scrutiny at every ID check and must even stand in a separate queue at immigration offices.

Myanmar Hindus - who number about 250,000 - are also often branded as "mixed bloods" and face similar problems. Yangon-based Tun Min, 28, tells AFP it took him 10 years to get an ID card. Last week he chose to

speak out, posting a video on Facebook explaining the discrimination his community faces. "I drove a taxi for eight years but only used to work at night because I couldn't apply for a licence without an ID card."

The 'B' word

The least desirable label, however, is "Bengali", a pejorative term normally used to refer to the persecuted Rohingya. Myanmar faces charges of genocide at the UN's top court after the military drove out about 750,000 Rohingya in a supposed crackdown on militants in 2017. Many of the 600,000 who remain in Myanmar live in what Amnesty International calls "apartheid" conditions, refused citizenship and deprived of rights.

Mathieson says there have been numerous reports in recent years of other Muslims across Myanmar also being coerced into adopting "Bengali" as an identity. He blames "racist and discriminatory" bureaucratic procedures rather than an official policy but warns the government has not tried to stamp the practice out. The NLD has "more important agendas than pursuing a reverse engineering of a racist system many of their supporters are comfortable with". An immigration department official, asking not to be named, refuted allegations of corruption and discrimination, insisting ID cards were granted in accordance with the law.

Progress?

But Maung Cho says he thinks racism against Muslims is worse now than under the military junta, describing his community as "disappointed and depressed". Many people he knows feel so disillusioned they plan not to vote in the upcoming election. A campaign to boycott the vote is gathering pace. Former student leader and political prisoner Sithu Maung is one of just two Muslims out of 1,143 NLD candidates. In 2015, the party fielded no Muslim candidates at all. —AFP



MEIKTILA, Myanmar: This photo taken on June 20, 2020 shows Muslims praying inside a mosque in this city in the Mandalay region. — AFP

India battles black market in used gloves and masks

NEW DELHI: Indian police are battling a booming black market in used face masks and surgical gloves scavenged in some cases from hospital refuse tips, as people scramble for cheap coronavirus protection. Police in the western city of Navi Mumbai said Friday that they seized from one gang 3.8 million pieces of refurbished single-use surgical gloves that were washed, dried and packed ready for sale. "They sourced nearly 35 tons of used gloves from different hospitals and were preparing to sell it to dealers at throwaway prices," investigating officer Subhash Nikam told AFP.

"They had managed to sell 6,000 to 10,000 pieces and were in touch with several buyers for the rest of the consignment," he said. The four accused are facing initial charges of cheating and endangering lives by spreading a communicable disease. Demand for personal protection equipment has soared in the country of 1.3 billion people, which on Friday saw the official tally of coronavirus infections hit 3.4 million with over 60,000 deaths. Many experts say that with India not testing enough people and many deaths not properly recorded, the real toll could be considerably higher. Several antibody tests have borne this out.

Cheap alternative

Many Indians though cannot afford proper PPE and use cheap alternatives including a handkerchief or scarf wrapped around the mouth and nose. Health authorities in the eastern state of Bihar said they too have busted several gangs in recent months involved in selling used facemasks collected from hospital dump-yards. Thousands of masks have been seized that were washed and repacked before being sold to dealers across cities at cheap prices, the official said. "We have conducted several raids in the state after receiving tip-offs about the sale of used facemasks," an official from Bihar's health ministry said. The illegal business is at a very small scale, he added, but poses a serious health hazard at a time when the country is reeling under the pandemic. —AFP

International

Trump insults Biden and predicts reelection in New Hampshire rally

Speech filled with hyperbolic and inaccurate descriptions of life under Dems

MANCHESTER: US President Donald Trump on Friday insulted his Democratic challenger Joe Biden as “low-IQ” and barely conscious in a New Hampshire speech reinforcing his strategy of painting himself as the defender of the country against socialist mayhem. The speech, filled with hyperbolic and inaccurate descriptions of life under the Democrats, followed Trump’s White House address to the Republican convention late Thursday where he warned that “no one will be safe in Biden’s America.”

Trump told the crowd assembled at the airport in Manchester, New Hampshire, that he was sure of victory on November 3. “Does anyone have any doubt?” he asked to a chorus of support.

“I will have lost to a low-IQ individual. I don’t want that. ‘Sleepy Joe,’ I don’t want it,” Trump said of the former vice president and longtime senator. “The guy doesn’t know he’s alive.” Much as he did Thursday at the White House, Trump claimed to be singlehandedly protecting the country from Democratic anarchists.

And he again said that the coronavirus, which has killed more than 180,000 Americans already, was under control. “Hopefully we’re at the end,” he said. The difference in New Hampshire, where he hosted a scaled-down version of his trademark pre-coronavirus rallies, was that Trump was able to cut free with ad-libs and even more personal attacks on his rival. “We are all that stand between the American people and the left wing mob,” he said. “If you want to save democracy from the mob, then you must vote to defeat an extremely poor candidate.”

To cheers and laughter, Trump, 74, described 77-year-old Biden as “weak” and “the worst candidate

ever put up by the Democratic party.” As he has before, Trump claimed falsely that Biden, a lifelong Catholic, is “against God.”

Fanning the race flames

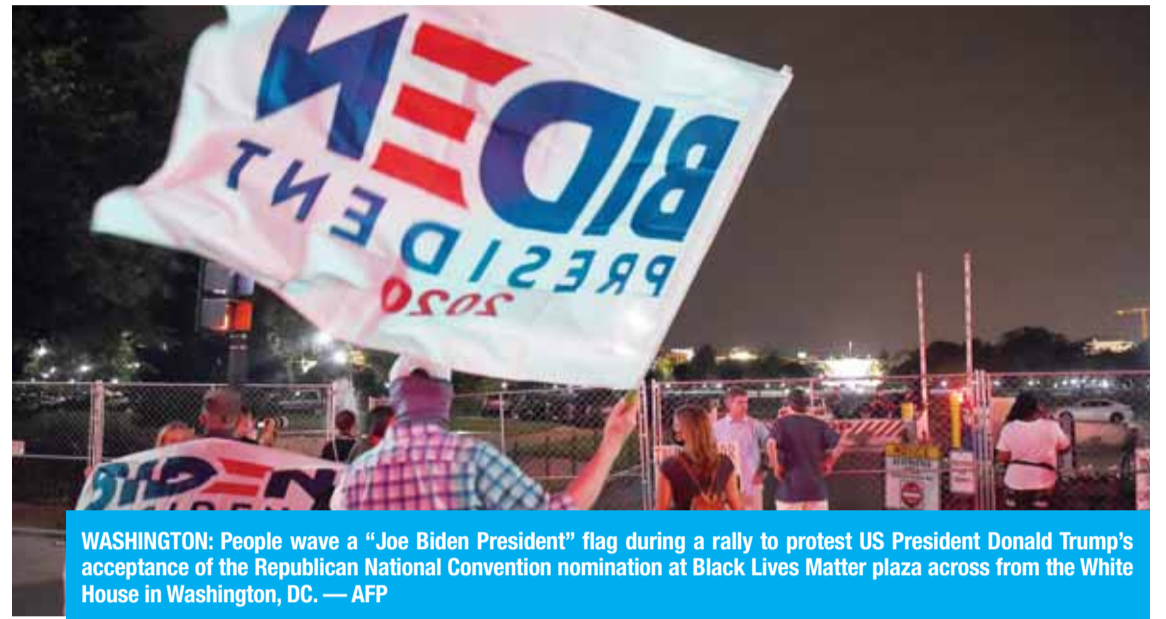
Trump is bidding to make what he calls “law and order” the central plank of his reelection campaign just as tensions over race and police brutality spiral around the country. After flaring all summer, a shooting by a white police officer of an African-



Law and order central plank of his campaign

American man in Kenosha, Wisconsin, sparked another wave of anger, with demonstrations and at times rioting and looting dominating television screens for days. On Friday, tens of thousands of people flooded Washington, DC, to protest that shooting and other instances of racial injustice, as well as to mark the anniversary of Martin Luther King Jr’s historic 1963 “I Have a Dream” speech.

Trump acknowledged “there’s so much racial hatred” but blamed this on the news channels CNN and MSNBC. “They stoke the flames and they know it,” he said. The phrase reversed Biden’s accusation



WASHINGTON: People wave a “Joe Biden President” flag during a rally to protest US President Donald Trump’s acceptance of the Republican National Convention nomination at Black Lives Matter plaza across from the White House in Washington, DC. — AFP

that Trump is the one “rooting for the violence” and “pouring gasoline on the fire” for his political benefit.

The greatest depression

Trump goes into the election carrying a staggering amount of baggage for an incumbent. He is only the third US president to have been impeached. A string of close associates have been charged or jailed. He has been dogged throughout his first term by allegations of racism and corruption. And polls show about two-thirds of Americans say his management of the Covid-19 pandemic is a failure.

But the summer of unrest has thrown the president a lifeline, as he stirs up his white, working class base, while trying to lure worried independents. New Hampshire is a state he narrowly lost in 2016 and now thinks he can add to the win column in what will likely be a tight contest in the electoral college on November 3. In his speech, he lobbed repeated rhetorical bombs at Democrats, saying they want “to eliminate America’s borders” and plan a “suicide mission” through tax increases. “You better vote for me or you’ll have the greatest depression you’ve ever seen,” he said. — AFP

In Central Africa Republic, Mali coup stirs bad memories

BANGUI, Central African Republic: In the Central African Republic, a country with a history of coups since independence from France 60 years ago, the ouster of Malian president Ibrahim Boubacar Keita has brought back dark memories. In 2013, the Seleka, a rebel coalition drawn largely from the Muslim minority, toppled then-president Francois Bozize, plunging the CAR into a spiral of violence that continues today.

The fragility of the state is visible whenever his successor, Faustin Archange Touadera, ventures forth.

The president is accompanied by armored vehicles, pickup trucks carrying soldiers and an ambulance with screaming sirens, in a convoy travelling on roads closed to traffic. “The Malian syndrome could be happen here,” said Edgard Kette-Djama, a teacher in Bangui. “We have an army that is politicized. Signs of frustration can be seen among the population.”

Vulnerable president

There are just four months left before presidential and parliamentary elections, and Touadera’s problems are evident. Elected in 2016, he has failed to crack down on two issues of deep concern—entrenched corruption

and militias that control two-thirds of the CAR’s territory.

The militias still inflict many civilian casualties, despite a peace accord signed in 2019 and the presence of 11,600 peacekeeping troops in the United Nations mission in the CAR (MINUSCA). As in Mali, the presence of UN troops sits ill with much of the population. Many people here say the peacekeepers are too passive with the militias.

This perceived weakness may be a temptation, said Nathalia Dukhan, a researcher with the US anti-corruption watchdog The Sentry. “The leaders of the armed groups now think that the UN presence is no obstacle to violently overthrowing the regime in Bangui,” Dukhan observed.

On the other hand, the mandate of the UN mission in the CAR is crucially different from that in Mali.

Its forces in the Sahel have been deployed against a jihadist revolt that began in northern Mali in 2012 and has since spread to the center. In the CAR, foreign troops can in theory intervene to protect the country’s institutions. “The preservation of constitutional order is an essential part of action by MINUSCA,” said Hans De Marie Heungoup, an analyst with the International Crisis Group (ICG).



BAMAKO: Mahamadou Diarra, who was wounded by Malian security forces during the protests that took place on July 10-12, looks on from the front row ceremony hosted by Imam Mahmoud Dicko and his organization, CMAS in Bamako on Friday. — AFP

Guarded by Rwandan UN soldiers and Russian security agents, the Renaissance Palace of the head of state would put up serious resistance to rebels or mutineers from a depleted national army already under an international arms embargo. If a coordinated assault like that of 2013 seems pretty unlikely, the volatile situation raises fears of other scenarios such as an attack on the president or a popular uprising led by the opposition. Coming from an ethnic minority and with no electoral base, Touadera has had to make compromises with clans locked in rivalry to grab power.

He can count on a solid electoral system and support from Russia, but

his position remains fragile.

Well-supported rival

The worries of the presidential majority are focused on former president Francois Bozize, a soldier who seized power from Ange-Felix Patasse in 2003 following several successive coup bids.

Bozize himself lasted a decade before he was toppled. Returning to Bangui last December after seven years in exile and becoming a presidential candidate, Bozize today presents himself as “a man of peace,” an assertion that does not convince many adversaries that he has turned the page. — AFP

Five years after refugee influx, Merkel ‘would do the same’

BERLIN: Five years after Germany controversially took in hundreds of thousands of migrants, Chancellor Angela Merkel said Friday she would do the same again as she rides a wave of popularity for her handling of the coronavirus pandemic.

“I would make essentially the same decisions,” Merkel said at her annual summer press conference in Berlin, in response to a question about whether she regretted her 2015 policy to keep the border open to an influx of asylum seekers. “When people are standing at the German-Austrian border or the Hungarian-Austrian border, they have to be treated like human beings,” she said.

More than one million people filed asylum applications in Germany in 2015-2016 during a pivotal moment in Merkel’s now 15-year tenure.

The influx deeply polarized Germany and fuelled the rise of the far-right AfD party, weakening Merkel’s standing at home. But as the veteran leader, 66, nears the end of her fourth term, her handling of the coronavirus pandemic has given her an unexpected popularity boost.

In a recent Infratest Dimap poll, 71 percent of respondents said they were very satisfied or satisfied with Merkel’s work. The AfD, on the other hand, has seen its ratings decline during the pandemic. “It’s amazing to see how quickly things can change,” notes Hans Vorlaender, a professor of politics at the TU Dresden university. “As a rule, crises are always a make or break moment for those in charge.”

Voters have been charmed by Merkel’s “rationality, calmness and self-confidence” during the crisis, he observes. Her understated pleas to the German public to help fight the virus were well received



BERLIN: German Chancellor Angela Merkel leaves after her annual summer press conference on Friday in Berlin. — AFP

because they were “not a macho show of power, but filled with empathy”, he said.

‘Loss of control’

Back at the height of the migrant crisis in 2015, Merkel at first seemed to have public opinion on her side, taking smiling selfies with the new arrivals and coining the now legendary phrase “We can do this!” But the debate around migration became deeply divisive, eating into public trust in Merkel and even leading to a far-right party—the anti-Islam, anti-immigration AfD—gaining a meaningful presence in parliament for the first time since the Nazi regime.

Some authorities were overwhelmed and the chancellor was blamed for the “chaotic” situation, even within her conservative ranks.

Thomas de Maiziere, then interior minister, admitted recently that there had been a “loss of control” at times. And then there were the damaging headlines. On New Year’s Eve 2015, mass sexual assaults were committed against women in Cologne, mostly by men of North African origin. A year later in December 2016, Anis Amri—a rejected asylum seeker from Tunisia and known radical jihadist—hijacked a truck and ploughed it into a crowded Christmas market in central Berlin. — AFP

Europe tightens virus measures as cases surge

PARIS: Europe tightened restrictions on Friday as it battled a surge in coronavirus cases, with masks becoming obligatory all over Paris and Hungary shutting its borders once again.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel warned the crisis will be “more difficult” in the autumn and winter. President Donald Trump took a characteristically more optimistic view, despite the death toll in the United States topping 180,000, as he vowed to “crush” the virus with a vaccine by the end of the year.

The total number of declared cases has now topped 24.5 million globally since the virus first emerged in China almost nine months ago, with more than 832,000 deaths. The economic toll has been catastrophic, with Canada the latest to announce a record collapse: a 38.7 percent drop in GDP in the last quarter on an annualized basis.

Canada also extended the closure of its border to non-essential travel by a month until the end of September. The border has been closed to all non-essential travellers since mid-March.

Governments hope tighter mask rules will offset the need for a return to economically-devastating lockdowns, though the French government said it could not rule out new stay-at-home orders.

Masks were already obligatory in Paris on public transport and in congested areas, but will now be needed throughout the city. “The epidemic is gaining ground, and now is the time to intervene,” said Prime Minister Jean Castex. Late Friday, health authorities said almost 7,400 new infections were registered in mainland France in 24 hours, calling growth in new cases “exponential”. — AFP

Young Belarus blogger with key role in protests

WARSAW: A fresh-faced 22-year-old blogger is using nothing more than his keyboard to run the main communications hub for protesters in Belarus as they mount an unprecedented challenge to the regime of President Alexander Lukashenko, often dubbed Europe’s last dictator.

Stepan Svetlov is the founder of NEXTA Live, a Telegram channel with 2.1 million subscribers that helps mobilize protesters and shares photo and video content from the demonstrations. “It started out as a school project,” Svetlov told AFP in an interview in the Polish capital Warsaw where he has been living in exile under police protection after having received death threats.

A mark of respect

Svetlov originally set up NEXTA Live in 2015 as a YouTube channel for sharing funny, satirical music videos about Belarus and President Lukashenko, who has ruled with a heavy hand since 1994.

NEXTA which means “somebody” in Belarusian, began putting out weekly video news videos in 2017 that got tens of thousands of views. The switch to Telegram—a messaging app used by protest movements worldwide because of its strong encryption and anonymity—came in 2018 when police raided Svetlov’s house in Belarus.

“It was the first sign that the authorities appreciated my work. Like a mark of respect,” said a self-assured Svetlov, whose father is a journalist at the Belarusian channel Belsat, also based in and backed by Poland.

Protesters ‘not alone’

The charge of organizing mass unrest for which NEXTA is now being investigated in Belarus carries a prison sentence of up to 15 years. “Of course it’s not true. We want exclusively peaceful protests.... It was the authorities that started beating, shooting, using water cannons.”

But Svetlov admits that NEXTA does have a role in co-ordinating the current protests since “nobody except us can do this since they would be immediately detained and arrested”.

“Even though we are 500 kilometers from the border, we do not stop being citizens of Belarus who want to have their own role, their own contribution in bringing about change,” he said. “Nexta and other Telegram channels play a very important role in bringing people together. People can see that they are not alone,” he said.

At the peak of the protests after the disputed August 9 election, Svetlov said NEXTA was receiving around 200 messages a minute. The volume of information—some 100,000 messages a day—meant the team of four people working on NEXTA had to focus on photo and video content, which Svetlov said was easier to verify.

The channel uses other forms of verification such as asking for pictures of ID documents or using multiple unconnected sources but Svetlov said trusted, regular sources are the best. Valery Karbalevich, an analyst from Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, said NEXTA played a “crucial role” in the logistics of protests such as giving timings and meeting places. — AFP

International

Crushed by virus and war, jobless Afghans turn to opium for cash

Virus lockdown, travel curbs saw trade grind to a halt

JALALABAD, Afghanistan: Afghans pushed out of work by the coronavirus pandemic after businesses and schools were shuttered have turned to opium cultivation for cash during this year's poppy harvest.

Afghanistan has long been the world's top grower of opium, producing more than 80 percent of the global supply and providing hundreds of thousands of jobs in the perennially cash-strapped economy.

A coronavirus lockdown and travel restrictions saw trade grind to a halt and many businesses were forced to lay off staff, in a conflict-riven country where stable jobs are already rare.

"Because of the coronavirus I lost my job. I have a family of 12 members, I am the breadwinner," said Fazily, 42, a mechanic in the central province of Uruzgan who, like many Afghans, goes by one name.

"I have no other way but to work in poppy fields to make some money." Farmers usually rely on a seasonal labor force for the spring and summer harvesting months but the coronavirus pandemic meant many were unwilling or unable to travel for the work. A report published by the UN's Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in June found a shortage of workers had been observed "in the western and southern provinces of the country, mainly due to the closure of a border crossing with Pakistan".

Students unable to go to school because of the lockdown were among those who filled in, heading to the opium poppy fields looking to make quick cash. "Our school is closed and I have enough

time to go work in a poppy field and make some money," said Nazir Ahmad, an 18-year-old student in Kandahar.

"About 20 of my classmates are also working here." More than 38,000 cases of coronavirus have been declared in Afghanistan and more than 1,400 deaths, though the health ministry estimated earlier this month that a third of the population has likely contracted the disease. A months-long lockdown, which has mainly affected cities, has slowly been lifted since the beginning of August, with some schools, wedding halls and markets reopening. Despite myriad eradication programs over the years, Afghan farmers continue to grow poppies with near impunity, as both government officials and the Taliban often profit from the lucrative trade.

Most poppy production is centered in the Taliban-controlled southern strongholds, although opium is also grown along the country's eastern border with Pakistan. "There were no jobs, and a lot of people, especially my relatives and villagers, resorted to poppy cultivation due to joblessness," Musafir, a resident of Khogyani district of eastern Nangarhar province, said. The Taliban has long profited from poppies by taxing farmers and traffickers, and running its own drug-making factories that turn raw opium into morphine or heroin for export, with drugs then trafficked through neighboring Pakistan and Iran.

International donors have spent billions of dollars on counter-narcotics drives in Afghanistan



NANGARHAR: 37-year-old farmer Mohaiyudeen displaying packages of opium after harvesting it from his poppy fields in the Surkh-Rod district of Nangarhar province. — AFP

over the past decade, including programs to encourage farmers to switch to other cash crops such as saffron.

But efforts to move farmers away from their lucrative but dangerous poppies have met with little

success. "The forced-eradication policy has not worked in the past 18 years," said Hayatullah Hayat, governor of southern Kandahar province. "Unfortunately, Kandahar faces an increase in poppy cultivation this year." — AFP

Abe: Political survivor dogged by health issues



Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe speaks during his press conference at the prime minister official residence in Tokyo on Friday. — AFP

TOKYO: Shinzo Abe has smashed records as Japan's longest-serving prime minister, championing ambitious economic reform while weathering scandals. But he has once again been undone by his health. After more than seven years in the job, Abe, 65, said Friday he would be stepping down because of a recurrence of the ulcerative colitis that forced him from office during his first stint as premier.

He had been due to stay on until September 2021, when his party presidency terms ends, giving him an opportunity to see out one final event in his historic tenure—the postponed Tokyo 2020 Olympics Games. A sprightly 52 years old when he first became prime minister in 2006, Abe was the youngest person ever to occupy the job, and was seen as a symbol of change and youth.

But in a country that sets much store by tradition, he also brought the pedigree of a third-generation politician groomed from birth by an elite, conservative family.

His first term was turbulent: shot through with scandals and discord, and capped by an abrupt resignation that made him the latest in a succession of short-lived Japanese prime ministers.

After initially suggesting he was stepping down for political reasons, he subsequently acknowledged he was suffering an ailment later diagnosed as ulcerative colitis. The debilitating bowel condition necessitated months of treatment, but was, he said, eventually overcome with the help of new medication. The revolving prime ministerial door brought him back to office in 2012 — and, until Friday, had stayed shut for an unusually long time.

With Japan still staggering from the effects of the 2011 tsunami and subsequent nuclear disaster at Fukushima—and with its inexperienced government lashed for flip-flopping and incompetence—the wily veteran offered a seemingly safe pair of hands.

He also had a plan. He called it Abenomics. The scheme to revive Japan's long-stalled economy—still the world's third biggest, but more than two decades into stagnation-involved vast government spending, massive monetary easing and the cutting of red tape.

He also sought to boost the country's flagging birth rate by making workplaces more friendly to parents, particularly mothers, and pushed through controversial consumption tax hikes partially intended to help fund free nursery school places for children, and plug gaps in Japan's overstretched social security system. While there was some progress with reform, the bigger structural problems for the economy never really went away. Abenomics was not enough to right the deflation that has beset Japan for decades, and growth has remained anaemic. — AFP

Student leader defies Thailand's royal taboo

PATHUM THANI, Thailand: When university student Rung calmly read out 10 demands to reform Thailand's monarchy before thousands of protesters at a pro-democracy rally this month, she defied the country's biggest political taboo. Backed by an arch-royalist military and shielded by draconian royal defamation laws, the super-rich monarchy wields enormous influence in nearly every sphere of Thai society.

But 21-year-old Rung—real name Panusaya Sithijirawattanukul—said the August 10 protest at Thammasat University outside Bangkok was "the right time" to ask for change, even though she risked arrest.

"When I left the stage, I felt like I had expanded the boundaries... raised the limits on how people can talk about the monarchy," the bespectacled sociology and anthropology student told AFP.

That demonstration was one of many near-daily rallies—some drawing thousands—across Thailand as the democracy movement gathered steam, led by university students like her. The demands Rung announced that day included more transparency for the royal family's fortune and the abolition of the royal defamation law, which carries a sentence of up to 15 years in jail per charge.

Born 1998 in Nonthaburi to a middle-class family that runs an auto workshop, Rung said she grew up largely unaware of political developments but one incident stood out. When she was 10, her entire neighborhood was ushered out onto the streets to wait for a royal motorcade to drive past.



In this picture taken on Friday, police patrol outside a sports complex in Hong Kong, that will be used as a COVID-19 testing center during a city-wide program starting on September 1. — AFP

HK's mass virus test plan hampered by China's distrust

HONG KONG: Hong Kong's plan to offer free coronavirus tests to all residents has become swept up in the festering political debate dividing the city, where many remain deeply distrustful of both local leaders and China. Billed as a benevolent public health initiative made possible with Chinese help, the city-wide tests are set to start on Tuesday in an attempt to stamp out a third wave of infections that have swept through the densely populated financial hub.

But the involvement of doctors and companies from the mainland has sent the rumour mills into overdrive and compounded fears of Beijing's surveillance state, while many health experts in the city have questioned the efficacy of a mass testing program. On the authoritarian mainland, biometric data forms a crucial part of China's vast security dragnet



BANGKOK: Student Union of Thailand spokesperson Panusaya "Rung" Sithijirawattanukul (left) speaking as she submits a list from pro-democracy activists of 10 demands to reform Thailand's monarchy to the political development committee at the parliament in Bangkok. — AFP

"I remember thinking: 'Why did I have to go? Why did they have to force me and other people to kneel down?'" "This was the incident that marked my conscience."

'It's about equality'

A few years later, when she was 15, Rung was "radicalised" as she saw the 2014 coup unfold. "Soldiers don't have the authority to rule the country and everything broadcasted then was propaganda," she told AFP at her university dorm. Inspired by the Hong Kong democracy protests, Thai activists are calling for a complete overhaul of the government of Premier Prayut Chan-O-Cha, a former army chief who led the 2014 coup.

To the current protesters, Prayut's administration is emblematic of a putsch-happy military entrenched in the country's political establishment long perceived to serve only the elite.

Sitting at the apex of power is King Maha

Vajiralongkorn. Since he ascended the throne in 2016, he has made unprecedented changes to the institution. He has taken personal control of the palace's fortune, worth an estimated \$60 billion, and also moved two army units under his direct command.

The burgeoning youth-led movement wants changes "meant to sustain the monarchy in a way that is adapted" to the modern world, said Rung. On Wednesday, activists submitted the demands to a parliamentary committee—a move that does not guarantee discussion among MPs but symbolizes the group's resolve. "It's about equality," Rung stressed. "No one should be more important or higher than anyone else."

'My life would change forever'

But speaking out comes at a cost. At least nine pro-democracy activists who fled Thailand since the 2014 coup have disappeared in the past two years, according to Human Rights Watch.

And while the royal defamation law has not been used against any of the activists charged so far, authorities have hit Rung and other student leaders with multiple charges, including sedition.

That carries a maximum sentence of up to seven years in jail. Prayut has claimed their demands are unacceptable to the country's majority, and on Wednesday warned that Thailand would be "engulfed in flames" if protesters push too far. Some analysts—and even student leaders themselves—have recalled the events of 1976, when students protesting the return of a military dictator were shot, beaten to death and lynched by state forces and royalist mobs. For now, Rung faces legal threats and could be arrested. But she says she is "ready" for what comes next. She continues to travel to rallies outside Bangkok to make speeches, and helps organize future gatherings in encrypted message groups.

"I knew that after I read out the 10 demands, my life would change forever," the soft-spoken activist said as she played with her kitten. — AFP

Modi's 'settler' masterplan for Indian Kashmir

SRINAGAR: Prime Minister Narendra Modi is changing Indian Kashmir's residency laws for the first time since 1947, in a bid to snuff out any challenge to the disputed territory belonging to India.

Drawing comparisons with Israel's "settler" tactics in the Palestinian Territories, Modi's Hindu nationalist government aims to change the demographic makeup and identity of the Muslim-majority region, critics say. AFP looks at the background, what the new rules are and their implications for the area's 14 million population.

What has Modi done in Kashmir so far?

The Himalayan former princely state has been split between India and Pakistan since independence from Britain in 1947. In the Indian-administered part a conflict between separatist rebels and government forces has killed tens of thousands since 1989, mostly civilians.

More than 65 percent of the population is Muslim. In the Kashmir Valley, the main center of the rebellion, it is close to 100 percent. On August 5, 2019 Modi's government revoked articles in the Indian constitution that guaranteed Kashmir's partial autonomy and other rights including its own flag and constitution.

A huge accompanying security operation saw tens of thousands of extra troops—adding to 500,000 already there—enforce a siege-like curfew. Thousands were arrested and telecommunications were cut for months. Jammu & Kashmir state was demoted to a union territory governed directly from New Delhi, while the Ladakh region was carved out into a separate administrative area.

Creating such new "facts on the ground" in Kashmir has long been advocated by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, the hardline Hindu parent organisation to Modi's BJP party. — AFP

Business

SUNDAY, AUGUST 30, 2020

Zain supplies Ahmadiyah with thermal camera solutions and 5G Internet

To support the company during COVID-19 pandemic and help protect its staff

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced an agreement with Ahmadiyah Contracting and Trading Company, whereby Zain will supply Ahmadiyah with thermal camera solutions, high-speed Internet services, as well as revolutionary 5G technology to support the company during the COVID-19 pandemic and empower it into digital transformation.

The agreement comes as part of Zain's commitment towards the nation during this crisis, through which the company reflects its role as a leading Kuwaiti private sector organization by making its tech capabilities available. The company is keen on offering the most advanced services and solutions as per the highest international standards to serve the needs of government entities and private businesses that work tirelessly during the current situation, including Ahmadiyah: one of the country's biggest and oldest companies.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, Zain was extremely keen on being one of the first to collaborate with many of the biggest companies, businesses, and government entities across the country's sectors and industries. The company makes its tech capabilities available to help its partners during the pandemic, as well as to deliver its promise in providing the best and most advanced services for the ultimate progress of the nation.

Ahmadiyah Contracting and Trading Company is considered one of the biggest and oldest Kuwaiti companies with notable achievements that span across the largest and most luxurious real estate projects in the country, including government and commercial projects, towers, health institutions, airports, infrastructure, and much more.

Zain's extended relationship with Ahmadiyah continues for nearly three decades since the two companies first started collaborating in 1992. Today, Zain is proud to support Ahmadiyah during the COVID-19 pandemic and help protect their staff and customers. In addition, the company will contribute to empowering Ahmadiyah into digital transformation, especially during such unusual times where companies demand remote work solutions more than ever.

As per this agreement, Zain will offer a number of its latest thermal camera solutions to be installed at Ahmadiyah's main headquarters and other related locations. The cameras are highly efficient and allow measuring body temperatures from a safe distance using advanced tech solutions, which will help protect Ahmadiyah's staff and customers.

Zain will also provide the company with the latest telecommunications and high-speed Internet services, which are based on world-class technologies, including the revolutionary 5G technology. By doing this, Zain aims at serving Ahmadiyah's technical needs and empowering it into digital transformation as per the highest standards.

Ahmadiyah Contracting and Trading Company noted that the collaboration with Zain comes as part of its keenness on following the highest international standards of quality and efficiency when

executing mega-sized urban and engineering projects in the country. AHMADIAH's relationship with Zain spans over decades of joint collaborations, where the company makes use of Zain's services as it offers the latest telecom and tech solutions in Kuwait.

Ahmadiyah's latest collaboration with Zain sees its use of Zain's thermal cameras, where the company abides by the Ministry of Health's official regulations and precautionary measures to help detect any infections of COVID-19. Many of these cameras were installed at Ahmadiyah's main headquarters and at all worksites where Ahmadiyah operates, which contributes to saving the lives of thousands of its workers, staff, and customers. This will enable the company to continue its journey of building and progress, which it started since the 1950s as per the highest standards.

Zain now offers a wide range of multi-use thermal cameras from Hikvision, a leading manufacturer and supplier of video surveillance equipment. The cameras are bundled with Zain's superfast Internet via a variety of flexible plans to guarantee the best operational efficiency. The plans feature fixed and handheld thermal cameras to suit customers' different needs, and all cameras are able to measure body temperatures from a safe distance of one meter without the need for physical contact,



which achieves social distancing goals and commitment in official instructions as much as possible. The thermal cameras Zain offers feature many unique tech solutions, such as measuring body temperatures in less than a second, allowing the measurement of a large group of people of up to 30 individuals at once. The cameras are also able to identify individual faces using artificial intelligence (AI), and compare previously recorded body temperatures even if the person is wearing a face mask. The cameras will notify the user immediately via visual and audio alarms in case an unusual body temperature was detected. Moreover, the thermal cameras can also be used as CCTV surveillance cameras that record footage 24/7 as well as measure temperatures at the same time.

Zain strongly believes in the crucial role played by private sector organizations in supporting social and economic sustainability projects, especially during crises. Springing from its growing commitment towards practicing its social responsibility, the company is committed to printing a positive print through all its activities. This has led Zain to embrace the most crucial issues in the community, including the support of the country's entities by making its tech capabilities available.



Zain underlines its commitment towards nation

US economy still sees sluggish spending

WASHINGTON: US consumers continued to spend in July but the gains were much slower than the prior two months amid a surge in coronavirus cases, and confidence remained in a "depressed range," according to new data released Friday. Separately, Coca-Cola and MGM Resorts became the latest major companies to announce massive layoffs as a result of the declines suffered during the coronavirus pandemic.

With the election in which he stands for a second term just two months away, President Donald Trump's hoped-for economic rebound from Covid-19 has not materialized and analysts warn that absent more emergency aid from the government, it may not come anytime soon.

Lydia Boussour of Oxford Economics cautioned that "momentum is at risk of faltering amid muted confidence and major income cliffs." "Providing further fiscal assistance is therefore crucial: without a healthy consumer, the broader economy will, at best, falter, and at worst, slip back into a downturn," she said in an analysis. Personal consumption expenditures (PCE) rose just 1.9 percent or \$267.6 billion compared to June, after gains of 6.2 percent and 8.6 percent in the prior two months, the Commerce Department reported.

Even after sharp gains in the previous months, spending remains well below the level seen in February before the pandemic struck and forced businesses to shut down nationwide, causing tens of millions of job losses.

Personal income rose 0.4 percent, after two months of declines, which the report said "was more than accounted for by compensation of employees as portions of the economy continued to reopen."

However, the reopening was accompanied by a surge in cases in many states, which then had to reimpose shutdowns. Income from emergency government support programs dropped sharply last month, and many expired July 31. The White House and Congress remain deadlocked on a new package that would include support for state and local governments and an extension of expanded unemployment payments.



LAS VEGAS: Tourists are wearing masks as they walk on the Strip in Las Vegas, Nevada, on Friday. —AFP

More layoffs, depressed consumers

MGM Resorts announced it was laying off 18,000 furloughed workers since the outlook remains uncertain, while Coca Cola was cutting its business units and offering 4,000 severance packages in North America, with more to come internationally. After a 31.7 percent plunge in GDP in the second quarter of the year, economists expect a rebound in the third quarter although the magnitude is in doubt. Another one million workers applied for jobless benefits last week, while there were 15 million fewer people employed last month compared to February before the pandemic forced business closures.

The University of Michigan's consumer sentiment index edged up only slightly in August to 74.1 from 72.5, holding "in the same depressed range it has traveled during the past five months," the survey's chief economist

gross domestic product (GDP) in the first quarter.

After steep declines at the height of the COVID-19 outbreak in April and May, however, GDP surged 6.5 percent in June. And preliminary data for July forecast a three percent rise in GDP. Economists said this suggests the worst is over for the Canadian economy.

"It was a quarter to forget for Canada's economy," commented CIBC analyst Royce Mendes in a research note. The drop in GDP, he said, was of "a magnitude never before seen... and was likely the worst performance since the Great Depression."

But, he added, "things were looking up by the end of the second quarter" with "solid momentum" continuing into July. Mendes also noted that Canadians' disposable income actually grew in the period as emergency government support more than offset a drag from a jump in unemployment.

That drove the household savings rate up to 28 percent, from seven percent, "potentially leaving some extra cash for spending in upcoming periods," he said. Derek Holt, head of Scotiabank Economics, noted that more than half of the three million Canadians who lost their jobs at the start of the pandemic, pushing up the unemployment rate to a peak of 13.9 percent in May, have since gone

back to work as restrictions eased. "Canada's economy may be rebounding even faster than expected into Q3," Holt said. "Canadian GDP is quickly recovering (from) the pandemic hit... which cautions against the policy narrative that years of pain lie ahead."

But senior TD economist Brian DePratto warned, "Many sectors are going to continue struggling in the absence of a vaccine." "We may be through the worst of it, but it is still a long road to normal."

Cautious consumers

The finance department said government revenues were down Can\$32.0 billion, or 37.9 percent, in the second quarter, while expenses—including wage subsidies, business incentives and direct aid—climbed by Can\$90.3 billion, or 116.5 percent. Trudeau last week announced an extension of the emergency aid to the end of September, when he said he would seek parliament's support for massive new social and environmental spending to pull Canada out of an economic slump.

If all three main opposition parties balk and vote against the proposals, however, Trudeau's minority liberal government would fall, triggering snap elections. According to

Canada economy takes record plunge but outlook bright

OTTAWA: Canada's economy shrank at a record pace in the second quarter but by the end of the period showed signs of a rapid recovery from the pandemic trauma that forced businesses to close and put millions out of work. At the same time, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government ran up a Can\$120 billion (\$90 billion) budget deficit doling out emergency aid to Canadians, compared to a shortfall of Can\$85 million during the same period last year.

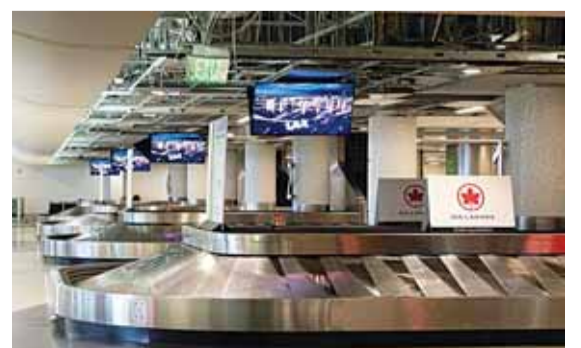
The economy contracted 11.5 percent, or at an annualized pace of 38.7 percent, in the three months ending June 30, the government statistical agency said Friday. Declines were recorded across the board amid a nationwide lockdown including in consumer spending, business investment, trade and tourism—in line with analyst forecasts, following a 2.1 percent (8.2 percent annualized) contraction of Canada's

Apple blocks Fortnite maker from game developer tools

SAN FRANCISCO: Apple said Friday it has followed through on its decision to block the maker of Fortnite from developer tools needed to update games on its mobile devices. The move to suspend Epic Games from the iOS developers program came just days after a US court rejected its bid to have Fortnite reinstated on the App Store, saying its eviction by Apple was a "self-inflicted wound." The ruling against Epic Games comes amid a battle over whether Apple's tight control over the App Store, and its 30 percent cut of revenue, counts as monopolistic behavior. "We are disappointed that we have had to terminate the Epic Games account on the App Store," Apple said in reply to an AFP inquiry. Apple pulled Fortnite from its online mobile apps marketplace on August 13 after Epic released an update that dodges revenue sharing with the iPhone maker. Apple does not allow users of its popular devices to download apps from anywhere but its App Store.

The Silicon Valley-based tech giant told Epic it would cut off access to tools needed to tailor software for devices powered by the iPhone maker's operating systems. A judge's ruling this week prevented Apple from also cutting Epic off from access to developers tools for its Unreal Engine that powers graphics on computers. "The court recommended that Epic comply with the App Store guidelines while their case moves forward," Apple said.

"Epic has refused. Instead they repeatedly submit Fortnite updates designed to violate the guidelines of the App Store," Apple contended Epic was putting Fortnite players in the middle of a budding battle involving the companies. "Apple is asking that Epic revert Fortnite to exclusively use Apple payments," Epic said in reply to an AFP inquiry. "As a matter of principle, we won't participate in this scheme." Apple is no longer allowing Epic to submit apps or updates via a developer account. Players with earlier versions of Fortnite can still play on iPhones or iPads, but will have to rely on Apple's payment system for transactions. —AFP



LOS ANGELES: Air Canada signs are seen at an empty baggage claim area at Los Angeles International Airport in April. —AFP

Statistics Canada, household spending fell 13.1 percent in the second quarter due to substantial job losses and few opportunities to spend as most stores and restaurants were closed and travel and tourism was restricted by the closure of the border. —AFP

Business

US recovery hampered by wobbly performance in powerhouse states

California, Florida, New York and Texas account for 35% of US economic output

WASHINGTON: Of the many tragedies in the US coronavirus epidemic, among the largest was that the nation's four economic powerhouses - California, Florida, New York and Texas - bolted to opposite corners early in an often politicized response to the crisis.

Democratic-governed California and New York tackled the spread of the virus aggressively with lockdowns and other steps that exacted a heavy toll on their economies. Republican-led Texas and Florida, in contrast, took a more hands-off approach. Neither tandem, so far, has managed to pull off the tricky balancing act of getting and keeping infections under control while fostering a speedy and sharp economic rebound. The result: A US recovery hampered by underperformance in four states that account for about 35 percent of the country's economic output. New York has scored the one singular victory in suppressing the virus. But its economy remains on its heels with a jobless rate that sits at 15.9 percent, more than five percentage points above the US average.



The other three continue to battle on both fronts. "Most of the responses have been a big disappointment," said Harvard University economics professor James Stock, who argued early in the outbreak that a "no-fun" world of limited social engagement, widespread testing for the virus and use of masks offered a way to solve the health crisis and, ultimately, fix the economy.

That was a prescription even New York has struggled to follow, let alone a nation with no uniform federal response. More than 5.8 million US residents have been infected with the coronavirus and more than 179,000 killed by the associated COVID-19 disease, according to a Reuters tally. With the outbreak still raging nationally, key parts of the New York economy, like hotels and tourism, won't bounce back even as the state's coronavirus case rates remain under control with only a handful of deaths each day. Daily deaths in each of the three other big states, meanwhile, are at more than a hundred.

Gulf Bank cardholders enjoy exclusive services, rewards

KUWAIT: As part of an expansive array of products and services, Gulf Bank offers its clients a variety of different cards designed to suit their banking needs and reward them every time they spend. Gulf Bank provides a variety of unique services to its cardholders, including Easy Pay and the Bank's cashback program, in addition to the fastest rewards points program in Kuwait and numerous offers for restaurants and retail outlets.

Regarding the various exclusive services that Gulf Bank provides its clients, Ahmad Al-Amir, Assistant General Manager for Corporate Communications at Gulf Bank, said: "We are always keen on finding innovative solutions that satisfy our clients' needs. We are proud to offer a variety of cards designed to suit the various banking requirements of our customers and are constantly striving for continual innovation and enhanced levels of customer satisfaction."

Easy pay

As one of Gulf Bank's exclusive programs, "Easy Pay" aims to make the shopping experience that much more convenient. With Easy Pay, Gulf Bank credit cardholders can shop from a variety of different vendors and pay for their purchases in installments over the course of 12 months, with 0 percent interest. For example, if a customer were to buy items worth KD 240 from a participating Easy Pay outlet, they will be billed KD 20 every month for 12 months at 0 percent interest and no processing fees. Easy Pay makes shopping easier at over 100 participating outlets both locally and abroad from a variety of different categories including electronics, airlines, automotive, furniture, and more.

Gulf Bank designed the Easy Pay program as part of its ongoing commitment to customer satisfaction and ensuring the Bank is meeting the needs and aspirations of their clients. The list of Easy Pay participating partners is thus carefully curated and selected according to Gulf Bank clients' preferred shopping outlets. The process of enrolling any transaction at participating shopping outlets into Easy Pay is seamless. Customers can simply request Easy Pay at the merchant outlet prior to making their purchase, and do not need to submit any additional documents or call the bank. The cashier at the merchant outlet will then process the credit card transaction on the dedicated Easy Pay terminal, and the transaction will be automatically converted into Easy Pay. Customers can also avail multiple

Markaz sells industrial property in Reno

KUWAIT: Kuwait Financial Centre K.P.S.C "Markaz" announced the sale of Longley Commerce Center in Reno, Nevada. Launched in March 2018, the investment involves the acquisition and development of a greenfield land parcel into a 270,975 square foot Class A industrial property. Exceeding promised returns, Markaz continues to outperform with a weighted IRR of 17.6 percent across the current cycle further strengthening our track record.

The exit delivered a net internal rate of return to investors (IRR) of 17.9 percent and a net return on investment (ROI) of 49.3 percent. Despite the negative implications of COVID-19 across the various business sectors, both metrics comfortably exceeded initial estimates driven by strong market selection, excellent

Big four, big laggards

The four states, which account for about a third of the US population, are home to the country's largest and densest cities as well as major travel hubs, ports and other infrastructure, and are top tourist destinations. "It's unlikely the national economy fully recovers unless these four states do," said Oren Klachkin, an economist at Oxford Economics. "A lackluster, muddling-through scenario now looks to be the most likely path," particularly as the impact of those four spills over into neighboring states and regions.

An Oxford index tracking the economic recovery shows California, Florida, New York and Texas as a group lagging more than 10 percentage points behind the rest of the country.

The gap emerged early when New York and California, two of the early epicenters of the US coronavirus outbreak, imposed restrictions on businesses. It widened in June as infections surged in Texas and Florida, forcing those states to impose restrictions they had tried to avoid.

Data shows California, Florida, New York and Texas lagging the rest of the country in both growth in the number of businesses that are open and the number of employees working. Department of Labor data shows that after accounting for roughly a third of all job losses in March and April, the four states are responsible for only about a quarter of the jobs regained in May, June and July.

Estimates of the return of retail shoppers gathered by cellphone tracking company Unacad showed Texas had reached 84 percent of its 2019 level through Aug. 15, Florida and California were just above 70 percent and New York below 60 percent. The rest of the country, taken together, had topped 90 percent.

Four Pennsylvanias

Mark Zandi, chief economist at Moody's Analytics, said few states came close in his view to an optimal

response. Pennsylvania is one, with a mix of tough restrictions on its largest cities and a lighter touch in rural areas. The state avoided the more intense public conflicts over lockdowns and other measures that have erupted elsewhere in the United States.

A COVID-19 rebound in June was quickly curbed and daily fatalities are low. "The state has managed (infections) down and kept them down ... The economy has made its way back solidly since then," Zandi said. Nonetheless, it would take roughly four Pennsylvanias to match the economic heft of California alone, indicating just how long the road to a US recovery may be with the big four states so hobbled.

The national recovery is seen by many economists themselves and their families when purchasing airline tickets using their Gulf Bank credit cards, which can be used for the Schengen Visa application. **Worldwide lounge access** Gulf Bank credit cardholders also enjoy unlimited complimentary lounge access at airports all over the world. **Gulf Bank Prepaid Cards** Gulf Bank's prepaid card is the ideal card for customers looking to manage their day-to-day finances. Prepaid cards, which can be loaded with any amount depending on the cardholder's needs, can be used easily and securely by people of all ages, including children. With the Gulf Bank Prepaid Card, cardholders can also enjoy discounts at their favorite restaurants. As part of the Gulf Dining Program, cardholders can redeem instant discounts of up to 25 percent at over 550 restaurants and coffee shops across Kuwait. Cardholders can also enjoy the benefits of the Gulf Promotions program and redeem instant discounts of up to 30 percent at over 300 retail outlets, enjoying offers across a variety of segments including travel, entertainment, health, beauty and lifestyle.

Gulf Bank's Prepaid Gift Card, which launched last year, offers customers the perfect gift idea to celebrate any occasion, and is ideal for friends and family who love shopping. The Prepaid Gift Card is available at all Gulf Bank branches and can be collected, activated and loaded with the amount requested by the customer to gift to their loved ones.

In February of this year, Gulf Bank also launched its Special Edition - Feb 2020 prepaid card with a Kuwaiti flag design in celebration of the National Day holidays. The limited edition prepaid card is a reloadable card that offers cardholders a variety of exclusive benefits, including being free for the first year and valid for 3 years. Cardholders can also avail instant discounts of up to 25 percent at over 550 local restaurants and discounts of up to 30 percent at over 300 retail outlets in Kuwait. As with all Gulf Bank prepaid cards, the new limited edition card is reloadable, and offers users faster payments on service-enabled POS terminals with Gulf Bank Tap & Pay, enhanced security, safety and convenience with EMV chip technology, and global acceptance at more than two million ATMs and 33 million point-of-sale terminals worldwide. The new card is available for both Gulf Bank customers and employees.

Gulf points Gulf Bank credit cardholders can also take advantage of the Gulf Points program, the fastest rewarding program in Kuwait. The program, which all Gulf Bank credit cardholders are automatically enrolled into free of charge, gives cardholders valuable points to use with every transaction made using a Gulf Bank credit card, with the ability to earn even more points when using their credit cards abroad. Credit cardholders can redeem their points to avail a variety of benefits, including free airline tickets with all airlines and free hotel accommodation at over 300,000 hotels worldwide without blackout dates. In addition, credit cardholders can also earn airline miles with the airline of their choice. In the event that users do not have enough Gulf Points to complete the booking process, cardholders can choose to pay a portion of their bill using their Gulf Bank credit cards, earning even more Gulf Points in the process. Clients also get free travel insurance upon redeeming their airline tickets.

Gulf dining The Gulf Dining program provides Gulf Bank credit cardholders with instant discounts of up to 25 percent at over 550 renowned restaurants and coffee shops outlets in Kuwait, with the ability to earn Gulf Points on all transactions.

Gulf promotions The Gulf Promotions program allows Gulf Bank credit cardholders to avail instant discounts of up to 30 percent at over 300 retail outlets in Kuwait across a variety of segments, including travel, entertainment, health, beauty and lifestyle.

24/7 Concierge Service Gulf Bank clients can enjoy the comfort and convenience of 24/7 local concierge services designed to ease the process of school fee payments, car registration, and making travel arrangements, including delivery of airline tickets.

Free family travel insurance Gulf Bank clients also receive free travel insurance for

execution and a strengthened investment thesis. Sami Shabshab, President of Mar-Gulf Management Inc., Markaz's US real estate arm, stated: "I would like to start by thanking our partners on the strong performance and look forward to build on the momentum we have established to further grow our business relationship. We believe that the current market conditions have and will continue to create selective exciting opportunities that we will capitalize on by leveraging the lasting partnerships we have built with leading operating partners, service providers and lending institutions over the past 30 years through our office in the USA. With a combined experience of over 100 years, the team looks forward to navigating the new market dynamics that the COVID-19 has created as we have done throughout the previous crises.

Shabshab added: "The sale of the property in Longley was in line with the initial investment strategy and was our fifth exit over the past couple twelve months. Our remaining international real estate portfolio across the USA and Europe is worth over \$400 million and consists of eight active and three upcoming investments that have



DALLAS: US President Donald Trump points as he talks with Texas Governor Greg Abbott as he deplanes from Air Force One with US Attorney General Bill Barr after arriving at Dallas Love Field Airport in Dallas, Texas. —Reuters

been fully sold to our investors. Abdullatif Al-Nusif, Executive Vice President of Wealth Management and Business Development, reiterated the company's commitment towards its real estate program in the USA and Europe He stated "We are very pleased with the results of our international real estate program and look forward to continue growing both in terms of size and geographical coverage. The investor appetite towards our program continues to grow and I would like to thank them for their continued trust and support. Our focus remains set towards offering the right mix of products that will enable us to create value to our investors, shareholders and stakeholders. To conclude, the COVID-19 pandemic has no doubt created uncertainty in the market due to the unprecedented nature of the event, however I would like to reiterate that this will create unique opportunities that we at Markaz are ready to capture".

Markaz has been active in the US real estate market since 1977 with the launching of its first syndicated transaction. Since 1988, Markaz has been conducting real estate transactions in the US through



Ahmad Al-Amir

as approaching something of a crossroads. Key emergency measures to help families and small businesses lapsed in July, and negotiations in Congress over extensions are deadlocked. The country is still about 13 million jobs shy of February's level, and about 14.5 million Americans were collecting unemployment insurance in the latest week - more than twice the number seen in the 2007-2009 recession.

There are some optimistic signs. Growth in daily infections is moderating, with the 7-day moving average below 50,000 nationally from 66,000 in mid-June. A Goldman Sachs study estimated the country overall had met 2.5 of the 4 "gating" criteria for a fuller economic reopening. It had fallen near 1 in mid-July. —Reuters

Joyalukkas Group greets Malayalis on Onam festival

KUWAIT: Joyalukkas Group yesterday greeted the Malayali community in Kuwait on the occasion of Onam that falls on Monday, August 31. Joy Alukkas, chairman and managing director of Joyalukkas group, said in a statement that Onam is the harvest festival of the Indian state of Kerala when all Malayalis come together to celebrate the goodness of mankind.

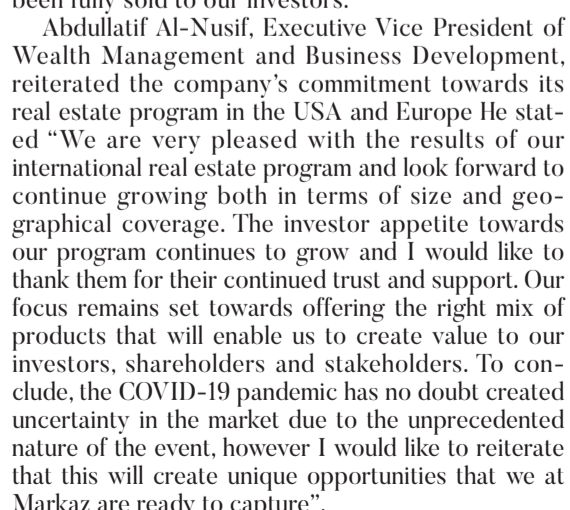


Joy Alukkas

"As we get ready to celebrate the festival, I wish that this Onam brings joy, peace, harmony and prosperity to all of us. May the spirit of this auspicious occasion usher in a colorful and healthy Onam bringing abundance of happiness, good health and well-being," he added.

This is the time of the year, according to traditions, when virtues and self-understanding enable everyone to emerge victorious and move forward with confidence. Let this Onam be the beginning of this and more, he added.

Abdullatif Al-Nusif, Executive Vice President of Wealth Management and Business Development, reiterated the company's commitment towards its real estate program in the USA and Europe He stated "We are very pleased with the results of our international real estate program and look forward to continue growing both in terms of size and geographical coverage. The investor appetite towards our program continues to grow and I would like to thank them for their continued trust and support. Our focus remains set towards offering the right mix of products that will enable us to create value to our investors, shareholders and stakeholders. To conclude, the COVID-19 pandemic has no doubt created uncertainty in the market due to the unprecedented nature of the event, however I would like to reiterate that this will create unique opportunities that we at Markaz are ready to capture".



Abdullatif Al-Nusif

Markaz has been active in the US real estate market since 1977 with the launching of its first syndicated transaction. Since 1988, Markaz has been conducting real estate transactions in the US through



Sami Shabshab

Markaz, the US real estate arm and wholly-owned subsidiary of Markaz. Over the past thirty years, Markaz and Mar-Gulf have been involved in the ownership and development of real estate properties in a variety of segments including industrial, retail, multifamily and office across the US with a total acquisition cost exceeding \$1.65 billion.

Business

NBK opens its new branch at Boursa Kuwait building

Serving customers starting from today

KUWAIT: As part of its continuous endeavors to provide top-notch services to its customers, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) announced the inauguration of its new branch at Boursa Kuwait building. NBK customers can now visit the new branch that provides all banking services from 8:30 am until 3 pm.



NBK maintains top position in Kuwait

NBK is committed to adhere with safety guidelines, including measuring customers' temperature before entering the branch, wearing masks and gloves, in addition to abiding by all social distancing

rules, in order to ensure the safety of customers and employees.

Commenting on the inauguration of the new branch, Assistant General Manager - Consumer Banking Group at National Bank of Kuwait, Ghadeer Al-Awadhi, said: "NBK is keen to consolidate its leading position in the local market through its largest network in Kuwait, in order to ensure providing top-notch banking experience to its customers and help them obtain all their banking needs."

Al-Awadhi added: "The bank always strives to be closer to its customers and to provide them with the best, most advanced and secure services while keeping them their safe through strict adherence with all precautionary measures and health authorities' guidelines."

Al-Awadhi affirmed that the bank's branch network covering Kuwait is integrated with its digital channels, mainly NBK Mobile Banking and NBK Online Banking serving customers around the clock, noting that these channels have become highly popu-



Ghadeer Al-Awadhi

lar, in view of the current exceptional circumstances, which proves NBK's superiority in providing digital services and its keenness on continuous upgrade of its digital channels.

NBK provides its banking services through NBK ATMs and CDMs available all over the country, comprising 327 ATMs, including more than 100 CDMs.

Customers can also reach the bank through multiple channels including NBK Contact Center on 1801801 and NBK WhatsApp on the same number, or through the bank's social media platforms, where all inquiries are answered.

Furthermore, NBK shares information and guidance related to all aspects of the current circum-

stances on its social media accounts @nbkgroup, in addition to engaging content for all age groups.

Additionally, as part of its efforts to provide integrated banking solutions, NBK is continuously upgrading NBK Mobile Banking to enable customers avail banking services easily and conveniently at any time. These services include applying for a loan, increasing credit card limit, advanced payment solutions like e-Payments to pay at various sectors, and NBK Quick Pay to receive money, pay bills or even pay an amount owed to a friend. Moreover, customers can manage their accounts and credit cards during travel, view transactions made on the accounts and credit cards, view NBK Miles Points and NBK Rewards Points balance, re-activate dormant accounts, create a monthly standing order, locate NBK Branches and NBK ATMs/CDMs all over Kuwait, as well as request account statement, checkbook and other services that make NBK Mobile Banking App the best choice inside and outside Kuwait.



X-cite catches hearts of 1m followers on Instagram

KUWAIT: X-cite by Alghanim Electronics, Kuwait's largest electronic retailer, today celebrates hitting 1 million followers on Instagram. The leading brand jumped on the train with the rise of social media and opened its Instagram account back in April 2012, with the aim of communicating directly with its followers, responding to their requests, and providing immediate support, thus enabling customers to reach the customer care center easily and effortlessly. Using this platform, X-cite was also keen to present the strongest marketing offers that empowered the brand to achieve a remarkable success and create a loyal fan base.

X-cite's noteworthy accomplishment was mainly due to the unique and distinct content published on its account that characterized the brand across this platform and appealed to the followers who enthusiastically interacted with the company. Featuring a wide variety of digital content, X-cite's account showcases major brands' latest releases for modern homes such as electronics and accessories from Wansa, Philips, Sony, Toshiba and other international brands. To satisfy its customers, X-cite never ceases to gift them amazing discounts throughout all occasions. Currently, the company is running its Back to School campaign offering the best prices on all essentials, ranging from smartphones, computers and tablets from Apple, Samsung, HP and many more.

Today, X-cite's Instagram account is the first, largest and most followed electronics business in Kuwait, a clear affirmation of the company's leading position in the local market. The major electronic retailer extends its presence on the different social media platforms with a Facebook account followed by 981K fans.

To mark this milestone and celebrate its customers'

loyalty, X-cite has launched the "Follow, Mention & Win" campaign on Instagram where 10 of its followers will get the chance to win coupons worth of 250 KD by simply following the account and mentioning their friends to enter the draw.

Through its customer-centric concept, X-cite offers customers competitive quality and prices to serve every segment, providing them with the highest level of service, engaging with them, and earning their trust through supporting services and offerings. X-cite also enables customers to shop from the comfort of their homes through its free mobile app and shopping



website at www.xcite.com.

X-cite has established itself as a leading brand in providing the latest products to customers as it continues to build strong relations with international brands in the electronics sector. Continuously seeking to satisfy the needs of its customers, X-cite provides them with diverse services that enable customers to experience products and interact with them, and the service of buy online and pick the product in store, whether in their 42 showrooms or through the website, designed to make online shopping a fast and easy experience. X-cite is also present in hypermarkets and co-ops, in addition to its stores in Al Rai, Hawally and Al Mekhial. X-cite also offers premium maintenance and purchase services at most of its major showrooms throughout Kuwait and other services such as free delivery and X-care packages.

To stay updated on the latest events, monthly promotions and offers, subscribe to the daily newsletter on xcite.com, follow X-cite's social media channels on Instagram, Twitter and Snapchat, @xcitealghanim, or Facebook, XcitebyAlghanim, or visit the online store at www.xcite.com



AUB congratulates winners of Al-Hassad weekly draw

KUWAIT: In accordance with full preventive guidelines and measures set by health authorities, Ahli United Bank (AUB) held the weekly draw on 26 August 2020 of Al-Hassad Islamic account which is the very first draw account in Islamic banking in Kuwait and has won the "Best Savings Product in Kuwait 2019" by the prestigious Banker Middle East Magazine for the numerous unique features it provides. Al-Hassad Islamic account offers over 800 prizes, Over 12-month period and has reshaped the lives of thousands lucky winners.

The bank announced 20 winners of KD 1,000

as follows: Talal Ali Al-Boali, Faisal Abdullah Al-Sarraf, Yaqoub Ahmad Al-Saleh, Fatemah Abdullah Al-Bloushi, Navsheen Ahmed Manikware, Athari Mubarak Al-Azmi, Mohammad Abdullah Al-Otaibi, Nasser Motlaq Al-Otaibi, Ebrahim Ghloom Safar, Muna Hamd Al-Meshari, Sarah Abdulaziz Al-Sanousi, Ali Hasan Ali, Nitin Rajendra Singhvi, Ebjad Mohammad Al-Buti, Abdulla Yousef Al-Saif, Manal Yaseen Faras, Tareq Ahmad Ali, Shahad Salem Al-Rudaini, Adel Akram Al-Najar And Abd Al-Rasoul Ali Khan.

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

CBK launches Tijari Wallet service on its ATM cards

KUWAIT: Within its ongoing endeavors to upgrade and enhance its digital and electronic services and product offerings by employing the most sophisticated technologies & tools, Commercial Bank of Kuwait launched its new innovative service - "Tijari Wallet" for electronic payment without the need of physical plastic cards. This service allows all the Bank's customers to add their banking cards to "Tijari Wallet" via CBK Mobile App. The service is tailored-made and can be activated on all Al-Tijari debit, credit or prepaid cards bearing MasterCard logo where CBK Cardholders can - for the first time in Kuwait - get this service on their ATM Debit cards.

In this context, Abdulaziz Malak Assistant GM - Cards Center / Retail Banking Division said, "The launch of "Tijari Wallet" service came out of the Bank's present and future strategy to continuously expand its electronic & digital services offered to its customers". Abdulaziz pointed that this service enables the Bank's customers who use Android smart phones with NFC technology to use their smart phones at POS terminals instead of their physical plastic cards through encryption and tokenization of cards and adding the same to "Tijari Wallet" via CBK Mobile app.

Commenting on the mechanism of activating "Tijari Wallet" service, Abdulaziz Malak explained that customers can easily avail this flexible service via CBK Mobile app. He went on clarifying that customers and cardholders can add the cards they wish to activate then enter the card expiry date and CVV number printed on

the back of the card, thus tokenization code is created for each card added and OTP is sent to customer's smart phone for each card added to "Tijari Wallet". Upon activating the service, customers will be able to make point-of-sale purchases inside and outside Kuwait, using their mobile phones instead of their physical plastic cards by tapping their smart phones at NFC supported POS Terminals.

According to Abdulaziz Malak, Tijari Wallet, with its unique features, enables customers to make purchase without the need to connect their mobile to the internet or log in CBK Mobile App to avail the service when paying for purchase. Concurrently, POS purchases are processed using Touch ID or Face ID or security feature as activated on customer's smart phone. As such, and with a view to attain customers' satisfaction and peace of mind, customers can view the POS purchases they have made with their CBK cards bearing MasterCard logo whether they are debit, prepaid or credit cards.

Malak concluded his press statement by stressing Al-Tijari's commitment to keep pace with the latest technologies in the banking industry with a view to cater for its customers' ambitions and aspirations and help them banking with their bank of choice from anywhere in an easy and secured way.

term savings through a unique savings account with many advantages.

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

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

stc launches special offers for Samsung Galaxy Note20, Note20 Ultra

KUWAIT: Kuwait Telecommunications Company - stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announced the launch of its exclusive limited time offers to new and existing customers on the Samsung Galaxy Note20 with monthly packages starting at KD 27, and the Samsung Galaxy Note20 Ultra with monthly packages starting at KD 31.

stc said in a statement that upon subscribing to the limited time stc voice post-paid promotion, customers will receive several unique complimentary gifts. These include Galaxy Buds+ and Buds Live, 500 local minutes, as well as double the GBs up to 100 GB on the largest 5G network in Kuwait.

The Samsung Galaxy Note20 and Samsung Galaxy Note20 Ultra's next-generation design and sophisticated appearance are perfectly in sync with the mystic color options. What's more, the screen, which is also the largest on any Samsung Galaxy Note model, is the driving force behind outstanding immersive experiences and unrivaled performance. The world-class S Pen offers convenient accessibility, simplicity, and conviction on every occasion to elevate the user experience. Watching videos and gaming has never been easier thanks to the ergonomic design that fits perfectly in the palm of one's hand.

On this occasion, engineer Nasser Al-Saadoun, Chief Consumer Officer at stc, said, "stc places user experience at the center of its business model, dedicating its resources to streamline high-speed connectivity to meet the diverse needs of its customer base in Kuwait. We are pleased to partner with leading suppliers such as Samsung, who offer the latest smartphone technology and revolutionary devices that follow our strategic approach to enabling digital transformation."

Al-Saadoun added, "stc strives to provide its customers with access to the latest smartphones and devices available in the market, especially those compatible with 5G technology. To ensure convenient access to all our products and services, customers can take advantage of this limited time offer at one of stc's branches, our website (www.stc.com.kw), or through the mystic App. Following our commitment and our role as a digital pioneer, stc is proud to release this limited time offer to its valued customers."

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

For the gamers, the stage is set to be significantly elevated to newfound heights. With immersive gaming support through 5G, a next-generation AI game booster, Bluetooth audio response optimization, and 240 Hz touch response, the Samsung Galaxy Note20 Ultra will deliver outstanding visual and audio capabilities. With the upgraded battery capacity and fast charging capability, a 30 minute charge will enable users to accomplish multiple tasks with extended use, whether in their personal or professional lives seamlessly.



Nasser Al-Saadoun



Abdulaziz Malak

Classifieds

Sunday, August 30, 2020

Kuwait Times
 Now you can browse
www.kuwaittimes.net
 e-mail: info@kuwaittimes.net



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www.met.gov.kw

Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

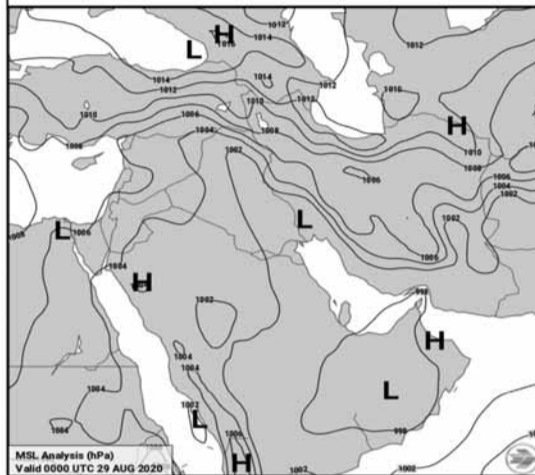
BY DAY: Hot with light to moderate north westerly wind with speed of 10 - 35 km/h.

BY NIGHT: Rather hot with light to moderate north westerly wind to wind with speed of 08 - 32 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

WEATHER WARNING	No Current Warnings
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STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	46 °C	33 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	45 °C	27 °C
ABDALY	45 °C	27 °C
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C
JAHRA	46 °C	31 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	44 °C	29 °C
SALMIYAH	43 °C	33 °C
AHMADI	- °C	- °C
NUWAISIB	41 °C	29 °C
WAFRA	45 °C	26 °C
SALMY	43 °C	25 °C

SFC. CHART 29/08/2020 0000 UTC



DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Sunday	08/30	Hot and some scattered clouds will appear	44 °C	28 °C	VRB-NW	08 - 35 km/h
Monday	08/31	Hot and Relatively humid specially over coastal areas and some scattered clouds will appear	47 °C	27 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 38 km/h
Tuesday	09/01	Hot and Relatively humid specially over coastal areas and some scattered clouds will appear	45 °C	26 °C	S-SE	12 - 40 km/h
Wednesday	09/02	Hot and Humid specially over coastal areas and some scattered clouds will appear	44 °C	28 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 35 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	04:01
Sunrise	05:24
Zuhr	11:49
Asr	15:23
Sunset	18:14
Isha	19:34

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	45 °C
MIN. Temp.	25 °C
MAX. RH	25 %
MIN. RH	07 %
MAX. Wind	N 43 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

All times are local time unless otherwise stated. U.P.O

Hospitals

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

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

FOR SALE

An Industrial plot with food license
 Almost 768 sqr metres
 Industrial food license can take Industrial loan
 • Monthly rent: KD 1920
 • Power was boosted (450 KV)
 • Selling price KD 250 thousand (negotiable)
Tel: 6 6 7 5 1 8 8 1

SHOP FOR SALE

The shop is located in Kuwait City next to Salhia complex and UTC. It is a two level - ground floor and basement. The ground floor is 16m2 and the basement is 340m2, the price is KD 40,000 and can be negotiated.
Tel: 6 6 7 5 1 8 8 1



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

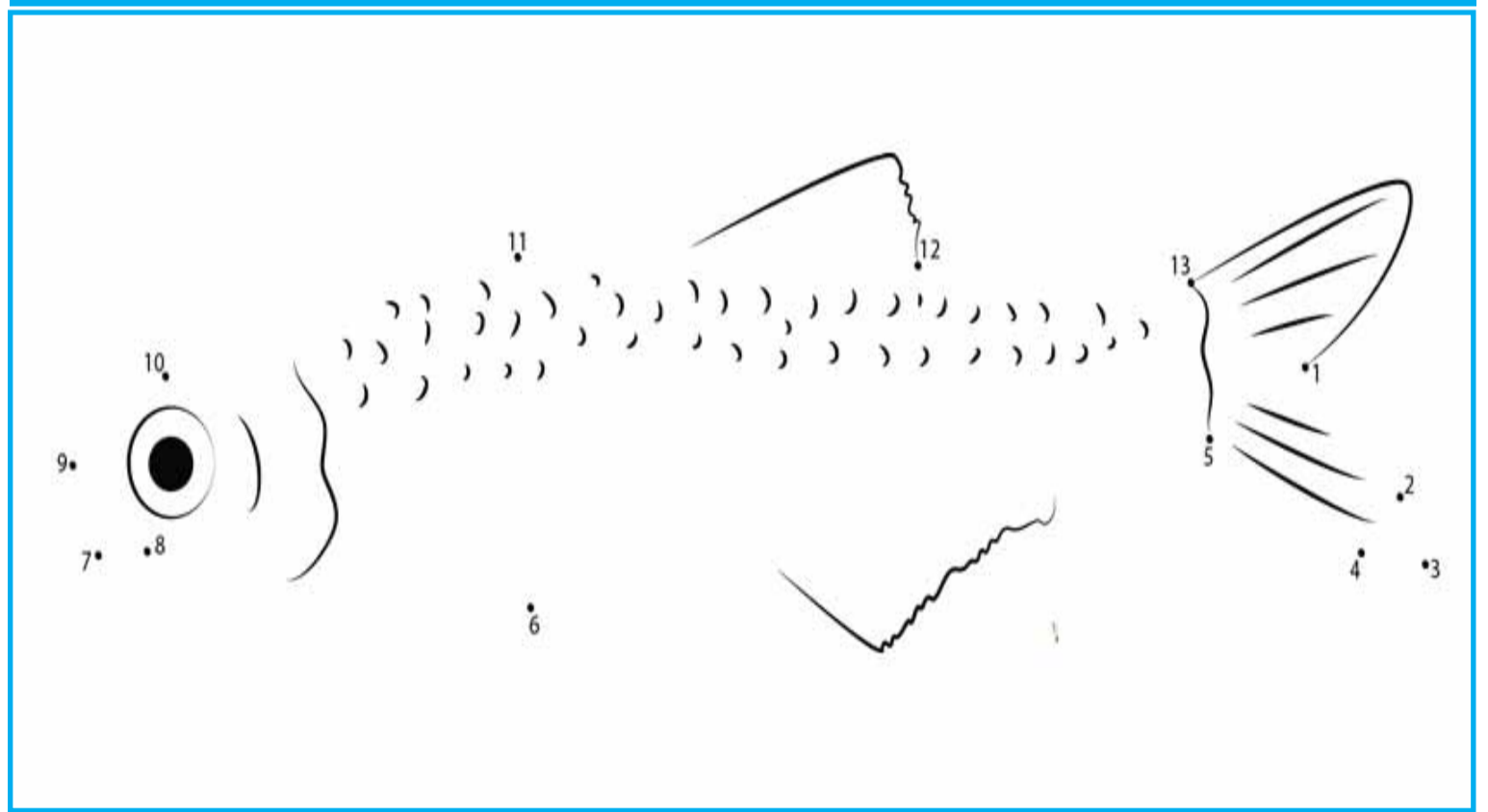
Word Search

Car Makers

Find the names of the car manufacturers in the grid. The names may be vertically, horizontally or diagonally placed and may also be backwards. Which is your favorite car?

ACURA	V	O	L	K	S	W	A	G	E	N	P	O	N	T	I	A	C	P
AUDI	C	H	V	I	M	E	R	C	E	D	E	S	B	E	N	Z	E	O
BMW	H	Y	Q	N	N	R	E	N	A	U	L	T	Z	H	A	E	R	R
BUICK	R	U	R	F	P	C	I	T	R	O	E	N	Z	X	J	W	U	S
CADILLAC	Y	N	K	I	A	E	O	N	L	V	L	V	B	B	D	M	Q	C
CHEVROLET	S	D	U	N	N	Y	U	L	Q	N	P	Y	F	F	B	A	H	
CHRYSLER	L	A	A	I	O	R	E	G	N	B	A	Q	I	O	M	L	K	E
CITROEN	E	I	V	T	T	D	U	A	E	N	D	S	R	L	J	C	F	
DAEWOO	R	S	K	I	B	B	K	T	S	O	U	D	S	I	L	K	G	E
DODGE	O	S	Y	D	X	C	E	A	Z	T	L	D	I	A	O	E	R	
EAGLE	G	Z	I	G	I	K	U	Z	U	S	A	A	D	K	N	N	G	R
FERRARI	M	O	W	L	L	G	I	D	U	A	C	U	R	A	D	I	D	A
FORD	M	E	R	C	U	R	Y	X	S	U	B	A	R	U	R	T	O	R
GMC	J	A	J	V	C	H	E	V	R	O	L	E	T	G	O	A	D	I
HONDA	S	K	Z	N	O	L	D	S	M	O	B	I	L	E	V	R	A	H
HUMMER	U	H	V	D	Y	L	E	F	Q	Q	E	L	G	A	E	E	E	B
HYUNDAI	T	Y	S	A	A	B	V	B	H	O	N	D	A	M	R	S	W	U
INFINITI	O	R	A	U	G	A	J	O	I	G	E	T	M	Q	H	A	O	I
ISUZU	L	A	M	B	O	R	G	H	I	N	I	U	G	M	C	M	O	C
JAGUAR	B	X	M	I	T	S	U	B	I	S	H	I	H	B	J	X	Z	K
JEEP																		
KIA																		
LAMBORGHINI																		
LAND ROVER																		
LEXUS																		
LINCOLN																		
LOTUS																		
MASERATI																		
MAZDA																		
MERCEDES BENZ																		
MERCURY																		

Join the Dots



STAR TRACK

<p>Aries (March 21-April 19) It's probably in your nature to want to include everyone in your plans today, Aries. Perhaps you're running around making sure everyone is being cared for. More than likely, your nurturing instinct is coming out, so feel free to spread this love around. Be careful not to sacrifice too much of yourself as you do this.</p>	<p>Cancer (June 21-July 22) You may be feeling a bit more in touch with your warrior side than your emotional side today, Cancer. More than likely this will set the stage for conflict in your world of hopes and dreams. Be careful that you aren't too aggressive toward people who are just trying to help you. The danger here is that you're most likely to hurt the ones closest to you. Be careful.</p>	<p>Libra (September 23-October 22) Emotionally, you should be doing well today, Libra. But when it comes to taking action, you're apt to be indecisive. Every option seems to look fantastic. You probably aren't going to want to miss out on anything. The best thing for you to do is try to get a piece of everything. There are many pies to dip your fingers into. Why not taste them all to see which one you like best?</p>	<p>Capricorn (December 22-January 19) You may be focused on a certain trajectory, Capricorn, but today you could run into complications based on overlooked issues. Be aware of the people around you and how your actions affect them. You don't necessarily need to change your direction, but you might need to make a couple modifications along the way in order to keep everyone happy.</p>
<p>Taurus (April 20-May 20) You may find that you have a strong will now, Taurus. Once you get fired up to go somewhere, there's little chance that anyone can stop you. People may accuse you of being lazy or wanting to take the easy way out, but it's different this time. You should feel fired up and ready to move. The only thing that could get in the way might be someone's over-sensitive emotions.</p>	<p>Leo (July 23-August 22) You may find that someone or something is thinking or working opposite to the way you are, Leo. This feeling is aggravated even more by a strong warrior force that wants to be recognized. There is definitely a squeaky wheel in the situation that desperately needs oiling. Take care of the basics first before you try to deal with the particulars of a certain situation.</p>	<p>Scorpio (October 23-November 21) There's tension in the air today, Scorpio, and you might be restless and anxious to start something. There is plenty of energy around to feed you, but the trick is to make sure that you're doing things for the right reasons. Don't do things out of guilt, fear, or regret. Keep on the best path for the best reasons for the best results.</p>	<p>Aquarius (January 20- February 18) You should be in a good mood today, Aquarius, but don't be surprised if some aggravating force steps on your toes or pulls your chain in some way. More than likely, there isn't much you can do about the situation except grin and bear it. Do your best to maintain your position and don't lose self-confidence just because someone else isn't in tune with how you handle your affairs.</p>
<p>Gemini (May 21-June 20) Calm down today, Gemini, and be careful about accusing someone of something when you don't have all the facts. Keep your wrath under control. If you strike out now, you may find that you lose their respect forever. There are no guarantees on a day like today. If there are conflicts that you need to work out, at least make sure that it's done in private.</p>	<p>Virgo (August 23-September 22) Pay attention to your body today and feel free to stop when your body says to stop, Virgo. There's a strong aggressive force asking you to take action in one way or another. Make sure that you are considerate of others. Most importantly, make sure that you are considerate of yourself. Don't indulge in cheap thrills at the expense of your physical well-being.</p>	<p>Sagittarius (November 22-December 21) You're probably feeling more in touch with your emotions, Sagittarius, but it might be difficult to know which way to move based on where you are. There's an element of aggression in your world today that might aggravate your heart, making it difficult for you to get a grip on your situation. Try to calm down and focus before making any major decisions.</p>	<p>Pisces (February 19-March 20) Your aggressive nature is strong today, so be careful, Pisces. Even though this may be good for getting things done and tackling any project you need to complete, the problem is that you might tend to step on other people's toes in the process. Be considerate of others' emotions and try not to get upset if someone else takes the spotlight for a while.</p>



In this file photo American actor Chadwick Boseman poses on arrival for the European Premiere of 'Black Panther' in central London. — AFP photos



In this file photo Taylor Simone Ledward and Chadwick Boseman attend the 25th annual Screen Actors Guild Awards at The Shrine Auditorium on January 27, 2019 in Los Angeles.



In this file photo US actor Chadwick Boseman arrives for the 91st Annual Academy Awards at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood.

'Black Panther' star **Boseman** dies after private battle with cancer

Chadwick Boseman, star of the ground-breaking superhero movie "Black Panther," has died after a private four-year battle with colon cancer, his publicist told AFP Friday. Boseman, 43, never publicly discussed his condition and continued to work on major Hollywood films during and between "countless" operations and chemotherapy, his family said in a statement. "It was the honor of his career to bring King T'Challa to life in 'Black Panther,'" they said. "A true fighter, Chadwick persevered through it all," the statement added. He died in his home "with his wife and family by his side," it said. Boseman played the first black superhero to get his own standalone film in the record-breaking Marvel franchise with 2018's "Black Panther."

The movie, set in the fictional African

kingdom of Wakanda, was adored by critics and audiences, becoming the first comic book film to be nominated for best picture at the Oscars and grossing over \$1 billion worldwide. Earlier in his career, Boseman played black icons Jackie Robinson in "42"-Friday, ironically, was Jackie Robinson Day in the US-and James Brown in "Get on Up." The news of Boseman's death sent shockwaves through Hollywood and around the world. "The true power of @chadwickboseman was bigger than anything we saw on screen," wrote Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden. "From the Black Panther to Jackie Robinson, he inspired generations and showed them they can be anything they want-even super heroes." Biden's running mate Kamala Harris said she was "heartbroken" and referenced Howard University

in Washington, nicknamed Bison, where they both studied.

"My friend and fellow Bison Chadwick Boseman was brilliant, kind, learned, and humble," she tweeted. "He left too early but his life made a difference. Sending my sincere condolences to his family." Boseman's final post to Twitter, on August 12, was to congratulate Harris the day after she was announced as the Democratic candidate for vice president in the 2020 election. Chris Evans, who played Captain America in the Marvel series, tweeted: "Chadwick was special. A true original. He was a deeply committed and constantly curious artist. He had so much amazing work still left to create. I'm endlessly grateful for our friendship." Another of Boseman's Marvel co-stars, Mark Ruffalo, tweeted: "Brother, you were one of the all time greats and your

greatness was only beginning. Lord love ya." Both Evans and Ruffalo signed off their tweets: "Rest in power, King." Leading US civil rights organization the NAACP praised Boseman for "showing us how to conquer adversity with grace" and "to walk as a King, without losing the common touch." "#RestInPower #BlackPantherForever," its tweet concluded.

'Hearts are broken'

Boseman had recently appeared in Spike Lee's Vietnam War-set "Da 5 Bloods," and was set to appear in a sequel to "Black Panther" due in 2022. "Our hearts are broken and our thoughts are with Chadwick Boseman's family. Your legacy will live on forever. Rest In Peace," wrote the official Marvel Twitter account. His character T'Challa, king and protector of technologically advanced Wakanda, was the first black superhero in mainstream American comics, having been featured in "The Fantastic Four" in 1966. The Marvel film was celebrated as an important cultural moment for its mainly black cast, and for subverting stereotypes by depicting a prosperous African country that takes in refugees and extends its culture and technology to poorer nations.

Boseman shrugged off doubters who tried to convince him not to give the superhero an African accent. "There was a time period where people would ask me questions about whether or not an audience could sit through a movie with a lead character that spoke with that accent," he said at the time. "I became adamant about the fact that it's not true," he added. Born in South Carolina, the



In this file photo Actor Chadwick Boseman arrives for the 90th Annual Academy Awards in Hollywood.

son of a nurse and an upholstery entrepreneur, Boseman has roots in the West African state of Sierra Leone. Before Marvel, he was best known for his acclaimed portrayal of the legendary Robinson in Brian Helgeland's "42" (2013), which had the highest-grossing debut for a baseball movie in Hollywood history. He was also lavished with praise for his interpretation of soul singer Brown in "Get on Up" (2014), earning inclusion among the top 10 performances of 2014 by Time magazine. — AFP



In this file photo Chadwick Boseman (center), Michael B. Jordan (left), Danai Gurira (left), Lupita Nyong'o (second right), Angela Bassett (right) and the cast of "Black Panther" accept the award for best Cast in A Motion Picture the 25th Annual Screen Actors Guild Awards show at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles.

Paris theatre parts company with British artistic director

British arts supremo Ruth Mackenzie is to leave her job at the helm of one of the French capital's most important theatres, in a surprise move sources said was due to managerial and financial concerns. The Paris Theatre du Chatelet appointed Mackenzie in 2017, just as the theatre prepared to close for nearly two and a half years for a 26.5-million-euro (\$31.5-million) refurbishment. The theatre, which is one of the city's chief venues for classical music, opera dance and also musicals, confirmed her departure in a short statement on Friday. "There was a managerial problem with the staff and a financial problem due to an insufficient artistic season," said a source with knowledge of the issue who asked not to be named. "An independent audit was conducted which has led to her departure."

"The (issue) had been brewing for a long time and it is the board of directors who asked Ms Mackenzie to leave," the source said. Mackenzie is known for running the Cultural Olympiad for the 2012 London Olympic Games, the Scottish Opera, the Manchester International Festival, and the Holland Festival until her appointment to the Theatre of Chatelet. Her brief reign was marred by controversy, particularly a decision to host the immersive "Dau" project by Russian director Ilya Khrzhanovsky, who faced accusations in the French press of exploiting his cast and having a guru-like hold over them. — AFP



This file photograph shows the then Director of The Chatelet Briton Ruth Mackenzie as she poses during a portrait session in Paris. — AFP

Indian stars Kohli, Sharma expecting first child

Indian cricket superstar Virat Kohli and Bollywood actress Anushka Sharma announced Thursday they are expecting their first child in January. Photos of Kohli and a pregnant Sharma were posted on the celebrity couple's social media accounts. "And then, we were three! Arriving Jan 2021," Kohli tweeted. The pair married in a low-key ceremony in Italy in December 2017 after being in a relationship for several years.

Kohli, 31, is one of the world's top batsmen and captain of India's national cricket team. Sharma, 32, is one of the highest-paid actresses in Bollywood. She was last seen on the big screen in the 2018 film "Zero", and has also been working on content for streaming platforms. — AFP

In this file photo, Indian cricketer Virat Kohli (left) and Bollywood actress Anushka Sharma, who were recently married in Italy, pose during a reception in New Delhi. — AFP



London Blue Plaque honor for Indian 'spy princess'

A woman of Indian-origin dubbed "the spy princess" on Friday gets a new memorial in Britain honoring her espionage work and refusal to betray secrets in World War II. English Heritage is putting up a Blue Plaque honoring Noor Inayat Khan outside 4 Tavistock Street in the Bloomsbury area of central London where she lived from 1942-43. In 2012, Queen Elizabeth II's daughter Princess Anne unveiled a bronze bust of Khan in nearby Gordon Square Gardens. Her biographer, Shrabani Basu, said Khan, born into a princely Indian Sufi family and descended from Tipu Sultan, the 18th century ruler of Mysore, was an "unlikely spy".

She believed in non-violence and religious harmony but gave her life in the fight against fascism when her adopted country needed her, she said. "It is fitting that Noor Inayat Khan is the first woman

of Indian origin to be remembered with a Blue Plaque," said Basu, who wrote "Spy Princess: The Life of Noor Inayat Khan". "As people walk by, Noor's story will continue to inspire future generations. In today's world, her vision of unity and freedom is more important than ever." Khan was the first female wireless operator sent to Nazi-occupied France but was captured, tortured and shot dead aged 30 at the Dachau concentration camp in September 1944. English Heritage described her as "Britain's first Muslim war heroine in Europe". She was killed after refusing to give away secrets under repeated torture by the Gestapo. Khan was posthumously awarded the George Cross and is one of only four women to have directly received Britain's highest non-combat award for gallantry. —AFP

RIDLEY SCOTT BRINGS BOWIE AND BODYSUITS TO SCI-FI TV DEBUT 'RAISED BY WOLVES'

When Ridley Scott, the legendary filmmaker behind "Alien," "Gladiator" and "Blade Runner," began directing his first television series in decades, he was faced with a dilemma. Sci-fi show "Raised by Wolves," premiering on HBO Max on September 3, sees a pair of advanced male and female androids land on a new planet after the destruction of Earth, charged with raising a new colony of humans. "Because it's Adam and Eve, really they should be naked," Scott said. "And I thought, 'That may be a bridge too far for HBO—they might have a heart attack.'" His solution came as he walked past lingerie store Agent Provocateur in London's Soho district, spotting a racy elastic bodysuit in the shop window.

"The elasticity became a metaphor for nakedness," said the British auteur. "Besides, (nudity) would be too distracting." The visually striking spandex outfits worn by actors Amanda Colin ("Mother") and Abubakar Salim ("Father") are just one intricate detail of the latest immersive, futuristic world created by Scott. And that dystopian vision—a universe in which a 22nd-century Earth has been ripped apart by war between atheists and the Mithraic religious movement—has resonance for the turbulent world of 2020. "We don't learn by past events, and we keep making the same mistakes... we're witnessing that right now," said Scott. —AFP



In this file photo Sir Ridley Scott speaks at his Hand and Footprint ceremony in front of the TCL Chinese Theater in Hollywood. — AFP



In this file photo British author JK Rowling poses upon arrival at the BAFTA British Academy Film Awards at the Royal Albert Hall in London. — AFP

JK Rowling returns award over trans comments criticism

"Harry Potter" creator JK Rowling said on Friday she would give back an award presented by the US Kennedy family after one of its members criticized her views on gender issues. The Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights organization gave Rowling its Ripple of Hope honor last year. But the group's president, Kerry Kennedy, said this month the British writer's outspoken views on gender "diminished the identity" of trans people. "Kerry Kennedy recently felt it necessary to publish a statement denouncing my views," Rowling said in a statement on her website. "The statement incorrectly implied that I was transphobic, and that I am responsible for harm to trans people," she added. "I absolutely refute the accusation."

"In solidarity with those who have contacted me but who are struggling to make their voices heard, and because of the very serious conflict of views between myself and RFKHR, I feel I have no option but to return the Ripple of Hope Award." Rowling sparked controversy in June for tweeting about the use of the phrase "people who menstruate" instead of women. "I'm sure there used to be a word for those people. Someone help me out. Wumben? Wimpund? Woomud?", she wrote. It led to a string of denunciations, including from the actor Daniel Radcliffe, who played Potter in the blockbuster film franchise, and other actors who starred in the series. —AFP

Lifestyle | Features

BANKSY-FUNDED MEDITERRANEAN RESCUE BOAT CALLS FOR URGENT HELP

A refugee rescue vessel funded by British street artist Banksy said it was stranded and needed urgent help yesterday after lending assistance to a boat in the Mediterranean that was carrying at least one dead migrant. The German-flagged Louise Michel said it was overcrowded and unable to move after encountering another boat attempting to cross the expanse dividing Europe and Africa with 130 people on board. "There is already one dead person on the boat. We need immediate assistance," the crew of the 31-metre (101 feet) Louise Michel wrote on Twitter, saying other migrants had fuel burns and had been at sea for days. The vessel's crew of 10 had earlier rescued another 89 people from a rubber boat in distress on Thursday, and said European rescue agencies had so far ignored its distress calls.

The boat-named after 19th-century French anarchist Louise Michel—was around 90 kilometers southeast of the Italian island of Lampedusa early yesterday, according to the global ship tracking website Marine Traffic. Thousands of people are thought to have died making the dangerous trip across the Mediterranean to flee conflict, repression and poverty in Africa and the Middle East. Banksy's decision to fund the high-speed boat follows a body of work by the

artist that has leveled scathing judgments on Europe's halting response to the migrant crisis.

'I can't keep the money'

Painted in hot pink and white, the Louise Michel features a Banksy artwork depicting a girl in a life vest holding a heart-shaped safety buoy. The motor yacht, formerly owned by French customs, is smaller but considerably faster than other charity rescue vessels—enabling it to outrun Libyan coastguard boats, according to The Guardian. Its crew is "made up of European activists with long experience in search and rescue operations" and is captained by German human rights activist Pia Klemp, who has also captained other such rescue vessels, the paper reported.

Banksy's involvement in the rescue mission goes back to September 2019 when he sent Klemp an email. "Hello Pia, I've read about your story in the papers. You sound like a badass," Banksy wrote. "I am an artist from the UK and I've made some work about the migrant crisis, obviously I can't keep the money. Could you use it to buy a new boat or something? Please let me know. Well done. Banksy." Klemp, who initially thought it was a joke, told the paper she believed she was chosen because of her political stance, The



Picture taken shows three small rescue boat that are part of the Sea-Watch 4 civil sea rescue ship (back left) approaching the pink rescue boat "Louise Michel" (back right) off the coast of Libya.



Handout picture shows the pink rescue boat "Louise Michel" (right) off the coast of Libya. —AFP photos

Guardian said. "I don't see sea rescue as a humanitarian action, but as part of an anti-fascist fight," she told the paper. The crew with diverse backgrounds "all identify as anti-racist and anti-fascist activists advocating for radical political change," The Guardian said.

'Incognito'

A spokesman for Burriana's port confirmed that the Louise Michel docked there on June 23 and left on August 18. "During this time, they have been repair-

ing and preparing the boat but they did it by themselves, they did not use the port services", he told AFP. About Banksy, "if he has been here, he came incognito," the official said. The Louise Michel left Burriana on August 18 "under the strictest secrecy", The Guardian reported. Early this month, humanitarian organizations said they would resume migrant rescues in the Mediterranean Sea, where none have operated since the Ocean Viking docked in Italy in early July.

Before the Ocean Viking's last mission,

rescue operations in the Mediterranean had been suspended for months due to the global coronavirus pandemic. More than 100,000 migrants tried to cross the Mediterranean last year from North Africa with more than 1,200 dying in the attempt, according to the International Organization for Migration. — AFP



The Museum of Modern Art prepares to reopen to the public on August 27 by displaying specially commissioned "Let's Stay Safe Together" graphic illustrations by designer Nicolas MA(c)nard that remind visitors of the shared responsibility to protect everyone's health and safety in New York.



A woman stands near a painting by Vincent Van Gogh, "The Starry Night" as the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) reopens its doors.



A woman walks past the Milton Glaser "I Love NY" mural at the The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA).



People walk around the atrium as The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) reopens its doors to the public.

NEW YORK'S MUSEUM OF MODERN ART RE-OPENS WITH FEW VISITORS

New York's Museum of Modern Art reopened its doors Thursday following a nearly six-month shutdown due to the coronavirus pandemic, allowing visitors the rare experience of viewing its works by Monet, Van Gogh and Warhol without the usual throngs of visitors. MOMA is the first major museum in the Big Apple to reopen to the public since the US cultural capital was hard-hit by the virus, bringing its busy calendar to a halt. Under the new regulations, and with the tourism sector at a standstill due to the pandemic, only a few art lovers reserved a time slot for the church-like calm of reopening day.

Crowds won't grow much bigger, as the museum will operate at 25 percent of capacity and with the now-usual precautions of social distancing and temperature checks. "I like galleries not being too crowded and people not talk-

ing and people not taking pictures. Everything about it is great," Alan Orenbuch, a 66-year-old retiree and museum regular, told AFP. "In recent years, it just attracted people who had it on their bucket list when visiting New York, it wasn't the same thing," he said.

A safe space

For now, the MOMA has limited capacity to 100 people per hour, although museum leadership hopes to gradually increase entry numbers, explained Sonya Shrier, the director of visitor engagement. "It's really a very special time to visit the galleries, because the galleries aren't as crowded, but also, it's such a wonderful opportunity for visitors to gather safely... in a difficult time," she said. The grand reopening was meticulously planned, and it's "just so gratifying to see the

plans in action and the doors open and visitors back," Shrier added. New York's largest museum, the famed Metropolitan Museum of Art, will reopen on Saturday, and the majority of other museums are expected to reopen by early October.

New York City was hit hard by Covid-19 in the spring, with more than 23,600 deaths, but the city has become a model for keeping the pandemic under control, with an infection rate of about one percent. But New York, normally synonymous with nonstop activity and mass tourism, has yet to fully come back to life, so strong is the fear of a second wave. Many people continue to work remotely, the business districts are deserted and many stores have yet to reopen. — AFP

Macron to meet iconic singer in push for Lebanon reform

French President Emmanuel Macron will next week meet iconic singer Fairuz and members of Lebanon's political leadership as he returns to the country in search of serious reform in the wake of the devastating Beirut port blast, the Elysee said Friday. Macron will be in Lebanon on Monday and Tuesday for his second visit in less than a month after the August 4 blast at the Beirut port that killed 181 people and revived calls for radical change in the country. One of his first meetings after arriving on Monday will be with Fairuz, one of the rare figures in Lebanon who is admired across the multi-confessional country, the Elysee said.

Fairuz, 85, is famously private and rarely seen in public but throughout her career has roused fans with her songs about love and in praise of the beauty of her troubled nation. Karim Emile Bitar, a political science professor in France and Lebanon, tweeted Friday it was an "excellent decision" by Macron to meet Fairuz, describing her as "arguably the most iconic, dignified and consensual Lebanese figure." Macron will meet political leaders at the palace of President Michel Aoun on

Tuesday with the aim of encouraging movement in a political process already mired in stalemate. "He won't let go," said an Elysee source, who asked not to be named. "The purpose of his visit is clear: to push for the conditions to be met for the formation of a government that is capable of carrying out reconstruction and reforms," added the source.

Premier Hassan Diab's cabinet has resigned over the blast, which was blamed on a store of ammonium nitrate left for years in a port warehouse despite warnings. Macron's arrival Monday will coincide with the start of parliamentary consultations on the choice of a new prime minister. On August 9, Macron chaired a video conference that saw world leaders pledge more than 250 million euros (\$295 million) for Lebanon. But France has made clear its patience is far from limitless; Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian warned Thursday that Lebanon risked "disappearing" as a country unless serious reforms are undertaken. — AFP



French President Emmanuel Macron, wearing a protective face mask, delivers a speech as he visits a site of pharmaceutical group Seqens, near Paris. — AFP

Brazil paradise island reopens, with a Covid catch



Fernando de Noronha, a tropical island off Brazil known as one of the world's most coveted travel destinations, said Thursday it is reopening to visitors, with a catch: they have to have had Covid-19. The island, part of a pristine volcanic archipelago that limits tourism to several hundred arrivals per day, closed five months ago to stop the spread of the new coronavirus. Officials said in a post on the island's Instagram account that it would begin reopening in phases from September 1, with strict health controls to "guarantee everyone's protection." "In this first phase, only tourists who have already had Covid-19 will be allowed to disembark," it said.

Visitors will be required to present a

positive test result for the virus along with their payment of Fernando de Noronha's environmental conservation tax. "We are reopening responsibly, with caution and without hurry," the archipelago's administrator, Guilherme Rocha, told a news conference. "Hurry is the enemy of life... We can't do everything at once." Known for its wild, undeveloped beaches, breathtaking scenery and national marine reserve, Fernando de Noronha is home to slightly more than 3,000 permanent residents. But its boutique hotels are typically packed with jet-setters from Brazil and abroad.

The island closed to visitors on March 21, and residents who were on the mainland were barred from returning

from April to mid-June. Those arriving on the island are now issued an ID bracelet they must wear until public health officials give them the all-clear, either after completing quarantine or obtaining two negative test results for the virus. Brazil has the second-highest number of virus infections and deaths in the world, after the United States: nearly 3.8 million and 120,000, respectively. But Fernando de Noronha is a "Covid-19 success story," said Rocha. "We haven't had communal transmission on the island for a long time. And we want it to stay that way," he said. — AFP

Sports

Photo of the day



UTAH: Carson Storch hikes up to practice at Red Bull Rampage in Utah. — Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

Sweden's Nordqvist in three-way tie for LPGA lead

LOS ANGELES: Two-time major champion Anna Nordqvist fired seven birdies in a seven-under 64 on Friday to share the first round lead in the LPGA NW Arkansas Championship with Jackie Stoelting and Esther Lee.

Stoelting, making her first LPGA start since the birth of her son last October, also nabbed seven birdies on the Pinnacle Course in Rogers, Arkansas, where Lee collected eight birdies and a bogey to join the leading trio.

"Today was really good," Nordqvist said. "I feel like I've done a lot of good things the last couple weeks. It just hasn't really paid off."

"It's been a little bit disappointing, a little bit frustrating," added the Swede, who finished tied for 32nd at the Women's British Open at Troon last week. "But had a pretty good talk with my caddie and fiance the beginning of the week, and I feel like they kept me in it."

Stoelting, 34, is making her first start in 14 months. Some of that time off was due to the birth of her son, now 10 months old, and some to the coronavirus pandemic.

"I feel great," she said. "I didn't really have many expectations. But I also have an extremely different perspective on life now that I'm a mom. So, I just was out here really trying to have fun and take it one shot at a time."

Stoelting said she found it harder to play during her pregnancy than she expected, feeling more fatigued and struggling to find her game. — AFP

McIlroy seizes share of halfway lead at BMW Championship

Defending champion Justin Thomas is tied for 45th

LOS ANGELES: Rory McIlroy couldn't keep the bogeys off his card, but the four-time major winner offset that with five birdies to grab a share of the halfway stage lead at the BMW Championship on Friday.

Northern Ireland's McIlroy toughed out a one-under 69 to tie Patrick Cantlay at the top of the leaderboard for a one-stroke cushion heading into the final round of the second leg of the PGA Tour's FedEx Cup playoffs.

McIlroy and Cantlay are at one-under 139, making them the only players under par on the difficult Olympic Fields Country Club course in Illinois.

McIlroy, who won this tournament eight years ago, has carded just one top 30 finish since the Tour restarted, but he can never be counted out in play-off event. McIlroy has two career FedEx Cup titles.

"Pars are good out there," McIlroy said. "I was able to break par which is awesome. I got myself into a good spot going into the weekend." Dustin Johnson birdied his final two holes for a 69 to vault into a tie for third with Japan's Hideki Matsuyama, who shot a three-over 73 to reach even-par 140.

Australia's Adam Scott, Brendon Todd, Louis Oosthuizen of South Africa, Tony Finau and Billy Horschel are tied for fifth at one-over 141, two strokes back of the leaders.

The Olympia Fields event features a 69-player field with no cut, and the top 30 in the rankings after this event advance to the Tour Championship. The suburban Chicago layout, which hosted the 2003 US Open, has proved to be one of the toughest challenges on the Tour this year.

McIlroy, who is trying to win this event for the first time since 2012, had three birdies on his front nine and two on the back.

He started quickly with two birdies on his first

four holes, including a five-foot birdie putt on the par three 13th hole followed by an eight-foot putt on the par-four 11th.

McIlroy birdied his seventh hole of the round (No. 16) and his first hole on the back nine to get to three under. But three bogeys over his final seven holes knocked some of the wind out of his sails.

After some sub-par results of late, McIlroy said



Toughest challenges

he has been making adjustments with his clubs, especially his driver.

"I was just trying to find something that I could get it in play," he said. "I went to higher loft driver and a different shaft. "If I can get it in play off the tee, then I can play from there. I wasn't doing that over the last few weeks."

Cantlay had four birdies and an eagle on the par-four 11th hole for a two under 68. He made double bogey on No. 16 but then closed with a birdie to move into a tie with McIlroy.

"I drove it pretty good actually, and I thought my way around the golf course really well," said Cantlay. "I got a couple of good breaks, and sometimes that's what it takes to get up at the top of the leaderboard."



OLYMPIA FIELDS: Rory McIlroy of Northern Ireland plays his fourth shot on the fifth green during the second round of the BMW Championship on the North Course at Olympia Fields Country Club in Olympia Fields, Illinois. — AFP

TIGER TIED FOR 55TH

Johnson finished up his round with an eight-foot birdie putt on 17 and then a 32 footer on the par-four 18 to get within one stroke of McIlroy and Cantlay.

"I am in a very good position, what with two guys under par it shows you that the golf course is very tough," said Johnson. American Tiger Woods

birdied No. 17 then closed with a 37-foot birdie putt on 18 to salvage something from a disappointing five over 75 to move into a tie for 55th.

The birdie on 17 snapped a string of three straight bogeys for the 15-time major winner and reigning Masters champion. Defending champion Justin Thomas shot a four-over 74 and is tied for 45th, eight shots back of the leaders. — AFP

GAZOO Racing achieves spectacular one-two finish in Belgium

GAZOO Racing (GR) returned to winning ways in the sixth round of the 2019-2020 FIA World Endurance Championship (WEC) with a one-two victory in a dramatic Total 6 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps. The No. 7 TS050 Hybrid Electric Vehicle (HEV) crew of Mike Conway, Kamui Kobayashi and Jose Maria Lopez overcame a maximum success handicap to extend their World Championship lead to 12 points with just two races remaining.

They were pushed hard by Sebastien Buemi, Kazuki Nakajima and Brendon Hartley in the No. 8 TS050 HEV, who finished 34.170 seconds behind as the team earned its fourth one-two of the season and stretched its lead in the teams' World Championship to 42 points.

After days of sunshine and high temperatures, the famously changeable Spa weather struck just over an hour before the start, with a heavy rainstorm causing the race to begin behind the safety car. When racing resumed on lap five, the TS050 HEVs' exceptional four-wheel-drive capabilities enabled Buemi to take the lead in the No. 8 TS050 HEV, while the No. 7 TS050 HEV raced into second place with Conway at the wheel.

Amid constantly evolving conditions, the No. 8 TS050 HEV crew pitted a lap earlier and kept their Michelin wet tires, whereas the No. 7 TS050 HEV opted to switch to dry tires. When the safety car was called soon after due to an incident involving another car, it soon became clear that conditions



favored the dry rubber.

More rain was to come, however, as the second hour came to a close and both cars pitted simultaneously for wets: the No. 7 TS050 HEV with Kobayashi at the wheel led the second-placed No. 8 TS050 HEV, now driven by Hartley, by a minute.

The sun made a rare appearance as the final third approached, allowing Lopez and Nakajima to take their stints on dry tires. The race entered its final hour under the safety car, bringing Nakajima on to the tail of Lopez and setting up a tense duel heading into the final pit stop.

Lopez held the lead under heavy pressure and both pit crews serviced the cars in near-identical times, with the No. 7 TS050 HEV pitting a lap after its sister car. Conway took the wheel of the No. 7 TS050 HEV and saw out the remaining 40 minutes, with Buemi holding strong in second to cross the

line 34.17 seconds behind at the flag.

Hisatake Murata, Team President said: "It was a dramatic race and a fantastic result for our team. Credit to the drivers, mechanics and engineers for their great job in difficult conditions. Thank you also to the WEC and the FIA for their hard work to allow us to race again in a safe environment: everyone has made a big effort to put on a show today. Now we all look forward to Le Mans, which is even more special for GAZOO Racing this year. We are all pushing to win this race for the third consecutive time with the TS050 HYBRID."

Jose Maria Lopez, Driver of the No. 7 TS050 HEV, said: "Today, everything went in our favor: the weather gave us a chance to fight and we really took it. All the strategy calls we made on our car were the right ones. It has been a fantastic effort from the whole team, and particularly my team-

mates. Now we are ready for Le Mans, our biggest race; even without spectators we will give everything to get the win."

"We are delighted to claim the two top spots on the podium and further extend our lead as we approach the final two races of the season. I'd like to congratulate the entire team on another outstanding performance in very challenging conditions," commented Kei Fujita, Chief Representative, Middle East and Central Asia Representative ?Office, Toyota Motor Corporation. "Competing in these conditions allows us to push our cars to the limit, gain a deeper understanding of their capabilities, and fine-tune our production models to create 'ever-better' cars. I'd like to thank all of our fans for their loyal support, and we look forward to giving them more reasons to celebrate at the iconic Circuit de La Sarthe in September!"

Over the years, Toyota has been participating in many different forms of motorsports, including Formula One, the World Endurance Championship (WEC), and the Nurburgring 24 Hours endurance race. Toyota's participation in these events was overseen by separate entities within the company until April 2015, when Toyota established GR, to consolidate all of its motorsports activities under one in-house brand. Representing Toyota's belief that 'the roads build the people, and the people build the cars,' GR highlights the role of motorsports as a fundamental pillar of Toyota's commitment to 'making 'ever-better' cars. Harnessing years of experience gained under the extreme conditions of various motorsports events, GR aims to forge new technologies and solutions that bring the freedom, adventure, and joy of driving to everyone.

The WEC season now gears up for its biggest race of the year, the 24 Hours of Le Mans. The GR team will be aiming for a third successive victory in what will be the TS050 HEV's final appearance in the historic French event, which will take place on 19 and 20 September.

Sports

Mets sweep doubleheader, get walk-off homer at Yankee Stadium

Diamondbacks end skid with victory over Giants

NEW YORK: Pinch hitter Amed Rosario hit a two-run homer with no outs in the bottom of the seventh inning, and the host New York Mets recorded a dramatic 4-3 victory over the New York Yankees on Friday night to complete a doubleheader sweep at Yankee Stadium. Jeff McNeil opened the ninth by drawing a walk on a full count off Aroldis Chapman (0-1), and pinch runner Billy Hamilton stole second. Rosario batted for Luis Guillorme and then lifted a 2-0 slider from Chapman about five rows into the empty left field seats. It came on the heels of a come-from-behind, 6-4 victory for the Mets in Game 1, when the Yankees were the home team. Dominic Smith hit a go-ahead solo home run as the Mets homered three times in a span of five batters in the sixth inning. Pete Alonso and Jake Marisnick also homered off Chad Green (2-2) as the Mets opened the five-game series by erasing a four-run deficit.

DIAMONDBACKS 7, GIANTS 4

Arizona finally got its most consistent starter this season, Zac Gallen, his first win after six no-decisions and put an end to an eight-game losing streak with a win over San Francisco in Phoenix. Gallen (1-0) held the Giants to a run on five hits through seven innings, striking out five with a walk. He set a major league record by allowing three or fewer earned runs in each of his first 22 career starts, breaking the previous mark of 21 he shared briefly with former Boston Red Sox pitcher Aaron Sele. Starling Marte had two hits and drove in two runs, and hot-hitting Christian Walker drove in two. Ketel Marte added two hits and scored twice. San Francisco lost its third straight game, a day after being swept in a doubleheader at home by the Los Angeles Dodgers. Brandon Crawford hit a two-run home run and Wilmer Flores doubled in a run, but the Giants' ninth-inning rally came up short.

PHILLIES 7, BRAVES 4 (11 INNINGS)

Scott Kingery hit a three-run, walk-off home run with two outs in the 11th inning to lift host Philadelphia past Atlanta. The blast made a loser of Mark Melancon (2-1), who gave up the homer on

an 0-2 cutter after Kingery didn't swing at the first two pitches, also cutters. Andrew McCutchen homered, singled and drove in two runs while Jean Segura added a two-run home run for the Phillies, who have won four in a row. Phillies starter Zack Wheeler tossed 5 2/3 solid innings and allowed six hits and two runs, one earned. Wheeler recorded three strikeouts and one walk. Blake Parker (2-0) earned the win in relief by pitching out of a jam in the 11th.

REDS 6, CUBS 5

Eugenio Suarez had three hits with three RBIs and Tyler Mahle struck out 11 over 6 2/3 innings, but host Cincinnati had to hold on for a third straight win, defeating struggling Chicago. Jesse Winker and Freddy Galvis joined Suarez with homers, and they had two hits apiece for the Reds, who overcame an early 2-0 hole to take the opener of a four-game set. Suarez, who has hit safely in nine of his last 10 games, was a triple shy of the cycle. Mahle (1-1), making a spot start, allowed first-inning solo homers to Anthony Rizzo and Ohio native Kyle Schwarber, but that was it. However, the Chicago bats woke up in the ninth off Robert Stephenson. Willson Contreras hit a two-run homer and Jason Heyward followed with a solo shot to make it a one-run game.

BLUE JAYS 5, ORIOLES 4 (10 INNINGS)

Randal Grichuk hit a two-run homer with two outs in the bottom of the 10th inning, and Toronto beat visiting Baltimore at Buffalo. Grichuk's ninth homer of the season came against Cole Sulser (1-3) and also scored Reese McGuire, who had been placed at second base. The Orioles led 4-3 when Hanser Alberto blooped an RBI single to center in the top of the 10th against Rafael Dolis (1-1), his fourth hit of the game. It scored Rio Ruiz, who had been placed at second, and was sacrificed to third by Cedric Mullins. Vladimir Guerrero Jr. and Teoscar Hernandez hit solo homers for Toronto in the opener of a four-game series. Renato Nunez had a solo shot for Baltimore to tie the game in the eighth.



NEW YORK: Gary Sanchez #42 of the New York Yankees slides into second as Luis Guillorme #42 of the New York Mets turns a double play during the third inning of the second game of a doubleheader at Yankee Stadium in the Bronx borough of New York City. — AFP

RAYS 2, MARLINS 0

Yandy Diaz broke up a scoreless game with an RBI single in the eighth inning, lifting Tampa Bay to a win at Miami. The Rays have won 16 of their past 19 games. Miami has lost two straight games following three consecutive victories. Pete Fairbanks (4-1) earned the win, throwing 1 1/3 innings of scoreless relief. Diego Castillo pitched a scoreless ninth to earn his second save of the season. Miami rookie Sixto Sanchez, making just his second major league start and appearance, pitched seven scoreless innings, striking out 10 while walking one.

RANGERS 6, DODGERS 2

Shin-Soo Choo had two hits, two RBIs and two

runs, and Nick Solak had two hits and two RBIs to lead Texas to a win over Los Angeles in Arlington, Texas. The victory snapped a two-game losing streak for Texas, which has won just twice in its past 12 games. Los Angeles, which owns the best record in the major leagues at 24-10, lost for the second time in its previous four games. The Dodgers are 13-3 in their past 16 outings. Texas touched up Dodgers starter Dustin May for two runs in the third inning on a Choo double that scored Leody Taveras and on Solak's single that plated Choo. Mike Minor started for the Rangers and hurled six scoreless innings, allowing four hits and three walks while striking out six. — Reuters

NBA playoffs set to resume

WASHINGTON: NBA playoff games are set to resume on Saturday, but players are determined to keep the focus on the fight for social justice and racial equality with the help from club owners and the league.

NBA commissioner Adam Silver and National Basketball Players Association executive director Michele Roberts said in a joint statement on Friday that "All parties agreed to resume NBA playoff games on Saturday." "We look forward to the resumption of the playoffs and continuing to work together — in Orlando and in all NBA team markets — to push for meaningful and sustainable change," the NBA/NBPA statement said.

Players and the league agreed to form a social justice coalition to address a broad range of issues including access to voting, promoting civic engagement and police and criminal justice reform.

The announcement came on a third day of postponed NBA playoff games after the Milwaukee Bucks — shocked by the police shooting of Jacob Blake in Kenosha, Wisconsin, refused to take the court Wednesday for a scheduled Eastern Conference first-round matchup against Orlando in the NBA's COVID-19 quarantine bubble at Disney World in Orlando, Florida.

The move led to postponements in support of social justice in Major League Baseball, Major League Soccer, the Women's NBA, the National Hockey League and tennis.

Milwaukee is scheduled to take the court against

Orlando on Saturday, with a chance to advance to the second round. Oklahoma City take on Houston and the Los Angeles Lakers face Portland in another potential series-clinching game.

Lakers superstar LeBron James was reportedly among a small group of players who consulted with former President Barack Obama to find a productive way forward after games were halted.

"As an avid basketball fan, President Obama speaks regularly with players and league officials," Katie Hill, a spokeswoman for Obama, told the New York Times. "When asked, he was happy to provide advice on Wednesday night to a small group of NBA players seeking to leverage their immense platforms for good after their brave and inspiring strike in the wake of Jacob Blake's shooting."

Hours of meetings — first among players as they discussed whether to continue the season at all and then among players, owners and league commissioner Adam Silver — resulted in the coalition and some concrete next steps.

Among the initiatives agreed on, NBA owners whose teams own and control their arenas will work with local elections officials to use them for voting locations for the 2020 US general election, allowing safe in-person voting options in communities fearful of COVID-19.

If that option won't work, NBA team owners will try to find another election-related use for the arena, such as for voter registration or ballot counting.

Oklahoma City star point guard Chris Paul, president of the players union since 2013, said the solidarity shown by players was unprecedented in his experience. "Fifteen years in this league and I've never seen anything like it," Paul said of the hours of meetings in which players voiced their feelings and sought ways to use their public platform to battle

racism and inequality in the wider world. "The voices that were heard, I'll never forget it." Players pushed NBA club owners to undertake broader measures for social change, frustrated by video of Blake, a black man, being shot in the back seven times by a policeman. Paul choked up as he told reporters about speaking with Blake's father, and said NBA players, the majority of whom are black, were exhausted as similar stories continue to surface in the United States, where the death of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police in May sparked protests across the nation and beyond.

"We're all tired of just seeing the same thing over and over again," he said. "And everybody just expects us to be OK because we get paid great money." Ultimately, Paul said, players realized continuing the season would give them greater visibility as they press for change. "We're going to continue to play but we're also going to continue to make sure our voices are heard."

A MOMENT TO BREATHE

Silver had told league employees the measures were coming as he expressed full support for the players' walkout.

"I wholeheartedly support NBA and WNBA players and their commitment to shining a light on important issues of social justice," Silver wrote in an open letter to NBA employees posted on the league's website.

Los Angeles Clippers coach Doc Rivers said that despite the emotionally charged atmosphere, meetings between players and owners weren't contentious. "The key to this thing is we all needed to take a breath," Rivers said. "We needed a moment to breathe. It's not lost on me that George Floyd didn't get that moment. "But we did. And we took it." — AFP

Banton hits out before rain ends first England-Pakistan T20

MANCHESTER: England rising star Tom Banton made a fine 71 before Pakistan fought back in the first Twenty20 international at Old Trafford on Friday only for rain to reduce the match to a no-result washout.

England had threatened a huge total while the 21-year-old Banton was compiling his maiden fifty in four T20s at this level.

But his exit left England 109-3 and sparked a collapse that saw the 50-over world champions lose four wickets for 14 runs — all to spin — in 19 balls.

Rain fell with England 131-6 off 16.1 overs. The umpires held a lengthy inspection but decided shortly after 9:00 pm (2000 GMT) that the outfield was too wet to get the game back on.

But Banton, opening after Jason Roy was ruled out with a side injury, at least had a night to remember after being dropped on five when Iftikhar Ahmed floored a routine slip catch off unfortunate paceman Shaheen Afridi.

"It was good fun," Banton told Sky Sports. "I struggled to begin with, they bowled quite nicely and then I just backed myself when the spinners came on. There was a small boundary on one side."

Pakistan struck five balls after captain Babar Azam won the toss when left-arm spinner Imad Wasim caught and bowled Jonny Bairstow.



MANCHESTER: England's Eoin Morgan is trapped LBW (leg before wicket) by Pakistan's Iftikhar Ahmad (not pictured) for 14 during the international Twenty20 cricket match between England and Pakistan at Old Trafford cricket ground in Manchester, north-west England. — AFP

But Banton took charge with two slog-swept sixes off consecutive balls from leg-spinner Shadab Khan.

He went on to complete a 33-ball fifty featuring three fours and three sixes before scooping paceman Haris Rauf for an audacious six over fine leg only to slice Imad to extra-cover.

England captain Eoin Morgan was then lbw to

Iftikhar Ahmed before Moeen Ali was well caught by Mohammad Rizwan off Shadab.

Wicketkeeper Rizwan, who impressed during Pakistan's recent 1-0 Test series defeat by England, then stumped Lewis Gregory off Imad, who took 2-31 from his maximum four overs. The second fixture in this three-match series takes place at Old Trafford on Sunday. — AFP

Wolfsburg aim to stop Lyon claiming fifth Champions League

SAN SEBASTIAN: They are the two enduring heavyweights of the last decade in European women's football, and today title holders Lyon and German contenders Wolfsburg meet in the Champions League final for the fourth time in eight years.

Lyon's hegemony in Europe was supposedly under greater threat than ever before coming into the 'Final Eight', but the French club are now just 90 minutes away from winning the Champions League for the fifth year running, and for a record-extending seventh time overall.

But Wolfsburg have lived up to their billing as the most likely team to halt Lyon's run, and are themselves now aiming to lift the trophy for the third time in their fifth final appearance.

It is a fitting occasion for the women's game to be in the spotlight, although the coronavirus threat has ensured the match in San Sebastian will be played behind closed doors, just like the men's final between Bayern Munich and Paris Saint-Germain in Lisbon a week ago.

The similarities do not go much further — if the two men's finalists earned total prize money of around 80 million euros (\$95m) and are expected to make around 130 million euros altogether once television revenue and other bonuses are added, the winner of Sunday's game will have made just 460,000 euros in prize money.

At least Video Assistant Referees will be available for the final, having controversially not been in use previously in the competition. For years Lyon have served as a model of how successful a women's side attached to a professional men's club can be given proper financial backing, although rivals at home and abroad are gradually making life tougher. They were crowned French champions for the 14th year running in May in a season curtailed because of the pandemic, and they recently won the French Cup for the ninth time by beating Paris Saint-Germain on penalties in the final.

Jean-Luc Vasseur's team again edged out PSG in the Champions League semi-finals, with skipper Wendie Renard to England right-back Lucy Bronze, Japan midfielder Saki Kumagai, Germany playmaker Dzsenifer Marozsan and Norway's 2018 Ballon d'Or winner, Ada Hegerberg. "These players' hunger to win things is insatiable," Vasseur added. "They are still greedy for success. I've never seen anything like it."

Two years ago, Lyon came from behind to beat Wolfsburg 4-1 in extra time in the final in Kiev, although that game actually ended goalless in 90 minutes. — AFP

14 McIlroy seizes share of halfway lead at BMW Championship



15 Mets sweep doubleheader, get walk-off homer at Yankee Stadium



15 Banton hits out before rain ends first England-Pakistan T20



NEW YORK: Novak Djokovic of Serbia returns a shot to Roberto Bautista Agut of Spain in their semifinal match during the Western & Southern Open at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center in the Queens borough of New York City. — AFP

Djokovic struggles into final

Reluctant leader Naomi Osaka also reaches title match

NEW YORK: World number one Novak Djokovic battled into the ATP and WTA Western & Southern Open final Friday despite a neck problem while Japan's Naomi Osaka shook off stress to advance as well.

Djokovic was treated twice by a trainer for neck issues but rallied to defeat Spanish eighth seed Roberto Bautista Agut 4-6, 6-4, 7-6 (7/0) in the New York COVID-19 quarantine bubble where the US Open begins Monday.

The 33-year-old Serbian improved to 22-0 this year despite surrendering three breaks in the third set of the three-hour marathon.

He will face Milos Raonic in Saturday's final after the Canadian, 0-10 all-time against Djokovic, eliminated Greek fourth seed Stefanos Tsitsipas 7-6 (7/5), 6-3.

Fourth-seeded Osaka won a semi-final match she once vowed not to play, saving 18-of-21 break points to beat Belgium's Elise Mertens 6-2, 7-6 (7/5) and reach Saturday's final.

There she will play two-time Australian Open winner Victoria Azarenka, who beat British eighth seed

Johanna Konta 4-6, 6-4, 6-1.

Two-time Grand Slam champion Osaka on Wednesday initially withdrew from her semi-final as a protest for the police shooting of Jacob Blake in Kenosha, Wisconsin.

But when the ATP and WTA followed her lead and postponed all semi-finals to Friday, she changed her mind and played. "I just wanted to create awareness in the tennis bubble," she said. "I think I did my job."

The US Open tuneup is usually played in Cincinnati but was moved in the wake of the deadly virus outbreak. Djokovic, winner of five of the past seven Grand Slam events including the Australian Open, had the trainer work on his neck at 2-1 up in the second set, then broke and held for a 4-2 edge.

Bautista Agut hit a forehand volley winner off a Djokovic drop shot to break back in the seventh game. Djokovic had more treatment, rested as the roof was closed to avoid rain at Louis Armstrong Stadium, then broke Bautista Agut to force a third set when the Spaniard sent a backhand long.

Djokovic sent a forehand long to fall behind 2-1 but broke back in the fourth and again in the sixth on a

brilliant backhand lob winner on the way to a 5-2 edge. Serving for the match in the ninth game, Djokovic was broken at love as Bautista Agut fought back. The Spaniard broke again in the 11th game when Djokovic netted a forehand but gave back the break in the 12th game by sending a forehand long to force a tie-breaker which Djokovic swept, aided by his 13th and 14th aces of the match.

"That was a strange match. I don't know how I won. He was the better player," said the world number one.

RELUCTANT LEADER OSAKA

Osaka, of Haitian and Japanese heritage, said she was "sick to her stomach" and "exhausted" by repeated violence against blacks by US police, echoing a move by the NBA Milwaukee Bucks in boycotting a playoff game for the same reason.

"I honestly didn't even think it would be that big of a deal," Osaka said Friday. "I always thought it would be nice if someone started in tennis. I'm more of a follower. I was waiting and waiting and then I realized I was the one who was going to have to take

the first step."

Osaka, 22, said her big personal gains from the move were "confidence and really becoming more aware of the impact my voice could have." But she was worried how other players would react. "I don't want them to blame me for the one-day break because their schedule got messed up," she said.

"I was scared but they were really nice," Mertens was supportive of Osaka and unfazed by the off-again, on-again status of the match. "I totally get her reason 100% so I'm totally supporting her too," Mertens said.

Osaka, the 2018 US Open and 2019 Australian Open champion, broke for a 2-0 lead and again in the eighth game to take the first set in 38 minutes. She broke for a 2-0 lead in set two before Mertens rolled through the next four games. Osaka broke back in the seventh game and, after battling into the tie-breaker, won when Mertens hit a backhand wide.

Raonic commended Osaka's move, saying, "It's a human right not to have that fear. I hope there is a change in the future and that we as athletes can be a small part of that." — AFP

Swim queen Ikee returns to racing

TOKYO: Japanese swimming star Rikako Ikee made her sporting comeback in Tokyo on Saturday, competing for the first time since a shock leukaemia diagnosis last year. The 20-year-old had been a strong favourite for the 100-metre butterfly gold at the now-postponed Olympic Games before revealing she had the illness.

She was discharged from hospital in December after around 10 months of treatment and resumed training in March. "The fact that I'm swimming and I'm here again... I'm moved," she told re-

porters after the 50-metre freestyle race on Saturday.

"My goal was to enjoy it without thinking too much and I really could," she said, adding that she felt relieved. Ikee finished the race, organised by the Tokyo Swimming Association, at 26.32 seconds.

This makes her eligible to participate in Japan's Inter College Swimming Championship in October — a goal she has set for herself. "I was nervous but I was able to beat the time I was aiming for," she said.

Ikee had also been seen as a contender for the 200m freestyle at the Tokyo Olympics, but after her diagnosis she switched her focus to competing in the 2024 event.

She has not yet said if she plans to rethink and compete in Tokyo next year following the postponement of the 2020 Games because of the coronavirus pandemic.

This week the sports star posted two videos on Twitter showing her training ahead of the Tokyo race, prompting tens of thousands of likes and retweets.

"I can do 10 chin-ups now... I couldn't do any a couple of months ago," she wrote alongside one of the clips, which was viewed more than 2.3 million times.

Ikee has documented her experience with the disease online, thanking her legions of fans for their support. "It was a long and hard time," she said last year in a handwritten message posted on her Twitter account.

Ikee served as the key figure at a subdued year-to-go ceremony for the postponed Games last month, urging disheartened athletes not to lose faith. "To overcome adversity, what we need is hope. A flame of hope glowing in the distance allows us to keep trying, to keep moving forward, no matter how hard it is," she said. — AFP



TOKYO: Japanese swimmer Rikako Ikee reacts after competing in a 50-meter freestyle race at Tokyo Tatsumi International Swimming Center yesterday. — AFP