



Amir accepts resignation of Cabinet after election

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday accepted the resignation of the Cabinet, a constitutional requirement after the general elections, but asked it to continue in a caretaker role until a new Cabinet is formed. The Amir also issued a decree setting Dec 15 as the day for the inaugural session of the new National Assembly that saw Kuwaiti voters vent their anger against a majority of outgoing MPs, sending home 25 out of 44 lawmakers who bid for re-election.

The new Cabinet must be formed before the Assembly meeting. HH the Amir can reappoint Prime Minister HH Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah to form the Cabinet or ask someone else. The opposition lost a number of its veteran leaders but still managed to make small gains. But it all depends on whether various opposition groups and individuals reach consensus on various issues.

Their most immediate task is to push for a change in the speakership by electing someone to replace Marzouq Al-Ghanem, in the post for the past seven years, and who is at odds with the opposition. Ghanem won impressively, coming first in the second constituency. He told his supporters that his strong showing is a response against his foes. Ghanem is facing a major challenge to remove him from the speaker's seat, and needs solid government backing to win again.

Former Cabinet minister Bader Al-Humaidhi, who won a seat for the second constituency, said on Twitter that he has decided to contest the speaker's post amid rumors that he was expected to get support from the government. These reports could not be confirmed independently.

Opposition leader Bader Al-Dahoum, who ended an eight-year boycott of elections, won a seat in the fifth constituency in emphatic fashion.

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Winners of the 2020 National Assembly elections

1



Hassan Jowhar



Yusuf Al-Ghurayyeb



Ahmad Al-Shuhoomi



Hamad Rouhuddin



Essa Al-Kandari



Ali Al-Qattan



Adnan Abdulsamad



Abdullah Al-Turajji



Abdullah Al-Mudhaf



Osama Al-Shaheen

2



Marzouq Al-Ghanem



Mohammad Al-Mutair



Khalil Al-Saleh



Hamad Al-Matar



Salman Al-Azmi



Khaled Al-Enezi



Bader Al-Humaidhi



Bader Al-Mulla



Hamad Al-Harshani



Ahmad Al-Hamad

3



Abdulkareem Al-Kandari



Osama Al-Munawer



Muhannad Al-Sayer



Hesham Al-Saleh



Abdulaziz Al-Saqabi



Yusuf Al-Fadhalah



Mubarak Al-Mutairi



Saadoun Hammad



Fares Al-Otaibi



Muhalhal Al-Mudhaf

4



Shuaib Al-Muwaizri



Fayez Al-Mutairi



Musaad Al-Mutairi



Mohammad Al-Rajhi



Saud Al-Mutairi



Thamer Al-Dhefeeri



Marzouq Al-Khalifa



Farz Al-Daihani



Saad Al-Khanfour



Mubarak Al-Hajraf

5



Hamdan Al-Azmi



Bader Al-Dahoum



Mubarak Al-Ajmi



Al-Saifi Al-Saifi



Khaled Al-Otaibi



Humoud Al-Azmi



Saleh Al-Mutairi



Nasser Al-Dossari



Mohammad Al-Huwaila



Ahmad Al-Azmi

conspiracy theories

What a shame!



By Badrya Darwish

badrya_d@kuwaittimes.net

The National Assembly elections took place on Saturday in Kuwait despite the coronavirus and the rain. We walked to polling stations to make our voices heard, to serve our country. As for me, I walked twice guys, because at first I mistakenly took the old brown-colored nationality card and queued for an hour before realizing that I had brought the wrong one. Back to the house, queued again and finally cast my vote. I was delighted and encouraged to see so many women - young, old, modern, with hijab, without hijab - dedicated to queuing and casting their votes.

Then I woke up yesterday morning to the terrible news that not even a single woman made it to the Abdullah Al-Salem hall. Is this fair? Is this right? And whose fault is it? I don't blame the men, honestly speaking. I put the blame directly on our shoulders. I call it a betrayal - self-betrayal.

Women form the majority of the electorate. We comprise 51.7 percent of voters and yet we couldn't choose one woman candidate in each area? Debating with some of my friends over this issue, I was shocked by their opinion. They said none of the female candidates who ran deserved to win a seat. Excuse me?! All the men who won seats deserve it, really?

Don't we need at least one female voice among all the men to represent our concerns? What a shame!

To men, the parliament now looks like a men's club. Unfortunately, Kuwait was one of the pioneers in women's leadership. Our women are better educated, are well-traveled and are business leaders. Many of our women are doctors, engineers, architects and entrepreneurs. Our civil service is full of women working in every level and every field, and they have proven themselves.

I don't want to say better than men and sound like I'm discriminating. But women in Kuwait are doing very well in every field and industry. Even in the dark days of the invasion, women proved themselves to be powerful, perseverant and capable.

Not one of Kuwait's women deserved a seat in parliament? Do we need to follow other countries that set quotas for women in every constituency? Maybe that is what it will take.

Local

Cabinet resigns after 'tackling responsibility at crucial time'

Govt did its best to supervise 'transparent' elections: Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. — Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah tenders the Cabinet's resignation to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at Bayan Palace yesterday. Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah who tendered the resignation of his cabinet. His Highness the Amir accepted the resignation. "The resignation of His Highness the Prime Minister and the ministers is accepted and they are tasked

with proceeding in a caretaking manner addressing urgent affairs pending the formation of a new cabinet," an Amiri Decree stated in part.

Addressing His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Prime Minister noted that he was appointed as head of the government on November 19, 2019, adding that Decree 290/2019 tasked him with formation of the government during "this crucial period of our beloved homeland's history." His Highness the Prime Minister noted that he and the ministers

did their best to shoulder the responsibilities accorded to them for serving Kuwait and attain prosperity. "I have keenly supervised the general elections of the new National Assembly to hold the polls freely, transparently and with utmost objectivity despite the very strict precautions warranted by the novel coronavirus," Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled noted in part in his address to His Highness the Amir.

"As Allah is my witness, we have been keen on

performing the accorded tasks with utmost sincerity and faithfulness," Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled affirmed. His Highness the Prime Minister tendered his resignation as well as the resignation of his cabinet to His Highness the Amir, "So you may accept it and take what you may deem appropriate with your well known wisdom as I express admiration to Your Highness for your support." His Highness the Crown Prince also received His Highness the Prime Minister at Bayan Palace yesterday. — KUNA

Kuwait's Deputy FM meets ambassadors

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah met yesterday the Ambassador of Jordan to Kuwait Sager Abu Shtal. The two sides during the meeting tackled issues of common interest, and the latest developments in the regional and international arenas. Meanwhile, Jarallah received yesterday the credentials of the newly appointed Austrian Ambassador to Kuwait Marian Alexander Wrba. During the meeting, they discussed bilateral relations between the two countries and the latest developments in the region and international arenas. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah meets Ambassador of Jordan to Kuwait Sager Abu Shtal. — KUNA photos



Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah meets Austrian Ambassador to Kuwait Marian Alexander Wrba.



KUWAIT: Ambassador of Palestine to Kuwait Rami Tahboub visited Kuwait Times recently and discussed with Editor-in-Chief Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan issues of mutual interest. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Acting Info Minister hails leadership's sponsorship of election

KUWAIT: Minister of Foreign Affairs and Acting Minister of Information Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah stressed that the political leadership's patronage of the democratic process in the country, which described as historic and civilized that has become a Kuwaiti legacy, which originated more than five decades ago. Sheikh Ahmad Al-Sabah said in a press statement yesterday that the close cooperation by all government agencies related to the voting process is within a plan set to ensure the success

of this democratic process. The Ministry of Information devoted its national cadres, official websites and accounts to social media, from the opening of the polls stations until the results were announced, moment-by-moment, he said. Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad praised the active role played by Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), headed by KUNA General Director and Chairman Sheikh Mubarak Al-Duajj Al-Sabah, and all its employees, in transmitting this democratic event with transparency and credibility, reflect-

ing that of the civilized face and the pioneering role of Kuwait. He also congratulated the political leadership on the success of the 2020 parliamentary elections, as he highly appreciated their unlimited support in consolidating and strengthening the Kuwaiti democratic approach. At the same time, he congratulated the winners of National Assembly member, Kuwaiti voters, in addition to the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Information, Munira Al-Huwaidi, and all the employees of the ministry for their fruitful effort and constructive



Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah

work, through which they confirmed the competence of Kuwaiti media with all professionalism. — KUNA

Amir accepts resignation...

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He immediately called for a meeting at his home of all MPs who were elected. It was not known if pro-government MPs would attend. Only 19 MPs from the outgoing Assembly retained their seats, while six MPs did not contest. There are 22 fresh faces in the new Assembly, mostly young blood, along with nine lawmakers from previous assemblies.

It was a night of free fall for a large number of veteran MPs, mostly pro-government, but also a number of leading opposition figures. Shiite MPs Saleh Ashour, Khaled Al-Shatti and Salah Khorshid, along with Sunni Islamist opposition MP Adel Al-Damkhi lost their seats. Ashour has been a member of parliament since the 1990s.

In the second constituency, opposition lawmakers Riyadh Al-Adasani and Omar Al-Tabtabaei lost, in addition to pro-government veteran tribal MPs Khalaf Dumaitheer and Awdah Al-Awdah. In the third district, Safa Al-Hashem, the only woman in the outgoing house known for her attacks on expatriates, was humiliated, garnering just over 400 votes. Her loss became a key a trend on Twitter. One Kuwaiti activist wrote: "To our expat brothers: For your sake, we have brought the downfall of Safa Al-Hashem".

Along with Hashem, leading liberal MP Abdulwahab Al-Babtain failed to retain his seat from the same constituency. Others who lost include former information minister Mohammad Al-Jabri, pro-government MP Ahmad Al-Fadhl and Shiite MP Khalil Abul.

In the fourth constituency, Islamist opposition veteran MP Mohammad Hayef was knocked out, along with MPs Ali Al-Deqbasi, Faraj Al-Arbeed, Islamist Abdullah Fahhad and pro-government MP Askar Al-Enezi. In the fifth con-

stituency, Islamist opposition MP Nayef Al-Merdas lost along with opposition lawmaker MP Al-Humaidi Al-Subaei, Humoud Al-Khudhair and Majed Al-Mutairi, in addition to pro-government MP Faisal Al-Kandari.

The Islamic Constitutional Movement (ICM), the political arm of the Muslim Brotherhood, won three seats, maintaining its strength. Pro-government Salafists' two candidates lost, while opposition Salafists won at least three seats despite losing veterans like Hayef, Damkhi and Merdas. In all, Islamist Sunni opposition candidates won 11 seats, almost unchanged from the previous Assembly.

The Shiite National Islamic Alliance was reduced to just one seat - Adnan Abdulsamad - from two in the previous Assembly. Liberals were dealt a heavy blow, losing almost all their members. Pro-liberal new MP Muhallhal Al-Mudhaf was however elected from the third constituency. Women were a major casualty as no female MPs were elected for the first time since 2008. Three former ministers lost - Jabri, Yacoub Al-Sane and Roudhan Al-Roudhan, while one former minister - Humaidhi - won.

Tribes were the biggest winners. They increased their strength to 29 members in the 50 seat Assembly, up from 26 in the previous Assembly. Mutairis increased their strength from just two to seven MPs, while the Awazem also increased their strength by three to seven MPs. The Ajman won one more seat from last Assembly's three, while Rasheedis maintained their strength at four. The Enezi however won just one member against three in the previous house.

The opposition, now with an Islamic and tribal majority, has around 25-26 MPs, depending on issues, from the previous 22. Nevertheless, the election of 30 candidates under the age of 45 sent out a promising signal to youth hoping for change and reform. "There is a big change in the composition of the new National Assembly," Kuwait analyst Ayed Al-Manaa said. "This an indication of the voters' anger over the performance of the previous parliament and of their desire for change in economic, health, education" and services, he said.

Cabinet discusses Gulf reconciliation talks, elections

KUWAIT: The Cabinet discussed different topics in a meeting chaired by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah at Bayan Palace yesterday. In a statement after the meeting, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh hailed the recent positive developments regarding the talks on Gulf states' reconciliation. He noted that it was a result of the great efforts of His Highness the late Amir Sheikh Sabah

Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the current efforts of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, as well as the support of US President Donald Trump. The ministers also listened to a report on the National Assembly's elections, presented by minister Saleh and Minister of Justice and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Dr Fahad Al-Afasi. Meanwhile, the Cabinet hailed the efforts of all ministries that took part in organizing the elections, and congratulated MPs who won by the choice of the people. Moreover, in accordance with article 57 of Kuwait's constitution, the Cabinet discussed the government's resignation letter, presented by His Highness the Prime Minister to His Highness the Amir. His Highness the Prime Minister thanked His Highness Sheikh Nawaf for his continuous support for all ministers during their term. — KUNA



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

Local

Kuwait's Amir sends cables of congratulations to new MPs

Sheikh Nawaf thanks parliament elections' organizers

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday sent cables of congratulations to winners in National Assembly elections, expressing content for the trust they were bestowed with by citizens. His Highness the Amir wished the new MPs would succeed in serving their constituents and their homeland and in contributing to the development of the homeland and its prosperity. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables to the elected MPs.

An Amiri Decree was issued yesterday, calling on the newly elected National Assembly to hold the first regular session of the 16th legislative term on December 15. The Amiri Decree stipulated that it was issued in accordance with the Constitution, Decree 150/2020 that called on voters to elect members of the National Assembly and declaration of results of the general elections in all electoral districts held on December 5, 2020, and after a presentation by the Prime Minister and approval of the Cabinet. It has stipulated that the National Assembly is called upon



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah




to hold the first regular session of the 16th legislative term in the morning of Tuesday, December 15, 2020. Accordingly, the Prime Minister will notify the

National Assembly about this Decree that will be published by the official gazette.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent cables of thanks to Commander of the Kuwait National Guard His Highness Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister, Interior Minister and Minister of Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh, Foreign Minister and Acting Information Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Al-Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, Minister of Health Sheikh Dr Basel Humoud Al-Sabah, Minister of Justice and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Fahd Al-Afasi, Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education Saud Al-Harbi, Minister of State for Municipality Affairs Waleed Al-Jasem, Director General of Kuwait Fire Force Lt Gen Khaled Al-Mekrad, Director General of Kuwait Municipality Affairs Ahmad Al-Manfohi and Chairman of Kuwait Red Crescent Society Dr Hilal Al-Sayer for their role in the successful organization of the legislative election.

In the cables, His Highness the Amir expressed his sincere gratitude to all governmental bodies and ministries that took part in preparing and organizing the 2020 National Assembly election. His Highness the Amir hailed their constructive cooperation and coordination to hold these polls in line with the required health measures to maintain people's safety. In addition, His Highness the Amir lauded the national responsibility embodied in the effective participation of citizens in the election process and their adherence to the health instructions. His Highness the Amir voiced his deep appreciation and sincere praise to the members of the supreme judicial committee supervising the elections for their efficiency, transparency and efforts to facilitate the process. His Highness the Amir prayed to Allah Almighty to help all people do whatever is good for their dear homeland. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent similar cables to the state officials, in which he expressed similar sentiments and prayed to Allah Almighty to help all people serve their homeland under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir. — KUNA

National Assembly members' profiles

<p>1</p> 	<p>KUWAIT: The electoral committee of the first constituency announced 10 winners of the 2020 parliamentary elections, who will be parliament members for the next four years. The winners are:</p> <p>1- Hassan Abdullah Jowhar with 5,849 votes. Born in 1960, Jowhar holds a PhD in political science. Jowhar was professor in political science in 1991-96, and parliament member in 1996, 1999, 2003, 2006 and 2008.</p> <p>2- Yusuf Fahad Al-Ghurayyeb with 5,064 votes. Born in 1974, Ghurayyeb holds an MBA, and was a member in the Municipal Council in 2013.</p> <p>3- Ahmad Khalifa Al-Shuhooni with 4,129 votes. Born in 1971, Shuhooni holds a high diploma in law. He was an MP in 2006. Al-Shuhooni is a member of Kuwait Bar Society.</p> <p>4- Hamad Ahmad Rouhuddin with 3,783 votes. Born in 1985, Rouhuddin holds a PhD in law. He works in the investigation department in the Ministry of Interior and is a member of Kuwait Bar Society.</p> <p>5- Essa Ahmad Al-Kandari with 3,398 votes. Born in 1963, Kandari holds a diploma in banking. He worked at Kuwait Airways and became MP in 2013 and 2016. A former Minister of Communications and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs, Kandari is a member of KJA, Kuwait human rights society and Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI).</p> <p>6- Ali Abdulrasoul Al-Qattan with 3,320 votes. Born in 1978, Qattan holds a PhD in Educational management. He is an advisor for planning and research in Social Development Office of the Council of Ministers.</p> <p>7- Adnan Abdulsamad with 3,052 votes. Born in 1950, Abdulsamad holds a bachelor degree in political science and economy. He worked in the Ministry of Oil. He was an MP in 1981, 1992, 1996, 1999, 2006 and 2016. He is a member of Kuwait graduates society, Kuwait economy society and Kuwait human rights society.</p> <p>8- Abdullah Mohammad Al-Turajji with 2,472 votes. Born in 1958, Turajji is a retired police officer and a lawyer.</p> <p>9- Abdullah Jassem Al-Mudhaf with 3,437 votes. Born in 1983, Mudhaf holds a bachelor in business administration. He worked in the banking and investment sectors, and is a member of Kuwait economy society.</p> <p>10- Osama Essa Al-Shaheen with 2,167 votes. Shaheen won elections in 2012 and 2016. He holds a master in law and is a member of Kuwait Bar Society.</p>	<p>2- Mohammad Barrak Al-Mutair with 3,456 votes. Born in 1969, Mutair holds a bachelor degree in business administration. He was an MP in 2003, 2006, 2008 and 2016.</p> <p>3- Khalil Ibrahim Al-Saleh with 3,117 votes. Born in 1958, Saleh holds a diploma in commercial aviation. He was head of the Amiri Fleet, and an MP in 2012, 2013 and 2016. He is a member in society of pilots and aviation engineers.</p> <p>4- Hamad Mohammad Al-Matar with 3,903 votes. Born in 1970, Matar holds a PhD in industrial chemistry. Matar is a professor at College of Higher Education, and was a former MP in 2012.</p> <p>5- Salman Khaled Al-Azmi with 2,866 votes. Born in 1969, Azmi has a high-school degree.</p> <p>6- Khaled Ayed Al-Enezi with 2,565 votes. Born in 1968, Enezi holds a PhD in law and is a lawyer by practice.</p> <p>7- Bader Nasser Al-Humaidi with 2,534 votes. Humaidi holds a degree in aviation science and a diploma in management. He was a member of Kuwait Stock market's committee in 1988 and served as Minister of Public Works in 2003-2007.</p> <p>8- Bader Hamed Al-Mulla with 2,483 votes. Born in 1971, Mulla holds a PhD in law. He was</p>	<p>a teaching staff member at Saad Al-Abdullah Academy for Security Science. He won by-elections for the 2016 parliament.</p> <p>9- Hamad Saif Al-Harshani with 2,208 votes. Born in 1945, Harshani is a businessman, and an MP in 2012, 2013 and 2016. He was also a former chairman of Sulaibikhat SC and a former member of Kuwait Football Association (KFA).</p> <p>10- Ahmad Mohammad Al-Hamad with 2,195 votes. Born in 1967, Hamad holds a bachelor degree in electrical engineering. He is a manager in Ministry of Electricity and Water and member of Kuwait society of engineers.</p>	<p>8- Saadoun Hammad Al-Otaibi with 2,979 votes. Born in 1959, Otaibi holds a bachelor's degree in law. He was MP in 2006, 2008, 2013 and 2016.</p> <p>9- Fares Saad Al-Otaibi with 2,942 votes. Born in 1974, Otaibi holds a bachelor's degree in business administration. He was a member of the 2013 parliament.</p> <p>10- Muhalhal Khaled Al-Mudhaf with 2,904 votes. Born in 1971, Mudhaf is a lecturer at the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training. He is also Chairman of the Kuwait Association for Protecting Public Funds, and member at the board of directors of the Kuwait Environment Protection Society.</p>
<p>2</p> 	<p>KUWAIT: The electoral committee of the second constituency announced 10 winners of the 2020 parliamentary elections, who will be parliament members for the next four years. Turnout in this constituency was 70.3 percent. The winners are:</p> <p>1- Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem with 5,179 votes. Born in 1968, Ghanem holds a bachelor degree in Mechanical Engineering. He was chairman of Boubyan Petrochemicals, member of the Egypt-Kuwait holding company, and MP in 2006, 2008, 2009, 2012, 2013 and 2016. He was parliament speaker in 2013 and 2016. Ghanem was chairman of Kuwait SC, member of Kuwait Society of Engineers and the international union of mechanical engineers.</p> <p>2- Muhammad Talal Al-Sayer with 3,565 votes. Born in 1981, Sayer holds a Master's degree in law. He is deputy chairman of the Kuwait Bar Association.</p> <p>3- Hesham Abdulsamad Al-Saleh with 3,345 votes. Born in 1975, Saleh holds a PhD in constitutional law. He was an advisor of parliament speaker and in the Public Institution For Social Security. Saleh is a professor in the Law School and is a member in Kuwait Bar Society.</p> <p>4- Abdulaziz Tareq Al-Saqabi with 3,340 votes. Saqabi is an architect and a Kuwait University teaching staff member. He is specialized in architectural policies and planning of cities.</p> <p>5- Yusuf Saleh Al-Fadhalah with 2,992 votes. Born in 1981, Fadhalah holds a bachelor's degree in management studies, and served as Deputy Director General of KFH Capital company. He was elected a member in the 2016 parliament. He is a member of the Kuwait Economic Society, the Kuwait Association for Protecting Public Funds, the Kuwait Red Crescent Society, and the Kuwaiti Graduates Society.</p> <p>6- Mubarak Zaid Al-Mutairi with 2,982 votes. Mutairi is a lawyer and member in Kuwait Bar Society.</p>	<p>7- Fayeze Ghannam Al-Mutairi with 5,774 votes. Born in 1971, Mutairi holds a bachelor degree in Islamic Sharia.</p> <p>8- Thamer Saad Al-Dhefeeri with 4,935 votes. Born in 1976, Dhefeeri is an architect and member of Kuwait Society of Engineers. He was an MP in 2016.</p> <p>9- Marzouq Khalifa Al-Khalifa with 4,760 votes. Born in 1961, Khalifa holds a Masters in military science. He is a former army officer.</p> <p>10- Mubarak Haif Al-Hajraf with 4,422 votes. Born in 1970, Hajraf holds a Master's degree in law. He was an MP in the 2016 parliament.</p>	<p>8- Farz Mohammad Al-Daihani with 4,701 votes. Born in 1963, Daihani holds a degree in law. He was director of operations at the interior ministry, member of the Municipal Council in 2009 and a member of the Kuwait Bar Society.</p> <p>9- Saad Ali Khanfour with 4,520 votes. Born in 1965, Rashidi was MP in 2008, 2009, 2012, 2013 and 2016.</p> <p>10- Mubarak Haif Al-Hajraf with 4,422 votes. Born in 1970, Hajraf holds a Master's degree in law. He was an MP in the 2016 parliament.</p>	<p>9- Mohammad Hadi Al-Huwaila with 4,720 votes. Born in 1971, Huwaila holds a PhD in administration. He was an MP in 2008, 2009, 2013 and 2016. He is a member of KJA, the international center for strategic studies and Royal institute for International Studies in London.</p> <p>10- Ahmad Abdullah Al-Azmi with 4,651 votes. Born in 1970, Azmi holds a PhD in Islamic Sharia. He was an MP in 2012 and 2013.</p>
<p>3</p> 	<p>KUWAIT: The electoral committee of the third constituency announced 10 winners of the 2020 parliamentary elections, who will be parliament members for the next four years. Turnout in this constituency was 68 percent. The winners are:</p> <p>1- Abdulkareem Abdullah Al-Kandari with 5,585 votes. Born in 1981, Kandari holds a PhD degree in law. He is a lecturer at the Law College and a private lawyer. He is a member of a center of law studies at the University of Strasbourg. He was elected a parliament member in 2013 and 2016.</p> <p>2- Osama Ahmad Al-Munawer with 3,858 votes. Born in 1972, Munawer works as a lawyer. He is a member of the International Association of</p>	<p>Lawyers, the Arab Organization for Human Rights and the Lawyers Without Borders organization.</p> <p>3- Muhammad Talal Al-Sayer with 3,565 votes. Born in 1981, Sayer holds a Master's degree in law. He is deputy chairman of the Kuwait Bar Association.</p> <p>4- Hesham Abdulsamad Al-Saleh with 3,345 votes. Born in 1975, Saleh holds a PhD in constitutional law. He was an advisor of parliament speaker and in the Public Institution For Social Security. Saleh is a professor in the Law School and is a member in Kuwait Bar Society.</p> <p>5- Abdulaziz Tareq Al-Saqabi with 3,340 votes. Saqabi is an architect and a Kuwait University teaching staff member. He is specialized in architectural policies and planning of cities.</p> <p>6- Yusuf Saleh Al-Fadhalah with 2,992 votes. Born in 1981, Fadhalah holds a bachelor's degree in management studies, and served as Deputy Director General of KFH Capital company. He was elected a member in the 2016 parliament. He is a member of the Kuwait Economic Society, the Kuwait Association for Protecting Public Funds, the Kuwait Red Crescent Society, and the Kuwaiti Graduates Society.</p> <p>7- Mubarak Zaid Al-Mutairi with 2,982 votes. Mutairi is a lawyer and member in Kuwait Bar Society.</p>	<p>8- Saadoun Hammad Al-Otaibi with 2,979 votes. Born in 1959, Otaibi holds a bachelor's degree in law. He was MP in 2006, 2008, 2013 and 2016.</p> <p>9- Fares Saad Al-Otaibi with 2,942 votes. Born in 1974, Otaibi holds a bachelor's degree in business administration. He was a member of the 2013 parliament.</p> <p>10- Muhalhal Khaled Al-Mudhaf with 2,904 votes. Born in 1971, Mudhaf is a lecturer at the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training. He is also Chairman of the Kuwait Association for Protecting Public Funds, and member at the board of directors of the Kuwait Environment Protection Society.</p>	<p>9- Mohammad Hadi Al-Huwaila with 4,720 votes. Born in 1971, Huwaila holds a PhD in administration. He was an MP in 2008, 2009, 2013 and 2016. He is a member of KJA, the international center for strategic studies and Royal institute for International Studies in London.</p> <p>10- Ahmad Abdullah Al-Azmi with 4,651 votes. Born in 1970, Azmi holds a PhD in Islamic Sharia. He was an MP in 2012 and 2013.</p>
<p>4</p> 	<p>KUWAIT: The electoral committee of the fourth constituency announced 10 winners of the 2020 parliamentary elections, who will be parliament members for the next four years. The winners are:</p> <p>1- Shuaib Shabbab Al-Muwaizri with 6,200 votes. Born in 1959, Muwaizri holds a diploma in police science. A former colonel in the interior ministry, Al-Muwaizri was an MP in 2009, 2012 and 2016. He served as Minister of State for Housing and Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs.</p> <p>2- Fayeze Ghannam Al-Mutairi with 5,774 votes. Born in 1971, Mutairi holds a bachelor degree in Islamic Sharia.</p> <p>3- Musaad Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi with 5,750 votes. Rajhi is a former interior ministry officer.</p> <p>4- Mohammad Obaid Al-Rajhi with 5,198 votes. Rajhi is a former interior ministry officer.</p> <p>5- Saud Saad Al-Mutairi with 5,100 votes. Born in 1967, Mutairi has a bachelor's degree</p>	<p>in police sciences, and is a brigadier-general at the interior ministry.</p> <p>6- Thamer Saad Al-Dhefeeri with 4,935 votes. Born in 1976, Dhefeeri is an architect and member of Kuwait Society of Engineers. He was an MP in 2016.</p> <p>7- Marzouq Khalifa Al-Khalifa with 4,760 votes. Born in 1961, Khalifa holds a Masters in military science. He is a former army officer.</p> <p>8- Farz Mohammad Al-Daihani with 4,701 votes. Born in 1963, Daihani holds a degree in law. He was director of operations at the interior ministry, member of the Municipal Council in 2009 and a member of the Kuwait Bar Society.</p> <p>9- Saad Ali Khanfour with 4,520 votes. Born in 1965, Rashidi was MP in 2008, 2009, 2012, 2013 and 2016.</p> <p>10- Mubarak Haif Al-Hajraf with 4,422 votes. Born in 1970, Hajraf holds a Master's degree in law. He was an MP in the 2016 parliament.</p>	<p>9- Mohammad Hadi Al-Huwaila with 4,720 votes. Born in 1971, Huwaila holds a PhD in administration. He was an MP in 2008, 2009, 2013 and 2016. He is a member of KJA, the international center for strategic studies and Royal institute for International Studies in London.</p> <p>10- Ahmad Abdullah Al-Azmi with 4,651 votes. Born in 1970, Azmi holds a PhD in Islamic Sharia. He was an MP in 2012 and 2013.</p>	<p>9- Mohammad Hadi Al-Huwaila with 4,720 votes. Born in 1971, Huwaila holds a PhD in administration. He was an MP in 2008, 2009, 2013 and 2016. He is a member of KJA, the international center for strategic studies and Royal institute for International Studies in London.</p> <p>10- Ahmad Abdullah Al-Azmi with 4,651 votes. Born in 1970, Azmi holds a PhD in Islamic Sharia. He was an MP in 2012 and 2013.</p>
<p>5</p> 	<p>KUWAIT: The electoral committee of the fifth constituency announced 10 winners of the 2020 parliamentary elections, who will be parliament members for the next four years. The winners are:</p> <p>1- Hamdan Salem Al-Azmi with 8,387 votes. Born in 1968, Azmi holds a Master's degree in civil law. He was an MP in 2013 and 2016.</p> <p>2- Bader Zayed Al-Dahoum with 8,371 votes. Born in 1975, Azmi holds a PhD in Islamic Jurisprudence and was an MP in 2012.</p> <p>3- Mubarak Abdullah Al-Ajmi with 6,801 votes. Born in 1974, Ajmi holds a Master's degree in law, and is a police officer.</p> <p>4- Al-Saifi Mubarak Al-Ajmi with 6,294 votes. Born in 1961, Ajmi was an MP in 2009 and 2012.</p> <p>5- Khaled Mohammad Al-Otaibi with 5,387 votes. Born in 1966, Otaibi holds a bachelor's degree</p>	<p>in police science. He was an MP in 2016.</p> <p>6- Humoud Mebrek Al-Azmi with 5,347 votes. Born in 1956, Azmi is medical practitioner</p> <p>7- Saleh Theyab Al-Mutairi with 5,113 votes. Born in 1972, Mutairi holds a bachelor's degree in business administration.</p> <p>8- Nasser Saad Al-Dossari with 4,750 votes. Born in 1986, Dossari was an MP in 2016.</p>	<p>9- Mohammad Hadi Al-Huwaila with 4,720 votes. Born in 1971, Huwaila holds a PhD in administration. He was an MP in 2008, 2009, 2013 and 2016. He is a member of KJA, the international center for strategic studies and Royal institute for International Studies in London.</p> <p>10- Ahmad Abdullah Al-Azmi with 4,651 votes. Born in 1970, Azmi holds a PhD in Islamic Sharia. He was an MP in 2012 and 2013.</p>	<p>9- Mohammad Hadi Al-Huwaila with 4,720 votes. Born in 1971, Huwaila holds a PhD in administration. He was an MP in 2008, 2009, 2013 and 2016. He is a member of KJA, the international center for strategic studies and Royal institute for International Studies in London.</p> <p>10- Ahmad Abdullah Al-Azmi with 4,651 votes. Born in 1970, Azmi holds a PhD in Islamic Sharia. He was an MP in 2012 and 2013.</p>

Local

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ACCOUNTS : 24833199 Extn. 125
COMMERCIAL : 24835618
P.O.Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait.
Email: info@kuwaittimes.com
Website: www.kuwaittimes.net

News in brief

Kuwait records 205 COVID cases

KUWAIT: Kuwait recorded 205 new coronavirus cases and two deaths yesterday, raising the total number of cases to 144,369 and deaths to 891, respectively. The Ministry of Health announced meanwhile the recovery of 425 patients from COVID-19. The new figures raised the total number of recoveries to 140,035, the ministry said. There were 81 patients in ICUs as of yesterday, as the total number of patients still receiving medical care reached 3,443, ministry's official spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad said. He added that 4,102 swabs were taken during the same period, raising the total number of swabs to 1,141,794. — KUNA

Morocco lauds Kuwait's efforts

RABAT: Morocco on Saturday said it highly appreciates Kuwait's endeavors aimed at ironing out the Gulf crisis and overcoming differences between brothers of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). In a statement, the Moroccan Foreign Minister said that Morocco "is upbeat and satisfied with the current positive developments so as to overcome differences amongst GCC brothers." Morocco also wished success for the efforts exerted to reach a final agreement to turn a new chapter in the pan-GCC relations and reunite Gulf states in order to boost regional stability and Arab unity. — KUNA

Mauritania wishes success

RABAT: Mauritania on Saturday applauded Kuwait's efforts to end the Gulf rift, wishing it all success. In a press statement, the Mauritanian Foreign Ministry said that the Islamic Republic of Mauritania is pleased to follow up the sincere Kuwaiti efforts to heal the rift among sisterly Arabian Gulf states. Mauritania welcomes the Kuwaiti efforts and wishes all success to resolve the dispute to unite the GCC states in face of regional and international challenges, the ministry said. It hoped that the progress in the reconciliation efforts over the past few weeks would bring the crisis to an end and boost pan-Arab action. — KUNA

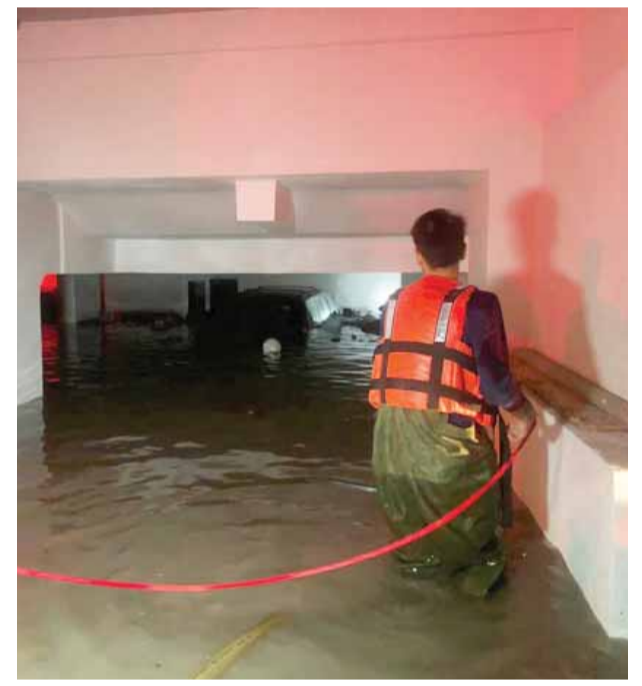
Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Rain clouds hovering over Kuwait City. — KUNA photo

Kuwait Fire Force saves 44 people trapped by rain floods

KUWAIT: Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) announced yesterday that its teams rescued 44 people who were trapped due to the current heavy rains. The Department of Public Relations and Information at KFF stated in a press release that the operating room received 43 reports yesterday morning, most of which were regarding people trapped in their vehicles from the heavy rainfall and the floods in the basements of buildings. Its teams were alerted and even more ready in all centers, while they activated the rainy season plan, which was under the direct supervision of the KFF Chief Lt Gen Khaled Al-Mekrad, and the KFF Deputy Chief for the Pest Control Sector Major General Jamal Al-Blaihis, the statement added. All the reports that were dealt with did not result in any human casualties, as the public must follow safety guidelines in conjunction with the instability of the weather for their own safety, KFF mentioned. — KUNA



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KUWAIT: Firemen battle the blaze in Jabriya.



Heavy damage left by the fire in Jabriya.

Ten hurt in fire, one in gas explosion

KUWAIT: Ten people were injured, including one in a critical condition, in a fire reported yesterday in Jabriya, while a gas cylinder explosion in the same area left a domestic helper wounded. Firemen rushed to a building in the area in response to an emergency call, and immediately evacuated the ten persons who suffered from smoke inhalation. Nine of them were treated

onsite, while one person was rushed to hospital. A case was filed for investigations to reveal the cause of the fire. In the second case, firefighters headed to a building where they discovered that a gas leak has caused an explosion in a ground floor apartment. A domestic helper was rushed to hospital with burn injuries, Kuwait Fire Force said in a statement. An investigation was opened.



Heavy damage left by the gas cylinder explosion.



Trump shows no surrender in first post-election rally

COVID sends hunger rising in America; kids bear the brunt



MANAMA: Turki Al-Faisal bin Abduliziz Al-Saud, chairman of King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies, listens to Israeli Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi addressing via videoconference the Manama Dialogue security conference yesterday. — AFP

Saudi, Israeli officials spar at conference

Prince Turki describes Israel as 'Western colonizing power'

MANAMA: An influential Saudi prince launched a bitter attack on Israel at a regional conference yesterday, drawing retorts from the Jewish state's foreign minister who addressed the gathering virtually. The row erupted months after the UAE and Bahrain broke decades of Arab consensus by normalizing ties with Israel, a move condemned as a "stab in the back" by Palestinians.

Prince Turki Al-Faisal, a Saudi former intelligence chief who is said to be close to the country's top leadership, reiterated strong support for the Palestinian cause in a fiery presentation to the Manama Dialogue security forum. In unusually blunt language, he accused Israel of depicting itself as a "small, existentially threatened country, surrounded by bloodthirsty killers who want to eradicate her from existence". "And yet they profess that they want to be friends with Saudi Arabia," he said.

He described the Jewish state as a "Western colonizing power" and outlined a history of forcible eviction of Palestinians and destroyed villages. Palestinians were held "in concentration camps under the flimsiest of security accusations - young and old, women and men, who are rotting there

without recourse to justice," he said. He said the Israeli authorities are "demolishing homes as they wish, and they assassinate whomever they want".

Israeli Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi addressed the meeting by videoconference shortly afterwards, expressing his "regret" over the com-

ments, which come after years of covertly warming relations between the two Mideast powers. "The false accusations of the Saudi representative at the Manama Conference do not reflect the facts or the spirit & changes the region is undergoing," he said

in a tweet. "I rejected his remarks & emphasised that the 'blame game' era is over. We are at the dawn of a new era. An era of peace."

Prince Turki, who said his comments reflected his personal view, voiced skepticism over the US-brokered Abraham Accords, to which Washington has been urging the kingdom to sign up. "You cannot treat an open wound with palliatives and painkillers. The Abraham Accords are not divine writ," he said.

'Two clear camps'

The agreements between the two Gulf states and Israel have undermined the Saudi-sponsored 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, which maintained that Arab states would not establish relations with the Jewish state until it made peace with the Palestinians - a position Riyadh has reiterated in recent months. However, Ashkenazi said the agreements were an opportunity for the Palestinians and offer a "window to solve this conflict".

"The Abraham accords do not come at the expense of the Palestinians. Quite the opposite, they are an opportunity that should not be missed,"

he said, urging them to return to peace talks which were frozen in 2014. Despite Prince Turki's blunt rhetoric, mutual concern over Iran has gradually brought Israel and Gulf nations closer, and Riyadh itself has quietly been building relations with the Jewish state for several years.

Reports last month that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had held secret talks in Saudi Arabia fuelled speculation that a normalization accord with the Gulf's top power could be in the making. Riyadh, however, denied that the meeting had occurred. Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan told AFP on Saturday that the kingdom's position remained resolute.

"We've been quite clear that in order for us to proceed with normalization we will need to see a settlement of the Palestinian dispute and the formation of a viable state of Palestine along the lines envisioned in the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative," he said in an interview in Manama. Asked whether that effectively ruled out the establishment of ties with Israel any time soon, he said he was "optimistic that there is a path towards a resolution between the Palestinians and Israelis". — AFP

“ The Abraham Accords are not divine writ ”

Allies 'on board' for resolution of Gulf crisis: Saudi Arabia

MANAMA: A resolution of the Gulf diplomatic crisis is in sight, with all nations involved "on board" and final agreement expected soon, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan said Saturday. In an interview with AFP conducted in Bahrain, the top Saudi diplomat also insisted that Gulf states must be fully consulted if the incoming US administration revives a nuclear deal with Iran.

"The only way towards reaching an agreement that is sustainable is through such consultation," he said on a sidelines of a security conference in Manama. Until recently the three-year Gulf dispute-pitting a group of regional nations against Qatar had appeared intractable, but Prince Faisal said that a breakthrough was imminent. "We are in full coordination with our partners in this process and the prospects that we see are very positive towards a final agreement," he told said, adding that "the eventual resolution will involve all parties concerned".

"What we envision is a resolution that covers all aspects and is satisfactory to all parties involved," he said when asked whether the dispute was headed for a full settlement. It would happen "soon", he said. Saudi Arabia led its allies the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt to cut ties with Qatar in June 2017, saying it was too close to Iran and funding radical Islamist movements-



MANAMA: Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan Al-Saud addresses the Manama Dialogue security conference on Saturday. — AFP

charges Doha staunchly denies. They subsequently forced out Qataris residing in their countries, closed their airspace to Qatari aircraft and sealed their borders and ports, separating some mixed-nationality families.

Analysts have said any breakthrough would likely only extend to ties between Riyadh and Doha, excluding the UAE which has been the most vocal critic of Qatar since the crisis began. UAE envoy to Washington Yousef Al Otaiba said earlier this month he didn't think the dispute would be resolved any time soon, and that it's "not on anyone's priority list". Prince Faisal indicated, however, that a much broader thaw is being negotiated. "We are in full coordination with our partners, and everyone is on board for the process as it stands," the minister said, when

asked if the UAE was in agreement.

After snapping ties, the regional quartet issued a list of 13 demands for Qatar, including shutting down its broadcaster Al Jazeera and downgrading relations with Turkey. But the blockade designed to choke Qatar and force it to align with Gulf interests has only made Doha more self-sufficient and pushed it closer to Iran and Turkey, observers say. It has also hurt Saudi strategic interests. Asked whether Saudi Arabia would drop or slim the list of demands, Prince Faisal said: "The best I can say right now, not to prejudice the ongoing discussions, is that the resolution will be satisfactory to all." On Friday there was a chorus of optimistic comments from Qatar, Oman and Kuwait, who all said progress had been made towards ending the crisis. — AFP

CONDOLENCES

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International

COVID sends hunger rising in America; kids bear the brunt

Increasing number of children are going hungry in US

COCKEYSVILLE: Before the pandemic closed her middle school and US immigration agents deported her father to El Salvador, Kimberly Orellana did not fear going hungry. But with her mother now alone and cleaning houses for pay that isn't enough to reliably feed Orellana and her two younger sisters, the 14-year-old is left to trek to a nearby school for a handout of groceries organized by a non-profit.

"Everyone in our family eats. Sometimes we need a little bit of groceries to keep our fridge full," Orellana said as she ran the errand north of Baltimore on a cold and rainy morning during a break from classes, which are now held online. Increasing numbers of children are going hungry in the United States as it weathers the world's worst coronavirus outbreak, which has killed around 280,000 people and caused a once-in-a-generation economic crisis.

Nearly 12 percent of adults said they lived in a household where there was not enough to eat "sometimes" or "often" last month, according to the Commerce Department. Ten percent of mothers reported their children under the age of five went hungry to some degree in October and November, a Brookings Institution survey found. Non-profit Feeding America estimates over 50 million people will be considered food insecure this year, including about one in four children, reversing gains made in recent years that had brought hunger among children to its lowest level in at least two decades.

"We feel pretty confident in saying food insecurity right now is the highest on record in the modern era," Lauren Bauer, an economic studies fellow at Brookings said. The numbers are jarring for a coun-

try that has the world's largest economy and is a major donor of food aid worldwide. They have propelled a political tussle over President-elect Joe Biden's choice for agriculture secretary, who will be tasked with fighting hunger. "Food and agriculture is about 20 percent of the US economy and 100 percent of people are eaters," said Chloe Waterman, a program manager for advocacy group Friends of the Earth.

'Quite disastrous'

The pandemic's March arrival and the business shutdowns that followed brought soaring unemployment and a sharp contraction in economic growth. President Donald Trump's downplaying of the virus and US states' uneven response set the stage for the ongoing surge in cases and deaths. Schools also shut down, making it complicated for poorer children to get free meals provided there, and Bauer said runs on grocery stores created a shortage of basic goods that put low-income parents further behind. "The pressure on families to pay for some of those things that the public provides was quite disastrous," she said. Congress responded by allowing states to give families whose children would normally get school meals benefit cards equal to their value, while many school districts also continued providing food that students could eat at home.

But there are holes in this safety net, Bauer said, particularly for parents who can't get to where schools are distributing their meals, perhaps because they have jobs as essential workers. There is also a gap for parents with children too young to attend school - the age at which poor nutrition can



COCKEYSVILLE, Maryland: Volunteers from the Baltimore Hunger Project pass out food to people in need outside Padonia International Elementary school on Dec 4, 2020. — AFP

have life-long consequences. And the government's main program to provide needy families with food, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), doesn't pay enough to live off of, shifting the burden of surging unemployment onto charities, Waterman said.

The effects have been felt by the non-profit Baltimore Hunger Project, which provides weekend

groceries in and around the city for families whose children rely on school meals. The bag of eggs, bread and other essentials Orellana picked up for her mother and herself, who are undocumented, and her two sisters who were born in the US at a distribution in the Cockeysville suburb will last them about two weeks. "It's really hard sometimes, but you just got to keep going," she said. — AFP

Three generations, one roof: US trend amplified in COVID

POTOMAC: After separating from her husband in 2007, Katie Marcoux and her two young daughters moved in with her parents for financial reasons. She expected to stay a year at most. Thirteen years later, Marcoux now remarried-still lives in the house, along with her parents and one of her daughters. Such arrangements are increasingly common in the US, where one in five people now live in a "multi-generational" household, according to Pew Research Center.

The phenomenon has been on the rise since the 1980s, when immigrant families arriving from Asia and Latin America tended to reside in households that ran the gamut in the age of residents. There was another rise starting around 2009 when the Great Recession brought the number of adults living in their childhood homes back to levels last seen in the 1950s. Now, with the upheaval of Covid-19, many are turning to the playbook again.

New directions

When she moved in, Marcoux, now 49, was working part-time for the school system and "not in a very good financial position," she recalled.

But living with her parents allowed Marcoux to maintain a part-time work schedule while raising her daughters, who were adjusting to new schools and their parents' divorce. She was assisted by mother Judy Kristensen. "When the girls were little, we were able to help Katie out by driving them places and stuff so she could work," Kristensen, 78, said.

Meanwhile, Marcoux was able to progress professionally and now works full time. "One of the things that it has afforded me big time is a financial freedom that I was able to recover," said Marcoux. Eric Marcoux, husband to Katie, felt "very at home" with his in-laws, "so I sold my house and moved in," recalled the 47-year-old former cartographer, who brought his dog, Jazzman. Still, Marcoux, his



POTOMAC, Maryland: Eric Marcoux poses with his wife Katie, her mother Judy Christensen, her father Dano Christensen and daughter Eva Kolb in front of their house on Dec 3, 2020. — AFP

wife and two stepdaughters, then teenagers, were forced to share one bathroom, an arrangement that "wasn't ideal," he said.

The situation improved immeasurably after a home improvement project added a second master bedroom and another bathroom. Dana Scanlon, a real estate agent in the Washington region, said more young parents are

taking a similar approach during the pandemic. "We have seen many couples with young children move in with their parents, into the large homes they grew up in-something they never imagined they would do," Scanlon said. "This allows them the opportunity to have in-house babysitters or 'Zoom school supervisors' while they work from their laptops." — AFP

Battered in first wave, Spanish town emerges scarred but safer

TOMELLOSO: Standing outside the hospital morgue, Lourdes Visus Cedrian shivered as she remembered the endless procession of hearses pulling up to collect the dead COVID-19 patients she'd been nursing just hours before. When the pandemic erupted, Visus, 56, was working as an auxiliary nurse in Tomelloso, a Spanish town in the arid plains of La Mancha which was blighted by death when the virus took hold.

"In the early days, I would come to this little corner to smoke, or cry when I needed to," said Visus. "But I had to stop. You'd see a hearse taking a body and then another, they were constantly carrying bodies out... it was just too painful." Although Spain was struggling with one of Europe's most deadly outbreaks, Tomelloso was particularly hard-hit, losing almost one percent of its 36,000 residents. During the second wave, it has been a completely different story, with the figures significantly lower, although memories of the earlier nightmare remain all too fresh.

"Around 300 people were buried in the local cemetery" in the first wave, Mayor Inmaculada Jimenez told AFP. "Every day, they were burying 10, 11 or 12 people, it was incredibly hard." Before the crisis, Tomelloso was known for its vineyards and popular with tourists following in the footsteps of Don Quixote, the delusional would-be knight in Miguel de Cervantes' 1605 novel. But the virus changed all that, with one damning headline branding it the "Wuhan of La Mancha" after the Chinese city where COVID-19 first emerged.

Few were the families who weren't touched by death or sickness, with Angeles Rodriguez, 50, losing her mother Josefa at the end of March after a week in hospital. She was 82. Things initially seemed to go well, although Rodriguez couldn't visit and struggled to get information from overwhelmed hospital staff. Then very suddenly it ended. "They called us at 3:00 am, and by 1:15 pm, we were at the cemetery," said Rodriguez. Not being able to say goodbye was devastating, and it was months before she could overcome her sorrow and anger to speak about it. "When it's like that, so sudden, it's like she was run over." — AFP



CARACAS: A man gets his fingerprints registered before voting at a polling station in a school yesterday during Venezuela's legislative elections. — AFP

Maduro eyes victory as Venezuelans vote

CARACAS: Polls opened yesterday in legislative elections set to tighten Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro's grip on power and weaken his US-backed rival, Juan Guaido, who is leading a boycott of the polls he calls a fraud. Victory will give Maduro's ruling Socialist Party control of an expanded 227-seat National Assembly-the only institution not in its hands.

The election, contested by about 14,000 candidates from more than 100 parties, comes with the country in a deep political and economic crisis-suffocated by runaway inflation, paralyzed in endless queues for petrol, lacking water and gas supplies, and afflicted by sudden power cuts. Since November 2019, inflation has reached 4,000 percent. "The time has come to vote for peace, for the country, for the future!" Maduro said in a message to supporters on the Telegram messaging application, shortly before voting began at 6.30 am local time. The vote comes five years after the opposition won control of the National Assembly by a landslide.

Weary population

Maduro, a former bus driver who became president on the death of his mentor Hugo Chavez in 2013, was re-elected in 2018 in fraud-tainted polls, a victory which much of the international community branded illegitimate. The United States, the European Union and many Latin American countries have long blamed Venezuela's crippling economic crisis on Maduro's repression and misrule.

Instead, they backed Guaido when the National Assembly speaker proclaimed himself interim president in January of last year. Initial enthusiasm has waned, however, with critics seeing Guaido's plebiscite ploy as a desperate gamble. Guaido, 37, called for a boycott on grounds that "free and fair" conditions for holding elections do not exist. He labeled yesterday's poll "a fraud."

"Maduro's objective isn't even to gain legitimacy," he told AFP in an interview this week, adding that the goal was instead to simply wipe out all semblance of democracy. Guaido and his allies plan a week-long plebiscite from Monday seeking public support to prolong the mandate of the current National Assembly until "free, verifiable and transparent" elections can be held. However, the results will not be binding, as Maduro exercises control of the country's institutions, including the Supreme Court and the powerful military. — AFP

UK vaccine rollout set to begin with queen in line for job

LONDON: Britain's Queen Elizabeth II will receive the Pfizer-BioNTech coronavirus vaccine within weeks, reports yesterday said, as the biggest immunization program in UK history begins next week. The monarch, 94, and her 99-year-old husband Prince Philip are in line to get the jab early in the rollout, which gets underway tomorrow, due to their age and will not receive preferential treatment, several newspapers reported. Britain's most senior royals will "let it be known" they have been given the inoculations "as a powerful counter to the anti-vaccination movement," the Sunday Times said.

The Mail yesterday added they hope "to encourage more people to take up the vital jab". The queen has spent much of the pandemic in self-isolation in Windsor because of her age, and will this year forego her traditional family Christmas at her Sandringham estate in eastern England with other royals. A Buckingham Palace spokeswoman declined to comment on the vaccination reports, noting "medical decisions are taken personally". Britain on Wednesday became the first country in the world to approve the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, and health officials have already drawn up criteria based on age and vulnerability to decide who will receive it first.

'Rise to the challenge'

Britain has pre-ordered 40 million doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine in total, and is set to receive an initial batch of 800,000 to kickstart the rollout. Elderly care home residents and their carers will be the very first in line, followed by those aged 80 and over and frontline health and care staff. Other elderly people and the clinically extremely vulnerable will be next, with the rest of the population then prioritized by age. The first doses were transported to the UK this week from a Pfizer plant in Belgium and will begin to arrive at dozens of "hospital hubs" nationwide by Monday. Among those first to be inoculated will be the eldest patients already attending hospital as an outpatient, those being discharged home and others invited in.

The effort faces significant obstacles because this vaccine must be stored at -70 degrees Celsius (-94 degrees Fahrenheit). However, it can be kept for up to five days at 2-8 degrees Celsius. "Despite the huge complexities, hospitals will kickstart the first phase of the largest-scale vaccination campaign in our country's history from tomorrow," Stephen Powis, national medical director of the state-run National Health Service (NHS), said. "Hardworking staff will once again rise to the challenge to protect the most vulnerable people from this awful disease," he added, noting the NHS had "a strong record" in vaccine delivery.

UK regulators were forced to defend their world-first approval, insisting it met all safety standards, after US and European officials queried the rapid process. The Sunday Mirror reported a string of high-profile figures in Britain had committed publicly to getting the vaccine in a bid to boost take-up. They include Monty Python star Michael Palin, 77, 69-year-old Bob Geldof and rocker Ronnie Wood, 73, the tabloid said. "I will absolutely and immediately take it as soon as humanly possible," Geldof said. — AFP

International

Trump shows no surrender in first post-election rally

US outgoing president launches another litany of allegations

VALDOSTA: President Donald Trump made clear Saturday he had no intention of relinquishing his baseless claims that last month's election was stolen from him, telling a raucous crowd at his first post-poll rally he would somehow still win. In a speech remarkable for its twisting of reality more than a month after the November 3 election, the outgoing president launched into another litany of allegations that the polls won handily by Democrat Joe Biden were rigged.

The crowd in Valdosta, Georgia for what was nominally a rally in support of two Republican Senate candidates facing a hugely consequential runoff election roared in support, at one point chanting "fight for Trump." Even with COVID-19 cases surging nationwide, there were few masks in the crowd and many ignored social-distancing rules. In a nearly two-hour speech Trump, 74, declared he would not concede, at times sticking to his script but regularly going off-the-cuff for his more incendiary claims.

"We're winning this election," Trump told the rally, which was similar to his many gatherings prior to the election, down to the soaring country song "God Bless the USA" played as he took the stage with First Lady Melania Trump. "It's rigged. It's a fixed deal." It was yet another example of Trump breaking democratic norms, engaging in conspiracy-mongering and presenting falsehoods in ways unprecedented in US history.

His stance has raised the question of how he will react when Biden's January 20 swearing-in date arrives. "The swing states that we're all fighting over now, I won them all by a lot," Trump said, falsely. "And I have to say, if I lost, I'd be a very gracious loser. If I lost, I would say, I lost, and I'd go to Florida and I'd take it easy and I'd go around and I'd say I did a good job. But you can't ever accept when they steal and rig and rob."

Huge stakes

Trump has barely left the White House since Biden was projected winner of the election on November 7, though he has made a number of trips to his nearby golf course. There had been concerns from some Republicans over whether Trump's continuing claims of fraud would drive down voter turnout among Republicans in the upcoming election,



VALDOSTA, Georgia: Supporters cheer as US President Donald Trump gestures after speaking during a rally to support Republican Senate candidates at Valdosta Regional Airport on Saturday. —AFP

making his appearance in Georgia somewhat of a gamble. The runoff election will decide which party controls the US Senate, and Trump in his speech continued his fear-mongering about rival Democrats.

"The voters of Georgia will determine which party runs every committee, writes every piece of legislation, controls every single taxpayer dollar," he said. "Very simply, you will decide whether your children will grow up in a socialist country or whether they will grow up in a free country." If Democratic challengers Raphael Warnock and Jon Ossoff defeat Republican senators Kelly Loeffler and David Perdue, the Senate will be evenly divided at 50-50, meaning Democratic Vice President Kamala Harris would cast

any deciding votes, as the Constitution dictates.

The race has drawn enormous attention. One measure of the intense interest: With donations pouring in from across the country, the candidates have already spent more than \$315 million, the AdImpact website reported, an astounding figure for senatorial races. And figures as prominent as ex-president Barack Obama, Vice President Mike Pence and now Trump himself have scrambled to boost voter turnout. But while Trump offered words of praise for the two Republicans and invited them on stage for brief comments on Saturday, he spent much of the time arguing that he had won the election. —AFP

Asteroid dust collected by Japan probe arrives on Earth

TOKYO: In a streak of light across the night sky, samples collected from a distant asteroid arrived on Earth yesterday after being dropped off by Japanese space probe Hayabusa-2. Scientists hope the precious samples, which are expected to amount to no more than 0.1 grams of material, could help shed light on the origin of life and the formation of the universe. The capsule carrying samples entered the atmosphere just before 2:30 am Japan time, creating a shooting-star-like fireball as it entered Earth's atmosphere en route to a landing site in Australia.

"Six years and it has finally come back to Earth," an official narrating a live broadcast of the arrival said, as images showed officials from Japan's space agency JAXA cheering and pumping their fists in excitement. A few hours later, JAXA confirmed the samples had been recovered, with help from beacons emitted by the capsule as it plummeted to Earth after separating from Hayabusa-2 on Saturday, while the fridge-sized probe was some 220,000 kilometers away. "We found the capsule! Together with the parachute! Wow!" the mission's Twitter account announced.

People who had gathered at a public viewing site near

JAXA's office in suburban Tokyo - despite the event taking place a few hours after midnight - also erupted with cheers. "I'm extremely happy because the capsule has returned home safely. Hayabusa-2 did a great job," a primary school boy said. The capsule was recovered in the southern Australian desert, and will now be in the hands of scientists performing initial, non-invasive analysis including checking for any gas emissions. It will then be sent to Japan.

Samples with organic material?

The samples were collected by Hayabusa-2, which launched in 2014, from the asteroid Ryugu, some 300 million kilometers from Earth. The probe collected both surface dust and pristine material from below the surface that was stirred up by firing an "impactor" into the asteroid. The material is believed to be unchanged since the time the universe was formed.

Larger celestial bodies like Earth went through radical changes including heating and solidifying, changing the composition of the materials on their surface and below. But "when it comes to smaller planets or smaller asteroids, these substances were not melted, and therefore it is believed that substances from 4.6 billion years ago are still there," Hayabusa-2 mission manager Makoto Yoshikawa told reporters before the capsule arrived. Scientists are especially keen to discover whether the samples contain organic matter, which could have helped seed life on Earth.

"We still don't know the origin of life on Earth and through this Hayabusa-2 mission, if we are able to study and understand these organic materials from Ryugu, it



This handout photograph taken and released yesterday shows recovery operations of the re-entry capsule carrying samples collected from a distant asteroid after being dropped off by Japanese space probe Hayabusa-2, following its landing in South Australia. —AFP

could be that these organic materials were the source of life on Earth," Yoshikawa said. "We've never had materials like this before... water and organic matters will be subject to research, so this is a very valuable opportunity," said Motoo Ito, senior researcher at the Japan Agency for Marine-Earth Science and Technology. Half of Hayabusa-2's samples will be shared between JAXA, US space agency NASA and other international organizations, and the rest kept for future study as advances are made in analytic technology. —AFP

Insect invaders threaten Rome's iconic pines

ROME: Rome's majestic umbrella pines are as much part of the landscape as the ruins and cobble streets, but they are under threat from a tiny insect invader-the pine tortoise scale. "If we do nothing, the pines of Rome will be destroyed by the thousands," warned agronomist Franco Milito, who estimates there are around 60,000 such trees in the city's public areas and another 30,000 on private land. "And they are really the trees of Rome, which shape the views. We must look after them." The insects, originally from North America, can kill trees already weakened by the urban environment within just two or three years, experts told AFP. "It's very serious," said Patrizio Zucca, head of the association of agronomists in Rome. "Urgent action is needed."

Little vampire

Toumeyella parvicornis, to give it its Latin name, is about three millimeters long, and its reddish-brown oval shell resembles a tortoise. It was unknown in Italy until five years ago, but after ravaging the stone pines of Naples in the south, it

has moved up the coast. The insect operates like a little vampire, sucking with its syringe-like mouth the sap from both the tree's needles and its bark. It produces a sweet white excrement, on which thick black mould develops, covering the tree and blocking the process of photosynthesis.

Massacre in Naples

In Campania, the southern region that includes Naples, although many pines succumbed, others resisted. "The scales act like agents of natural selection," said Antonio Pietro Garonna, professor of entomology at Naples Federico II university. He suspects that high temperatures, over 35 degrees Celsius (95 degrees Fahrenheit), can cause them to disperse. "If, with climate change, temperatures rise in the summer, the scales will suffer a lot," he said. But until then, "it's a massacre", laments Vincenzo Topa, an agronomist living in Posillipo, a coastal district of Naples. The area once boasted a glorious park of 1,200 pines, opened in 1931 by the Fascist leader Benito Mussolini.

He also planted pines across Rome, making them so much a symbol of Italy that they became known not by their Latin name "pinus pinea" but as "pino italico". But "out of around 10,000 pines in Naples, at least half are dead", Topa said.

No obvious solution

Authorities in Lazio, the region that



ROME: Workers prune pine trees opposite the Colosseum on Dec 2, 2020. —AFP

includes Rome, are urgently seeking a solution. One option is to inject chemicals into the trunk of each tree, but it is expensive and was effective only 20 to 30 percent of the time in Campania, according to Amadio Lancia, the local official responsible for the issue in Lazio. And many products cannot be sprayed directly on trees in urban areas for public health reasons, he added. "The only solution will be to use natural predators, but a study will take time." A predatory scale was introduced a century ago in Campania to protect against those attacking citrus fruits but "their numbers are still insufficient", Garonna said. —AFP

US notches a record number of COVID-19 cases, death

WASHINGTON: The United States notched a record number of coronavirus cases in 24 hours for the third day running, as it was reported that Britain's Queen Elizabeth II will get a vaccine within weeks. A tally by Johns Hopkins University showed the world's worst-hit country-which has seen a dramatic virus resurgence in recent weeks-reached nearly 230,000 new infections and 2,527 COVID-related deaths on Saturday alone. For two weeks, the US has regularly

topped 2,000 deaths per day, as it had in the spring at the height of the first wave of the country's outbreak. US health officials warned of a surge after millions of Americans traveled to celebrate last week's Thanksgiving holiday despite pleas from authorities to stay home. The coronavirus has now killed more than 1.5 million people and infected 66 million around the world since emerging in China last year, according to a tally from

official sources compiled by AFP.

In Britain, it was reported that the 94-year-old monarch will receive the Pfizer-BioNTech coronavirus vaccine within weeks after UK regulators granted emergency approval. The rollout of the vaccine will begin next week. The queen and her 99-year-old husband Prince Philip are in line to get the jab early due to their age and will not receive preferential treatment, the Mail on Sunday reported. —AFP

News in brief

Oxygen shortage in Pakistan

PESHAWAR: At least six COVID-19 patients died after "criminal negligence" resulted in a delayed supply of oxygen to a hospital in north-west Pakistan, officials said yesterday, as the country battles a second wave of the epidemic. More than 200 patients - including nearly 100 with coronavirus - were left for hours with limited supplies of oxygen at a government-run hospital in Peshawar. "The sad incident happened due to lack of central oxygen supply in the hospital," provincial health minister Taimur Saleem Jhagra told a press conference, confirming the deaths. "We will hold an inquiry and get to the bottom of the incident," he added, promising action against those responsible "for this criminal negligence". Hospital spokesman Farhad Khan said a disruption in oxygen supplies affected some 200 people, "including 96 COVID-19 patients". He blamed a private supplier, saying the Rawalpindi-based company had "failed to meet the growing demand". —AFP

Indonesia minister arrested

JAKARTA: Indonesia's social affairs minister was arrested yesterday for allegedly taking \$1.2 million in bribes linked to food aid for those hit by the coronavirus pandemic. Juliar Batubara was named as a suspect after Indonesian anti-corruption agents seized suitcases, backpacks and envelopes stuffed with cash equivalent to \$1.2 million in a sting operation on Saturday. He turned himself in yesterday at the anti-corruption agency's headquarters, becoming the second minister in President Joko Widodo's government to be arrested over alleged graft in recent weeks. "That's the people's money... it's aid urgently needed to help during COVID-19 and for the national economic recovery," Widodo said after Batubara's arrest, vowing he would not protect any corrupt officials. Indonesia's economy - Southeast Asia's biggest - has been hit hard by the pandemic, and the government has rolled out aid programs such as food packages to help those in need. —AFP

China docking in lunar orbit

SHANGHAI: A Chinese probe carrying samples from the lunar surface successfully docked yesterday with a spacecraft orbiting the moon, in another space first for the nation, state media reported. The manoeuvre was part of the ambitious Chang'e-5 mission-named after a mythical Chinese Moon goddess-to bring back the first lunar samples in four decades. The cargo capsule carrying lunar rocks and soil lifted off from the surface on Thursday, and docked with the orbiter yesterday morning, the official Xinhua news agency said, citing the China National Space Administration (CNSA). Xinhua said it was China's first "rendezvous and docking in lunar orbit". The cargo capsule's departure from the lunar surface on Thursday was also a first: the first liftoff of a Chinese craft from an extraterrestrial body. The capsule transferred the moon samples to the orbiter, which will separate and return to Earth, Xinhua said. —AFP

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Model: GLE Class (167)

Mercedes-Benz Cars

Model year: 2019 - 2021

RECALL REASON

Mercedes-Benz AG has determined that on certain GLE-Class vehicles (167 platform) with a high-lock seat in the second row bench seat, the middle seatbelt buckle could be pushed into the gap between the vehicle body and the seat cushion in certain circumstances while buckling up. If a passenger does not fasten the seatbelt according to the Operator's Manual, the risk of injury in a crash could increase.

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As a precautionary measure, we will adjust the positioning of the double buckle on the affected vehicles. The required work will certainly be carried out free of charge.

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Business

MONDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2020

Last-ditch effort to save Brexit trade deal

UK, EU embark on final two-day scramble to secure an agreement

BRUSSELS: British and EU negotiators embarked on probably their final two-day scramble to secure a post-Brexit trade deal yesterday, after failing for eight months to reach agreement. David Frost arrived in Brussels for more talks with EU counterpart Michel Barnier, ending a two-day pause after a fruitless week of late-night wrangling in London.

"We're working very hard to try to get a deal. We'll see what happens in the negotiations today," Frost told reporters as he arrived at the Gare de Midi train station in Brussels. A European official said the negotiators would meet later in the day at the EU's Berlaymont headquarters in Brussels and that talks could go on late. Meanwhile, UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson will reportedly lobby European leaders, after a call with EU chief Ursula von der Leyen on Saturday ended with the sides still facing "significant differences" on the key issues.

The pair's next call will be today evening and then the 27 EU leaders will gather in Brussels on Thursday for a two-day summit planned to tackle their own budget dispute, but which will now once again be clouded by Brexit worries. Johnson and von der Leyen issued a downbeat joint statement after their call, with divisions still wide over fishing rights, fair trade rules and an enforcement mechanism to govern any deal.

"Whilst recognizing the seriousness of these differences, we agreed that a further effort should be undertaken ... to assess whether they can be resolved," they said.

'Anything is possible'

Britain formally left the EU in January, nearly

four years after a referendum on membership that split the nation down the middle and two months after Johnson won an election touting what he claimed was an "oven ready" Brexit deal. The UK is bound to the EU's tariff-free single market until a post-Brexit transition period expires the end of the year—an immovable deadline by which time the two sides must try to agree on new terms of their future relationship.

"It's in a very difficult position, there's no point denying that," British Environment minister George Eustice told Sky News. "We're going continue to work on these negotiations, until there's no point in doing so any further," he said.

Without a deal, the bulk of cross-Channel trade will revert to World Trade Organization terms, a return to tariffs and quotas after almost five decades of close economic and political integration. Johnson has insisted Britain will "prosper mightily" whatever the outcome of the talks, but he will face severe political and economic fallout if he cannot seal a deal. "If there is no deal now, I see huge international implications... because we would be in an economic war with Europe that would cost us very dearly," former Labour prime minister Gordon Brown told Sky News.

European capitals have remained remarkably united behind Barnier through the fraught Brexit process, but some internal fractures have now begun to surface. On Friday, France threatened to veto any deal that falls short of their demands on ensuring fair trade and access to UK fishing waters, where they have demanded a durable agreement, whereas Britain wants frequent renegotiations.

"We know that 100 percent access to fishing



LONDON: An anti-Brexit protester stands with Union and EU flags outside a conference center in central London as talks continued on a trade deal between the EU and the UK. — AFP

waters in the UK maritime zone is finished," European Affairs minister Clement Beaune told le Journal du Dimanche.

"But we need lasting access. The British can't have total access to our EU single market and exclude fish," Barnier will brief envoys from the

bloc member states early today with several countries sharing Paris's concerns that the EU side could give too much ground, especially on fair trade rules. "Anything is possible," a European source with close knowledge of the talks said. — AFP

ECB to beef up stimulus as new virus wave bites

FRANKFURT: The European Central Bank is set to unleash more stimulus for the eurozone at its last meeting of the year on Thursday, as the region's battered economy grapples with a second coronavirus wave. ECB chief Christine Lagarde in October all but promised that extra support was on the way, when she said the Frankfurt institution would "recalibrate" its instruments in December.

The ECB will also unveil fresh economic forecasts likely to have been revised downwards after a spike in virus cases forced renewed shutdowns across Europe, although the prospect of mass vaccinations from next year could brighten the longer term outlook.

Analysts widely expect the ECB's governing council to add another 500 billion euros (\$600 billion) to its 1.35-trillion-euro pandemic emergency bond-buying program (PEPP), and extend it beyond the current deadline of June 2021. The purchases are aimed at keeping borrowing costs low to encourage spending and investment and bolster economic growth.

The ECB could also offer more ultra-cheap credit to banks for longer under a scheme known as TLTROs, whereby banks get loans at highly favorable interest rates in return for lending on to the wider economy. The central bank is all but certain to keep interest

rates at historic lows, but may increase its pre-pandemic asset purchases from the current 20 billion euros a month.

At Thursday's press conference, Lagarde is likely to reiterate pleas for governments to share the load through fiscal stimulus, as EU member states bicker over a 750-billion-euro recovery fund that has been blocked by Poland and Hungary. The ECB will be "under pressure to do more while the European budgetary policy response is lagging behind," said Pictet Wealth Management strategist Frederik Ducrozet.

Vaccine hopes

The ECB's last round of projections in September forecast 3.1 percent quarter-on-quarter growth in the fourth quarter of 2020. That number has become outdated after countries reintroduced virus restrictions that once again shuttered businesses and kept people at home across the 19-nation bloc, unravelling a recovery that had started over the summer.

On the bright side, successful vaccine trials have raised expectations that mass inoculations could start in Europe in early 2021, slightly behind Britain and the United States, paving the way for a reopening of the world's economies. "The more positive prospects on the back of recent vaccine news could lead to an upward revision of the ECB's growth projections" for the second half of 2021, said ING bank economist Carsten Brzeski.

But policymakers are acutely aware that any upsets in the Covid-19 vaccine rollout could again derail the economy. "The recovery may not be linear, but rather unsteady, stop-start and contingent on the pace of



European Central Bank (ECB) President Christine Lagarde (down left), European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen (top center), European Council President Charles Michel (down center) and Eurogroup President Paschal Donohoe (down right) attend a virtual meeting by video in Brussels. — AFP

vaccine rollout," Lagarde has said. The uncertain outcome of EU-UK talks on post-Brexit trade after December 31 adds another risk to the outlook.

Lagarde can expect to be grilled on Thursday about the ECB's ongoing struggle to push inflation up to its target of just below two percent. Eurozone inflation remained at -0.3 percent in November, Eurostat data showed, the fourth consecutive month of falling prices. But even before the pandemic, inflation stayed stubbornly low, fuelling calls for a rethink at the ECB. — AFP

Germany's F&B sector in virus survival mode

BERLIN: From distilling alcohol for pharmacies to printing takeaway bags and delivering order-in cocktails, Germany's food and beverage sector has been forced to get creative to keep their companies going through coronavirus shutdowns.

Three businesses talk about their battle to survive:

Distilling for pharmacies

Bastian Heuser and his partners have been learning on the job since they stumbled into the alcohol business without any experience in the trade. But since March, the three Berliners have been forced to further improvise as their distillery was forced shut during the first wave of the coronavirus pandemic. "We had to react very quickly because we had invested a lot over the past three and a half years, and didn't have a big cash reserve," said Heuser, co-founder and marketing manager at the Stork Club.

As factories and shops were ordered closed in March to curb transmissions of COVID-19, the distillery lost all of its sales. But the pandemic offered an

opportunity: with demand soaring for hand sanitizers, pharmacies in the area contacted the Stork Club to distill its alcohol to help cover regional shortages. The company also sold some whiskey barrels to make ends meet, Heuser said.

They also moved their bar from a streetside shop into a courtyard—a timely investment, as the region benefited from a marked increase in domestic tourism after restrictions eased. Guided tours, tastings and even weddings kept the distillery busy all summer. Heuser said the Stork Club "had up to 50 percent more turnover than in the preceding year, which more or less undid the springtime losses". Although income has once again plunged since in-house dining was banned in the latest round of shutdowns that began in November, Heuser said the distillery can weather the storm.

"With the new vaccine ... I hope that by May, June a certain normalcy will return to our business," Heuser said.

'Rain checks', cocktails to go

Katja Hiendlmayer, co-owner of cocktail bar Buerkner Eck, admitted that she would have "thought about doing something else" if she had known in March that her business would have to stay shut for much of the year. "We could have acted. Right now we're only reacting," she said.

Along with her partner Olaf Matthey, a barman by profession, Hiendlmayer opened the bar in Berlin in October 2017. During Germany's spring shut-



BERLIN: As factories and shops were ordered closed in March to curb transmissions of COVID-19, the distillery lost all of its sales.

down Buerkner Eck made "at most 30 percent" of the turnover from the same period in 2019, she said.

"Many bars aren't doing anything," she said, explaining that a November government aid program that reimburses up to 75 percent of a bar's turnover from the previous year meant some preferred to just stay shut. Nevertheless, she said, "we'd rather work for little than do nothing," adding: "We want to keep our people employed."

To keep employees busy, they came up with the idea of printing takeout bags. "We invented work," said Hiendlmayer. That idea followed their first response to the spring restrictions:

"rain check" vouchers they designed and printed in the bar and sold online. Some clients chose not to redeem their vouchers, "seeing it as a small donation," Hiendlmayer said. Five days after the start of the curbs in March, Buerkner Eck's webshop was ready for delivery orders. The barmen cycle to neighborhoods in a five-kilometer (three-mile) radius of the bar to deliver their freshly bottled cocktails. As the restrictions lifted late spring, demand for delivery and takeaway waned and customers returned. But as temperatures dropped again, clients were pushed indoors, with only half of the seating area available due to distancing requirements. — AFP

Ivory Coast's bauxite mine reopens

ABIDJAN: The Ivory Coast's first bauxite mine has reopened after it was closed for months because of election-related violence, its chief executive said Saturday. The mine that opened last year in the east central Moronou region is a centerpiece of Ivory Coast's ambitions to wean itself off dependence on agricultural commodities.

Production stopped in August as violence increased in the buildup to the October 31 presidential election.

"Work has resumed, the expatriates have returned," Moumouni Bictogo, chief executive officer of its concessionary, Lagune Exploitation Bongouanou (LEB), said referring to workers from Europe, Asia and the United States. He said security has been reinforced, adding that the stoppage and problems over the novel coronavirus have caused the mine to lose the equivalent of 7.6 million euros in sales.

He said the difficulties have prompted a revision of plans to peak mine output in 2020, including exports to foreign refineries. "We are counting on reaching our cruising speed not before the first quarter of 2021 and produce more than two million tons of bauxite ore in the next two years," Bictogo said.

LEB also plans to transform 100,000 tons of bauxite ore from the third year, through a carbonization process, in order to extract a semi-finished product with added value. The 13,000-hectare (32,000-acre) site holds an estimated 245 million tons of bauxite ore, the raw material for aluminum. The mine, which employs 200 people, aims for 1,250 employees with its development project.

The electoral violence claimed the lives of at least 85 people and wounded nearly 500 others since August, according to an official toll. President Alassane Ouattara was re-elected to a controversial third term in the face of an opposition which boycotted the vote and called for civil disobedience. Abidjan, Ivory Coast's economic capital, is 200 kilometers (120 miles) away from the mine. Ivory Coast has abundant mineral treasures, including gold, diamonds, iron, nickel, copper and manganese, as well as bauxite. But mining accounts for only five percent of gross domestic product in an economy still dominated by cacao production. — AFP

Business

Gulf Bank embarks on a multi-year transformation journey with Avaya

New approach to enhance bank's customer and employee experiences

DUBAI/KUWAIT: Gulf Bank, one of the largest and leading banks in Kuwait, has embarked on a multi-year customer experience transformation journey with Avaya as it seeks to embrace a multi-experience approach that strengthens its market differentiation through better customer and employee experiences.

Built on Avaya OneCloud CCaaS, the suite of solutions being adopted by Gulf Bank enable the financial institution to not only meet the digital demands of its customer base, but also to create a more flexible working environment for contact center staff now empowered to work from anywhere.

The transformation journey began earlier in the year, when Avaya supported Gulf Bank at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic by providing remote agent licenses. This deployment maintained Gulf Bank's exceptional service levels without compromising the safety of its staff, and set the stage for a

wider customer experience transformation. "We had planned to adopt a wide-ranging digital transformation plan with Avaya earlier in the



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& Kuwait**

year, but our priorities shifted when COVID-19 hit. Avaya not only supported us through the worst months of the pandemic by enabling our agents to

work from anywhere, but also helped lead the development of our new strategy that meets the realities of today's market. As our customer demands evolve, we are confident we have the right technology partner to continue delivering stand-out experiences across an increasingly broad range of touchpoints," said Mohammed Al-Qattan, General Manager of Consumer Banking at Gulf Bank.

Going forward, the transformation project will see Gulf Bank further invest in its digital capabilities to create a customer experience center that pro-



Mohammad Al-Qattan

vides exceptional engagement across all touchpoints throughout the customer journey while maintaining the highest standards of privacy and security. Built on open platforms, the solution creates a multi-experience journey by empowering customers and employees with contextual customer information, easy access to subject matter experts, and the ability to transition seamlessly between touchpoints.

Faten Halabi, Regional Sales Lead, Avaya, said: "We are proud to have supported Gulf Bank, one of the region's standout financial institutions, as it met the challenges of the pandemic. And we are prouder still to be supporting the bank as it continues to invest in delivering exceptional customer and employee experiences. For 60 years, Gulf Bank has evolved and transformed to meet the needs of its customers, and we look forward to enabling that transformation well into the future."

stc launches PS5, SIE's latest gaming device

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 Sony Interactive Entertainment's (SIE) long awaited PlayStation5 (PS5) to its customers in Kuwait. The gaming console is available with stc's postpaid internet plan.

stc released a statement indicating that SIE's latest gaming console is available to customers under its internet plan with unlimited 5G internet, 2 shared SIM cards and one year FREE Jawwy TV subscription, which boasts OSN, Starzplay, Wide Khaliji, FOX+ and more, all in one place. The PS5 Digital and Ultra HD Blu-ray disc drive editions is available to both new and existing customers that want to enjoy the next generation of gaming. With the exception of the Ultra HD Blu-ray disc drive, both PS5 models offer the same specifications, so players will enjoy the same transformative gameplay experiences regardless of which PS5 they choose.

Inspired by a global community of creators, PS5 will bring players into game worlds with unprecedented speed, visual fidelity and sensory immersion. Gamers will enjoy near-instant load times thanks to PS5's ultra-high-speed solid-state drive (SSD), as well as breathtaking 4K graphics and silky-smooth gameplay up to 120 frames per second. With the enhanced haptic feedback and adaptive triggers of the DualSense wireless controller and the immersive soundscapes made possible by Tempest 3D AudioTech, PlayStation 5 heightens players' senses, making them feel transported into their game world.

Following stc's commitment to deliver the latest devices to its customers, engineer Nasser Al-Saadoun, Chief Consumer Officer at stc, said, "We are proud to have collaborated with SIE in the official international launch of their latest gaming console, the PS5. Through the plan offered by stc, our goal is to provide our customers, especially gamers,

with access to the next generation of gaming, coupled with high internet speeds through our 5G internet, transforming the online experience. In line with our strategic approach to enabling digital transformation in Kuwait and our role as digital pioneers, we are excited to offer SIE's flagship device to customers at all of our stc branches, our website (www.stc.com.kw), or through the mystic App."

He added, "As pioneers in the telecom sector we will continue to explore digital solutions that blend innovation with the latest technology. The strong infrastructure of our 5G network, and wide range of resources, allows stc to offer an unrivaled and interactive experience through promotions, bundles and the latest devices in the entertainments world that cater to the needs of our valued customers, all under stc 5G #1 network in Kuwait."

Also commenting on the launch, President and CEO of Sony Interactive Entertainment, Jim Ryan, said, "Today marks a historic moment for the PlayStation brand, and all of us at SIE are pleased to celebrate the release of PlayStation 5 together with our community of fans, game developers, and industry partners."

He added, "PS5 is a truly next-generation console representing the beginning of a new era for gaming. I'm thrilled for the new worlds that players will begin to experience today, and I'm equally excited for the lineup of games still to come for PS5 that will continue to propel the gameplay experience forward. We are humbled to work with a talented community of world class game developers. Their creativity will bring limitless possibilities to what the future of gaming can look like on PS5."

In addition to transformative gaming experiences, PlayStation 5 offers plenty of entertainment experiences, with a curated lineup of some of the most popular streaming services available, including Amazon Prime Video, Apple TV+, Disney+, Hulu, Netflix, Peacock, Spotify, Twitch, YouTube, and more. There will be a dedicated space exclu-



Nasser Al-Saadoun

sively for media entertainment on PlayStation 5, making it fast and easy to switch between games and movie/TV.

The ultimate gaming experience with PS5

The breadth of PlayStation 5's game library represents the best lineup in PlayStation console history, led by launch day titles from SIE Worldwide Studios, including Marvel's Spider-Man: Miles Morales, Demon's Souls, Sackboy: A Big Adventure, and Astro's Playroom. PS5 owners can enjoy more than three dozen new games this holiday, including highly anticipated games from SIE's publishing partners such as Call of Duty: Black Ops Cold War (Activision), Fortnite (Epic Games), FIFA 21 (EA), NBA 2K21 (2K), Godfall (Gearbox Publishing), Watch Dogs: Legion and Assassin's Creed Valhalla (Ubisoft), and many more. Meanwhile, new titles from independent developers, such as Bugsnax (Young Horses) and The Pathless (Giant Squid/Annapurna Interactive) demonstrate the breadth of diverse content coming to PS5.

PS5 owners can look forward to even more incredible games. Upcoming Worldwide Studios exclusives include Ratchet and Clank: Rift Apart, Returnal, Destruction AllStars, Horizon Forbidden West, Gran Turismo (tm) 7, and a new God of War game. Additional games launching first on PS5 include DEATHLOOP (tm) from Arkane Studios/Bethesda Softworks, Ghostwire (tm): Tokyo from Tango Gameworks/Bethesda Softworks, Project Athia (Working Title) from Luminous Productions/Square Enix, and Final Fantasy XVI from Square Enix. Resident Evil (tm) Village from Capcom and Hogwarts Legacy from Warner Bros. Games round out the lineup of highly anticipated PS5 titles.

Following the launch, PlayStation Plus members can enjoy a curated lineup of 20 PlayStation4 games that defined the generation with the PlayStation Plus Collection, available to download and play on PlayStation 5. The PlayStation Plus Collection features critically acclaimed games, including Batman: Arkham Knight, Bloodborne, Call of Duty: Black Ops III - Zombies Chronicle Edition, Fallout 4, God of War, Monster Hunter: World, Final Fantasy XV, Resident Evil 7 Biohazard, Persona 5, The Last of Us Remastered, Uncharted 4: A Thief's End and more.

Canada employment growth slows in Nov

OTTAWA: Canadian employment growth slowed in November amid a second COVID-19 wave, with 62,000 net new jobs created, but the unemployment rate continued to fall from its peak, the government statistical agency said Friday. Employment was up 0.3 percent in the month, following increases of 0.5 percent in October and an average of 2.7 percent per month from May to September, said Statistics Canada.

The unemployment rate, meanwhile, fell 0.4 percentage points to 8.5 percent, continuing a steady decline from the record high 13.7 percent in May, and beating analyst forecasts.

A lockdown in the spring to slow the spread of the COVID-19 illness had put three million Canadians out of work. By November the total number of unemployed Canadians fell to 1.7 million. Many people struggling to find work, however, dropped out of the labor market.

According to Statistics Canada, November employment fell in industries most directly affected by public health restrictions such as in accommodation and food services. On the other hand, it approached or exceeded pre-pandemic levels where working from home or physical distancing was more feasible, including professional, scientific and technical services, the agency said.

Most of the new jobs were full-time. Employment increased for women and those under 24, and declined slightly for men. Some 4.6 million Canadians worked from home.

New hospital and school hires mostly drove a small uptick in public sector employment. Employment growth, meanwhile, resumed in construction, transportation and warehousing. It rose for the third consecutive month in finance, insurance, real estate, rental and leasing sectors to surpass pre-pandemic levels. The resources sector also bounced back, as did retail trade-but the latter was predicted to drop in December as some regions imposed new Covid-19 measures on restaurants, recreational facilities and retail businesses. Self-employment as a



OTTAWA: Canadian employment growth slowed in November amid a second COVID-19 wave, with 62,000 net new jobs created, the government statistical agency said.

group remained furthest from pre-pandemic levels, down 4.7 percent.

Trade flat

Canada's trade deficit remained virtually unchanged at Can\$3.8 billion (US\$3.0 billion) in October, the government statistical agency said Friday. Its imports and exports since a surge in July after a spring COVID-19 lockdown was lifted have shifted slightly away from its top partner the United States.

According to Statistics Canada, trade with the United States in October was 0.3 percent below July levels, while with other countries it rose 10.6 percent. The largest recent increases in imports were from China and South Korea, while Britain and the Netherlands contributed the most to growth in exports. As a result, Canada's trade surplus with the United States widened from Can\$1.7 billion in September to Can\$3.0 billion in October.

Total exports increased 2.2 percent to Can\$46.5 billion-below pre-pandemic levels-with growth in consumer goods partially driven by a rebound in foreign sales of pharmaceutical products (+39 percent). Notably more medications for treating psoriasis were sent to the United States, after a plunge in September of anti-depressants also shipped to its southern neighbor. — AFP

Work set to resume on NordStream 2 despite US protest

BERLIN: Work looks set to resume on the controversial NordStream 2 pipeline that will bring Russian gas to Germany despite a fresh protest from the United States on Saturday. German shipping authorities have issued an advisory for the Baltic Sea area where the final few kilometres of the pipeline are set to be laid, warning vessels to avoid the zone from December 5-31.

Ship-tracking website Marinetrac.com also shows Russian pipe-laying ships Fortuna and Akademik Cherskiy moving towards the area. These indications coincided with a statement from the acting US ambassador to Germany calling on Berlin and the EU to halt construction of the 1,200-kilometre (750-mile) pipeline, which is also opposed by many eastern European states.

"Now is the time for Germany and the EU to impose a moratorium on the construction of the pipeline," acting ambassador Robin Quinville told business daily Handelsblatt. This would send a signal to Russia that Europe was not willing to accept "its ongoing malicious behavior", the diplomat said.

"The pipeline is not only an economic project, but also a political tool that the Kremlin is using to bypass Ukraine and divide Europe."

Nord Stream 2 is a 10-billion-euro (\$11-billion) pipeline that will run beneath the Baltic Sea and is set to double Russian natural-gas shipments to Germany, Europe's largest economy. It has long been in the crosshairs of the United States, particularly by the Trump administration which has openly criticized European countries for their reliance on energy from Russia. Work has been suspended for nearly a year because of US sanctions signed off by Trump in late 2019 that threaten asset freezes and visa restrictions for companies involved in the construction work. As well as Russian giant Gazprom, which has a majority stake, the international consortium involved in the project includes European players such as Germany's Wintershall and Uniper groups, the Dutch-British giant Shell, France's Engie and Austria's OMV. —AFP

What Brexit means for EU students at UK universities

LONDON: The end of the Brexit transition period on December 31 will introduce new rules for European Union students who want to study in Britain during the 2020-21 academic year.

What is the current situation?

The situation for an estimated 150,000 EU students has been unchanged during the transition period to December 31, as the UK and EU try to agree terms of their new relationship. Currently, EU students have "home fee status", which means they pay the same level of tuition fees as UK counterparts, depending where the university is.

Education policy is set by devolved governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, with the UK government responsible for England. As a result, tuition fees vary. In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, students with home fee status can be charged up to £9,250 (\$12,400, 10,250 euros) per year for an undergraduate degree.

Scottish or EU undergraduates studying in Scotland are not charged. EU students are eligible to apply for a student loan to cover tuition fees. Ireland has separate arrangement with the UK under a reciprocal agreement.

What happens on January 1?

All EU citizens have to apply for residency status under the Settlement Scheme, which grants the right to live and study in UK when new immigration rules kick in. Students who start a degree course at some point in the 2020/21 academic year and arrive in the UK by December 31 will still have home fee status.

New students arriving after this date will need a student visa that costs about £350 if they are studying in the UK for more than six months. They will also have to pay a surcharge of about £500 per year to use the state-run National Health Service (NHS).

What happens in the next academic year?

Across the UK, EU students starting courses after August 1, 2021 look set to pay higher international tuition fees and not be allowed to get UK student loans.

How much will they have to pay?

According to the Times Higher Education (THE) magazine, undergraduate tuition fees for an international student in 2020 were between £10,000 and £26,000 a year. A longer undergraduate medical degree can cost foreign students nearly £59,000.

Undergraduate degrees in the UK typically require three years of study. Average student debt was £27,000 this year, according to the THE, but that does not include repayment of maintenance loans to cover living costs.

Together, this can total between £35,000 and £40,000.

What is not known or agreed yet?

London and Brussels have yet to strike a deal on their future relationship. It remains unclear if Britain will continue to participate in EU academic programs such as Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe beyond the end of this academic year.

The UK government has set out guidelines for EU students to apply for student visas. But there is uncertainty about whether students who have already gained settled or pre-settled status in the UK will be able to pay home status tuition fees for courses starting in 2021-22. Because of the coronavirus outbreak, which has forced a suspension of face-to-face tuition and travel restrictions, many overseas students are studying remotely outside the UK. If they do not visit the UK this year, it is not clear if they can still qualify for pre-settled status. —AFP

Business

Kuwait needs surgical confrontation to turn around its economy: Al-Shall

Bursa Kuwait liquidity grows substantially in November

KUWAIT: Twenty nine young Kuwaiti economists issued a document which they named it "Before It Is Too Late". We will not go into the contents' details, as the content is fully consistent with all serious studies and reports that diagnosed the outcome of the incorrect economic and financial policies that produced the difficult situation of the country.

The beauty of the document is that it was issued by young professionals motivated by a patriotic sense and concern for their country's future. So it is inspiring some hope at a time when corruption, waste and mismanagement have become features inherent in the country's public administration. The document names the four structural disorders in the economy: the production, financial, labor force balance and demographic structure disorders, it also added the educational system defect as a fifth administrative disorder. All pillars of diagnosis are correct and what is new in the document is the defect in educational system which is manifested not only in the separation between its outputs and the labor market need for them but also by its high costs while its level is heading downward, that is declining.

The document mentions two example of science and mathematics. In the science test, for example, Kuwait scored 347 points in 2011 then dropped to 315 points in 2015. In the mathematics test, it scored 342 points in 2011 and dropped to 327 points in 2015. This happened while students' costs increased between the two aforementioned two years by about 38 percent and the entire Ministry of Education's expenses increased by 63 percent.

We believe that the difference in the increase between the student's cost and the total expenses goes to employment expenses irrelevant to education. In Kuwait, according to our information, the salaries and wages in the Ministry of Education scored about 82 percent of its total expenditures for the fiscal year 2016/2017, rising by 62 percent from the fiscal year 2002/2003, while the "Arab Center for Educational Research" recommended a rate that it does not exceed 65 percent.

The imbalance of the percentages means fewer laboratories, equipment, and tools necessary to promote education. The rest of the document is valid pillars to get out of the impasse. The economy, public finance, labor force balance and demographic structure are all unsustainable; unless the goal is to sustain them and with fair participation by all society components to bear the costs of rotating the economy, it may be too late.

According to the document, Kuwait cannot get out of its predicament unless it seriously addresses corruption and it avails information to whoever needs it abundantly up-to-date, with transparency and unless the transformation project takes into account the social justice principle. Since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1990, the race for supremacy in the world has shifted to the economy. As such, the economy has lifted China to the top and the economy has dropped many countries to failing countries status despite their enormous resources. Venezuela, for instance, is a good example of that. Kuwait needs surgical confrontation of its economic conditions and

this requires that a motivated group and similar to the young people of this group take over the task of turning the economy towards China as an alternative to the management of "tribalism" and "quotas", which have become enslaved to the Venezuelan route.

Boursa Kuwait

Performance of Boursa Kuwait in November was more active compared to October performance as the traded value, i.e. Boursa liquidity increased accompanied by positive indices performances. The Premier Market index rose slightly by 0.1 percent, the All-Share Market index rose by 0.3 percent, also the Main Market index rose by 1 percent and the BK Main 50 index rose by 1.4 percent. Boursa liquidity doubled in November compared to October and scored KD 2.174 billion compared with KD 1.145 billion in October. On Monday 30th of November 2020, there was an influx of approximately KD 961.6 million in the trading session directly after implementing Boursa Kuwait upgrade within the MSCI as an emerging market level. Accordingly, the average daily trading value for November increased to KD 98.8 million versus KD 60.3 million in October, an increase of 63.9 percent. It remains an exceptional elevation that may not reoccur.

Boursa liquidity in the first eleven months of this year (219 working days) reached KD 9.832 billion, and the average daily trading value for the period was about KD 44.9 million, higher by 43.9 percent if compared to KD 31.2 million average daily trading value for the same period of 2019, and higher by 41.4 percent when compared to the average for the entire year of 2019 at KD 31.8 million. Liquidity trends since the beginning of the year indicate that half of the listed companies got only 0.7 percent, i.e. less than one percent, including 50 companies that got 2 about 0.1 percent of that liquidity and 5 companies without any trading. As for the small liquid companies, 12 companies whose market value equals 3.2 percent of all listed companies' value captured about 6.9 percent of total market liquidity. This means that major liquidity activity still deprives almost half of the listed companies. On the contrary, it favors companies with small market value even though this bias is low.

As for liquidity distribution between the two markets during November 2020 was as follows:

Premier Market (20 companies)

It captured about KD 2,039 billion, or 93.8 percent of Boursa liquidity, and half of its companies captured 93.8 percent of its liquidity and about 87.9 percent of total Boursa liquidity, while the other half obtained the remainder or about 6.2 percent of its liquidity. Liquidity concentration rate reached a high level, as 4 companies obtained 75.8 percent of its liquidity.

Main Market (153 companies)

It captured KD 135.3 million or about 6.2 percent of Boursa liquidity; within it, 20 percent of its companies captured 84.5 percent of its liquidity and 80 percent of its companies got about 15.5 percent of its liquidity. Companies within the Main Market that have a window for liquidity when needed deserve to

	30/09/2020 (Thousand KD)	30/09/2019 (Thousand KD)	Change		
			Value	%	
Total Assets	4,314,801	4,117,767	197,034	4.8%	↑
Total Liabilities	3,816,972	3,609,628	207,344	5.7%	↑
Equity attributable to the equity holders of the bank	437,189	447,499	-10,310	-2.3%	↓
Total Operating Income	68,412	80,670	-12,258	-15.2%	↓
Total Operating Expenses	25,824	29,584	-3,760	-12.7%	↓
Provision	18,369	3,751	14,618	389.7%	↑
Taxation	1,109	2,096	-987	-47.1%	↓
Net Income	23,110	45,239	-22,129	-48.9%	↓
Ratios					
**Return on Average Assets (ROA)	0.7%	1.5%			↓
**Return on Average Equity relevant to the bank shareholder (ROE)	6.9%	13.7%			↓
**Return on Average Capital (ROC)	14.6%	30.0%			↓
Earnings per share (EPS) - (Eib)	11.0	22.3	-11.3	-50.7%	↓
Closing Price - (Eib)	271	312	-41	-13.1%	↓
*Price to Earnings Per Share Multiples (P/E)	18.5	10.5			
*Price to Book Value Multiples (P/B)	1.2	1.3			

* Indicators Ended September 30, 2020 on an annual basis.
** Calculated based on the average rate of the financial data at the end of December 2019 and September 30.

be kept listed. There is no harm in encouraging companies that lack liquidity for a long period of time to withdraw from listing.

Monthly Report of the State's Financial Administration Accounts - August 2020

In its monthly follow-up report for the State's Financial Administration until the end of August 2020 (as published on its website), the Ministry of Finance indicates that total realized revenues until the end of the 5th month of the current fiscal year 2020/2021 scored KD 3.301 billion, which is 44 percent of the total estimated revenues for the entire fiscal year in the amount of about KD 7.503 billion. In details, actual oil revenues until 31/08/2020 were at KD 2.778 billion, i.e. 49.4 percent of the estimated oil revenues for the entire current fiscal year in the amount of KD 5.628 billion, or about 84.2 percent of total collected revenues. The average Kuwaiti oil price for the first five months of the current fiscal year 2020/2021 scored US\$ 33.1 per barrel.

An amount of KD 522.694 million was collected from non-oil revenues during the same period with a monthly average of KD 104.539 million, while the total estimated amount for the entire current fiscal year was about KD 1.874 billion. This means that the realized amount if it continues at the monthly average, will be less for the entire current fiscal year by nearly KD 619.9 million than the estimated. Expenditures allocations for the current fiscal year were estimated at KD 21.555 billion, of which an amount of KD 4.209 billion has been actually spent according to the bulletin until 31/08/2020.

An amount of KD 505.923 million has been obligated and considered as spent, raising the total



expenditures -the actual and the obligated to KD 4.715 billion. The monthly average of the actual expenditures and the obligated is nearly KD 942.927 million. Though the bulletin concludes that the budget achieved at the end of the 5th month of the current fiscal year a KD 1.414 billion deficit, although we publish it without recommending relying on it and taking into account that the monthly spending average will increase significantly by the end of the fiscal year.

The deficit figure at the end of the fiscal year depends mainly on the price of oil and its production for the remainder of the current fiscal year, that is the upcoming seven months. And if oil prices continue at their current level with reduction in production level, we expect the actual deficit number to rise to between KD 10-12 billion with it being closer to the smaller figure.

Has the ECB made wealth gap wider?

PARIS: The European Central Bank likely saved the eurozone from several financial crises but it is also accused of exacerbating inequality with its ultra-loose monetary policies.

What policies are being questioned?

Under the direction of Mario Draghi and now Christine Lagarde, the ECB has purchased billions of euros worth of sovereign and corporate debt since 2015 to keep borrowing rates down in the eurozone and ward off additional crises.

The unconventional policy is known as Quantitative Easing (QE) and it has been implemented along with more classic methods of boosting the economy, such as ultra-low interest rates that currently hover around zero. The bank might unveil additional, or stronger, measures this week.

Does this make financial inequality worse?

"Asset purchases tend to mechanically widen the gap between the most wealthy and the least wealthy," notes Jezebel Coupey-Soubeyran, professor of monetary policy at the Paris-1 University.

When it buys debt from financial institutions on secondary markets, i.e. after the debt has already been issued, the ECB and other central banks effectively lower the rate of interest that countries and companies must offer to obtain funds. Investors often then turn to assets that involve more risk but which offer better returns, like stocks, causing share prices to rise.

That generally benefits shareholders such as investment groups and wealthy individuals.

Interest rates have fallen sharply since QE began, and are sometimes negative now for counties such as France and Germany, while the CAC 40 and DAX stock market indices have surged



by more than 30 percent in the past five years. Shareholders have obviously benefited as a result.

"It is certain, that (QE) has enriched this class of the population," confirmed Frederik Ducrozet, a strategist at Pictet Wealth Management. Low interest rates have also allowed wealthy households to benefit from higher real-estate values because demand has driven up prices in many metropolitan areas.

ECB chief economist Philip Lane acknowledged as much in a recent interview with the French financial daily Les Echos, by saying that the bank's monetary policy had "immediate consequences for asset prices". He added that "the value of shares and property is higher which, of course, benefits those who own these assets."

Do such policies help more modest households?

The ECB, which is based in Frankfurt, declined to comment on this question.

But in January 2019, two central bank staff said in a study that QE had helped reduce unemployment among the bottom 20 percent of wage earners in four countries-France, Germany, Italy and Spain-and raised their wages. Ultra-low interest rates have also allowed less-wealthy

households to buy property, thus reducing inequality, they maintained.

That said, several ECB papers have concluded that such reductions have not been particularly significant. And Coupey-Soubeyran pointed out that comparable statistics on unemployment between the eurozone and broader European Union do not demonstrate a large difference that could be attributed to ECB policies.

Have savers been taken to the cleaners?

The central bank acknowledges a negative impact on thrifty households that have seen the value of their savings decline owing to low interest rates. The bank's policy has had a "distributive" effect, and affected households that are net borrowers and those that are net savers in a "heterogeneous manner", according to Eric Dor, research director at the IESEG School of Management.

ECB economists have argued that such negative effects were offset by support for employment and wages. And Dor agreed that strong central bank support for wages, in particular those of poorer workers, "has more than compensated for the fact that some households have suffered an overall loss owing to net interest revenues." —AFP

Venezuela: Top oil exporter in dire straits

CARACAS: Venezuela, once Latin America's top oil exporter and a bete noire of the United States, is enduring a deep economic, political and migration crisis.

With a third of its 30 million people going hungry, embattled President Nicolas Maduro still hopes to retake congress from the opposition in Sunday's elections.

Chavez: Anti-US firebrand

Maduro was propelled to power in 2013 following the death of the hugely popular leftist firebrand Hugo Chavez. Strongly anti-America, Chavez-first elected president in 1999 — mixed a larger-than-life personality with a man-of-the-people style. His popularity was underpinned by oil-funded social programs.

Elected to a third term in 2012, he died the following year of cancer. His were big shoes to fill for Maduro, who quickly lost favor, notably when a 2014 fall in oil prices sparked a major economic crisis for the oil-dependent nation.

The economic woes provoked anti-government riots that raged for months in 2014, with the authorities reacting with force. Forty-three people were killed. Protests again calling for Maduro to step down lasted for four months in 2017, leaving 125 people dead.

Power struggle

During elections in December 2015, the opposition won control of the National Assembly by a landslide. Following an intense fightback from Maduro, in 2018 National Assembly leader Juan Guaido proclaimed himself acting president.

He was immediately recognized by the US and a host of other countries. But Russia, Cuba, Bolivia, Mexico and

Turkey still supported Maduro, who remains in power.

To choke off the Chavist regime, the Trump administration in Washington imposed oil sanctions in April 2019. But the arrival of Joe Biden at the White House in January 2021 could end a hardline US pressure policy designed to oust Maduro, analysts say.

All about oil

The Caribbean nation has the largest proven oil reserves in the world. But lack of investment in infrastructure has meant its crude production has plummeted to less than 400,000 barrels per day from 3.2 million 12 years ago, bringing it to the same level as it was in the 1930s.

Oil accounted for 96 percent of exports in 2019 and half of state revenue. Despite its huge reserves, Venezuela recently had to turn to Iran to deal with a severe fuel shortage.

Economy in free fall

Even before the coronavirus, Venezuela's economy had shrunk by half since 2014. Inflation hit 9,000 percent in 2019, and the national currency, the bolivar, has collapsed. Due to plummeting oil prices Venezuela suffers from a lack of foreign currency, and has fallen into a severe crisis.

As a result five million Venezuelans have fled shortages of food, medicines, water, fuel and electricity. Maduro says the crisis is the result of an "economic war" waged by the right and the US to unseat him.

Teaching music

But Venezuela is not just known for its cataclysmic crises. Its internationally acclaimed "El Sistema" ("The System"), a musical education program founded by the late musician, politician and economist Antonio Abreu, has been copied in more than 50 countries. Venezuela also boasts the highest waterfall in the world, the Angel Falls, near-deserted Caribbean islands and dense jungles and the Andes mountains. But with the country in turmoil, tourists are not likely to flock there anytime soon. —AFP

Classifieds

Monday, December 7, 2020

Kuwait Times
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www.kuwaittimes.net
 e-mail: info@kuwaittimes.net

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Civil Aviation



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 Fax: (+965) 24348714
www.met.gov.kw

Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY NIGHT: Rather cold with light to moderate freshening at times over costal areas north westerly wind with speed of 08 - 40 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear with a chance for fog forming over some areas.

BY DAY: Fair with light to moderate north westerly wind with speed of 12 - 38 km/h .

WEATHER WATCH			Fog	
STATION	MAX. REC.	MIN. EXP.	SFC. CHART 06/12/2020 1200 UTC	
KUWAIT CITY	21 °C	12 °C		
KUWAIT AIRPORT	21 °C	12 °C		
ABDALY	17 °C	11 °C		
BUBYAN	20 °C	14 °C		
JAHRA	19 °C	12 °C		
FAILAKA ISLAND	18 °C	15 °C		
SALMIYAH	22 °C	14 °C		
AHMADI	- °C	- °C		
NUWAISIB	22 °C	13 °C		
WAFRA	21 °C	12 °C		
SALMY	17 °C	10 °C		

4 DAYS FORECAST

DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Monday	12/07	Fair at day and cold at night	19 °C	12 °C	NW	12 - 38 km/h
Tuesday	12/08	Fair at day and cold at night	19 °C	11 °C	NW-VRB	08 - 32 km/h
Wednesday	12/09	Fair at day and cold at night	20 °C	10 °C	VRB-NW	08 - 28 km/h
Thursday	12/10	Fair at day and cold at night	19 °C	10 °C	NW	12 - 38 km/h

TOMORROW PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	05:04
Sunrise	06:29
Zuhr	11:39
Asr	14:31
Sunset	16:50
Isha	18:12

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	23 °C
MIN. Temp.	17 °C
MAX. RH	96 %
MIN. RH	55 %
MAX. Wind	N 25 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	6.56mm

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

Hospitals

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

Clinics

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

NOTICE
 December 03, 2020

Mr. Prasanth Mathew Cherian, son of Mr. Prasad Aiyon Kovil Cherian, resident of Aiyon Civil House, Valakuzhy Tiruvalla, Kerala and Ms. Diana Merin Sam, daughter of Mr. Sam K Daniel, resident of Pynnumootil Nissy, Thazhakar PO, Mavelikara, Kerala both Indian nationals presently residing in Kuwait, have given notice of intended marriage between them under the Foreign Marriage Act, 1969. If anyone has any objection to the proposed marriage, he/she may file the same with the undersigned according to the procedure laid down under the Act/Rule within thirty days from the date of publication of this notice. Communications in this regard can be made by Email (cw2.kuwait@mea.gov.in) / letters / telephonic calls (00965-22550171, 00965-22533125).

(Ranveer Bharti)
 Second Secretary (Cons)
 and Marriage Officer.

Embassy of India, Kuwait.
 Email: cw2.kuwait@mea.gov.in

ANNOUNCEMENT VACANCY

GRILLS RESTAURANT IN AL KHAIRAN SEA CITY IS LOOKING CANDIDATES FOR THE FOLLOWING POSTS:

- COMMIE CHEF - NAAN MAKER
 - WAITER - CLEANER

REQUIREMENTS
 Candidates should have minimum of 3 years of experience in applied post Candidates should have 18 visa transferable & should know to speak English and preferred to speak Arabic.
 Facilities provided by company
 Accommodation, transport, food, uniform and training.

Interested candidates are requested to send cv at:
pathaknavin1990@gmail.com
 or contact mobile no: +96569998277

FOR SALE

House hold items for sale. Contact mobile: 66076140

Mitsubishi Galant model 2012, white color, low mileage, first owner. Contact: 66076140 (C 5822) 7-12-2020

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Lijo Gladin Austinsingh D/o Livingston, holder of Indian passport No: S2396095 presently residing in Kuwait, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be changed as given name: Lijo Gladin and surname: Livingston. (C 5821) 6-12-2020

Word Search

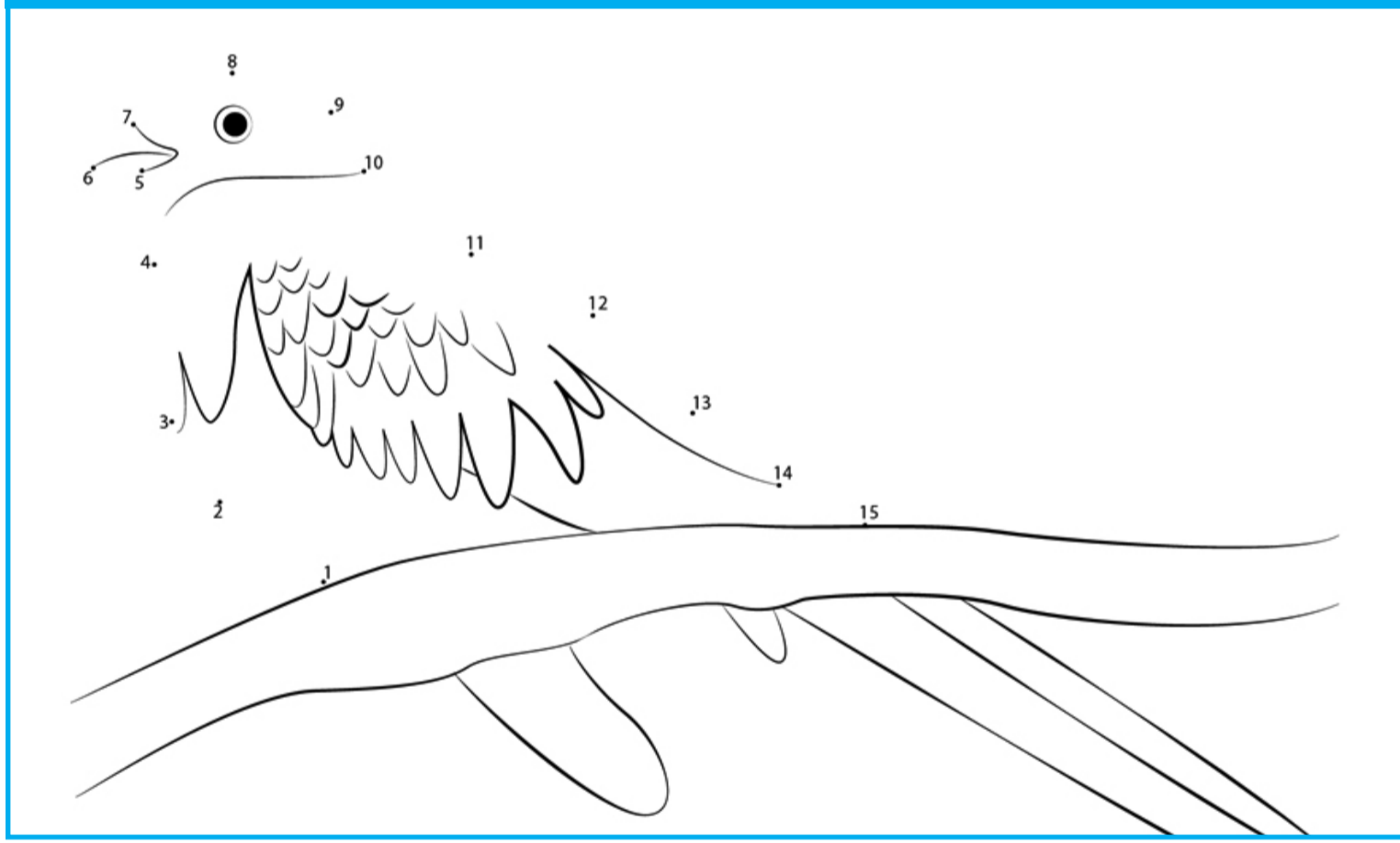
Let's Go Camping

Find all of the camping related words from the list below. The words can be up, down, forward, backward, or diagonal.

J	D	G	E	F	I	S	H	I	N	G	P	O	L	E	B	F
K	L	L	D	S	E	J	E	R	I	F	P	M	A	C	U	D
J	C	D	F	Z	R	W	M	R	M	Y	S	C	O	U	G	M
E	K	A	L	I	A	R	T	S	O	C	O	M	P	A	S	S
W	M	P	P	N	P	D	Y	H	S	M	U	T	B	S	P	L
H	K	T	F	K	O	P	P	M	M	Q	S	U	A	A	R	E
C	N	I	S	Y	C	P	Q	H	I	K	E	N	B	F	A	E
Y	R	T	N	E	T	A	L	R	L	L	B	Z	L	S	Y	P
E	E	K	S	B	R	I	B	F	A	L	J	A	A	A	S	I
K	T	N	T	I	O	O	U	F	O	C	S	U	E	N	W	N
U	N	I	R	V	U	E	F	C	N	H	C	Q	X	L	I	G
H	A	F	E	Z	B	F	K	P	L	A	T	O	G	P	M	B
M	L	E	A	Q	F	K	L	I	K	O	P	G	O	H	S	A
B	P	A	M	R	A	N	G	E	R	F	V	K	M	N	U	G
L	J	I	C	E	C	H	E	S	T	N	I	P	A	I	U	
Z	D	S	E	O	T	I	U	Q	S	O	M	B	K	N	T	E
W	Y	Q	X	D	P	X	K	W	B	L	B	X	N	B	S	S

BACKPACK, BUG SPRAY, CAMPFIRE, COMPASS, FIRE, FISHING POLE, FLASHLIGHT, FOREST, HXKE, ICE CHEST, KNIFE, LAKE, LANTERN, HAP, MOSQUITOES, NAPKINS, RACCOON, RANGER, SLEEPING BAG, SHOES, STREAM, SUNLOCK, SWISUIT, TENT, TRAIL.

Join the Dots



STAR TRACK

<p>Aries (March 21-April 19)</p> <p>If you're involved with the arts, the day ahead will be a bright one for you, Aries. You feel a strong desire to bring people together in pursuit of some artistic endeavor. Listen to your longings. You're likely to be a sharp talent scout, or at the very least, a person who is able to enhance other people's talents.</p>	<p>Cancer (June 21-July 22)</p> <p>You must be wondering what in the world is going on? On the one hand, you have humanistic and harmonious thoughts about your family and work environment. On the other hand, you also have a deep desire to destroy everything in order to start fresh! You will have to choose. In any case, given the current climate and the fire inside you, any sort of compromise will prove difficult.</p>	<p>Libra (September 23-October 22)</p> <p>Don't hesitate to speak up for what is right, Libra, even if it means confronting someone with power. So be it. The slightest injustice can't be tolerated. When you voice your opinion, as you feel compelled to do, it makes others respect you. This has been a long time coming, and it does you a tremendous amount of good!</p>	<p>Capricorn (December 22-January 19)</p> <p>Something's gotten into you today, Capricorn. An iconoclastic imp inside you is determined to tear down every convention, especially in the art world. Why are you so furious with orthodoxy? Did you dream that an imitator stole one of your ideas and made a fortune with it? If you were an art critic, we would expect you to sing the praises of the vanguard.</p>
<p>Taurus (April 20-May 20)</p> <p>Today you can expect to have some disagreements with your partner or friend, Taurus. You may overreact. If you do, it's only because the climate of the last few days has made you feel more vulnerable than usual. It's your tendency when faced with tension to be the first to back down. Try not to do it this time. Sometimes self-sacrifice comes at too high a cost.</p>	<p>Leo (July 23-August 22)</p> <p>You may be planning for the future, Leo, yet find yourself needing to make choices that will resonate far beyond the next few months. It's possible that you will have to consider sending your children to a new school, for example, or decide to move across the country. These are big decisions, to be sure, but trust that you won't be making them alone. Your loved ones have a say in these matters!</p>	<p>Scorpio (October 23-November 21)</p> <p>Scorpio, no one has ever accused you of being overly diplomatic. In fact, since you have no compunction about saying what you think, your mouth regularly gets you into trouble. It's true that your verbal outbursts often relieve tension in tight situations, but there are times when kind words are a more effective way to get a point across. Why not try it?</p>	<p>Aquarius (January 20- February 18)</p> <p>If you're involved in an occupation similar to that of your mother or father, Aquarius, today you may question if the choice was yours or preordained. Did you take this career path of your own volition? If not, what is it that you should really be doing with your professional life? You feel rebellious and yearn for more independence. You might want to find more freedom within the confines of your existing career.</p>
<p>Gemini (May 21-June 20)</p> <p>Today you will be confrontational, Gemini. This comes after several weeks of holding yourself back from openly criticizing other people. You have especially strong feelings concerning anything that touches activities outside of the family. An explosion is imminent and likely unavoidable. Go ahead and express yourself. You will all be best friends again tomorrow!</p>	<p>Virgo (August 23-September 22)</p> <p>You can expect to be volatile today, Virgo! No one will dare contradict you or insinuate that you've taken your ideas from others. You have the potential to get really angry. Rather than say things you might later regret, write down your thoughts. And if you do feel the need to make a speech, do it publicly.</p>	<p>Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)</p> <p>There's some likelihood you'll become irritated with someone close to you today, Sagittarius. Just who do they think they are, anyway? How insulting to put on such an act, especially considering how long you've known each other. Whatever you fight about, at the heart of it is your frustration and concern that your friendship may end. Try not to overreact. Express yourself mildly.</p>	<p>Pisces (February 19-March 20)</p> <p>Most people form their opinions on the basis of what they're told by a few people who supposedly know what they're talking about. Certain ideas become fashionable. Today, Pisces, you have no patience for these tendencies. In fact, you're tempted to use vulgar language just to shock the pseudo-intellectuals out of their complacency. Alas, you can't do it.</p>

Lifestyle | Features

Dutch 'vegetarian butcher' carves new niche for Unilever

When ninth-generation Dutch farmer Jaap Korteweg turned vegetarian and set up a shop selling meat-free products over a decade ago, his friends thought he was joking. But the founder of "The Vegetarian Butcher" had the last laugh when the company was gobbled up by British-Dutch consumer giant Unilever in 2018. Unilever has now put the firm at the heart of its plans to carve out a one-billion-euro (\$1.2-billion) a year slice of the increasingly juicy global market for meat-free products. "It's a dream that comes true for me," Korteweg told AFP at the site of a grass-roofed, eco-friendly house he has built on former farmland that has been returned to nature. "I'm a ninth generation farmer, grew up on the countryside of the Netherlands, between the bulls and the cows for milk," he adds. "So it's not logical maybe that I did it this way for the Vegetarian Butcher. But what I now see is that my family and my brother and sisters are very positive about this transformation and the new business."

Once a self-confessed "big meat lover", Korteweg says his conversion came 20 years ago, when he was asked to store dead pigs in his cold storage areas during a swine fever outbreak. "For me that was the moment to stop it, I'd had enough of that system using animals for meat," he said—although giving up eating meat was "not easy" and "like stopping smoking or drugs".

'Dream come true'

Korteweg then created a small "butcher's shop" in The Hague using expert chefs to come up with vegan and vegetarian alternatives to bacon, meatballs, mince, kebabs and other meat products. "My goal was to become the biggest butcher in the world as soon as possible, and at that time people laughed at it because they don't take it seriously," he said. "But for me I took it serious because I wanted to create an alternative for the industrial meat." The company expanded and its profile rose, producing a range of quirkily-named vegan products for sale in supermar-

kets, including "Little Willies" sausages, which made headlines in Britain for their risqué name.

Tall and bald, Korteweg himself posed for publicity pictures holding a meat cleaver and wearing a butcher's apron splattered not with blood but carrot juice. And his move towards plant-based products was ahead of the curve. Consumers worldwide were beginning to turn away from meat products, both for health reasons and also because of the climate emergency, as beef production is a major global polluter. Now the global plant-based "meat" market is on track to be worth \$100 billion in the next 15 years, with British tycoon Richard Branson investing in Impossible Foods, while Beyond Meat is part-financed by billionaire philanthropist Bill Gates.

'100 times bigger'

The Vegetarian Butcher's plant-based products are now on sale in 20,000 outlets across 30 countries, according to Unilever, which has also struck a deal to provide Burger King with a vegetarian version of its flagship "Whopper" in Europe, the Middle East and Africa. "Now the next step at Unilever is great, they invest a lot, and they have the knowledge and the power to bring it all over the world, so the team is exploding, and the results too," said Korteweg. "It's a dream that comes true for me."

He rejects criticism that Unilever has been "greenwashing" or "wokewashing" its image by publicly promoting sustainable plans including meat-free food while still being a major plastics polluter. "I don't think it's greenwashing because they take it too serious. If it was greenwashing they'd sell the Vegetarian Butcher and stop the development, but they have the goal to make it 10 times, 100 times bigger," he says. The original Vegetarian Butcher has meanwhile taken something of a step back, with Unilever appointing a new chief executive to oversee its global expansion.

"I am the founder and it's never going to change, but I am in the taste panel still and I'm the face of the company," he says. "It's a free role but I like to do it." Korteweg is now spending more time on the farming that he still loves, as well as on helping restore former farmland to the wild. "I'm still a farmer but a vegetarian butcher too," he adds.—AFP



Croatian Margareta Kranjcec, 99, gives the thumbs up as she rests in her bed at an elderly people home in Karlovac, Croatia, after being hospitalized for three weeks in late October for COVID-19 (novel coronavirus). —AFP

'Thumbs up' Croatian woman beats COVID-19 aged 99

A 99-year-old Croatian woman gave the thumbs up on Thursday after she successfully beat the new coronavirus. Margareta Kranjcec, who lives in an old people's home in the central city of Karlovac, was hospitalized in late October after testing positive for Covid-19 but released three weeks later. "It's over, I feel fine now," the Vecernji List newspaper quoted Kranjcec as saying. Kranjcec is bedridden due to her age and fragility but has no serious health conditions.

She was among several residents who tested positive for the virus, although she was asymptomatic, the home's director Stefica Ljubic Mlinac said. "With her fragility and old age it is really amazing how the coronavirus did not do her any harm," Ljubic Mlinac told AFP. "It's such nice news" amid the gloom of the pandemic, she added. Croatia, a country of 4.2 million people, has registered nearly 140,000 Covid-19 infections with nearly 2,000 deaths.—AFP



In this file photo shows the logo of the Vegetarian Butcher concept store in The Hague.



In this file photo a plate of 100% plant-based chicken chunks is displayed at The Vegetarian Butcher concept store in The Hague.

—AFP photos

Hospital staff 'truly exhausted,' says Texas doctor in viral hug photo

Through multiple masks, a face shield and a protective suit he likens to those worn by astronauts, Dr Joseph Varon bends over his COVID-19 patient and waves into the phone she is holding up. At the other end of the video call, several loved ones express their delight at seeing the man who helped save Gloria Garcia from the disease that has killed more than 278,000 people in the US and counting. Varon, the chief of staff at United Memorial, a small hospital that primarily treats minority patients in a low-income north Houston neighborhood, made headlines when a photo of him hugging an elderly

what I will eat because you don't know when you're going to eat again." He says he has gained 35 pounds (15 kilograms). Outspoken and frustrated, Varon complained to the media as far back as July that he and his staff were running "on fumes." "My staff is very tired. My nurses, they will start crying in the middle of the day. They will break down because they are so overwhelmed with the number of cases we're getting that they are truly exhausted," he tells AFP.

Reinforcements

Inside the critical care Covid ward, the beds are full. Staff take vitals and check on patients. Varon does his daily rounds. Garcia, ahead of her video call, sits up in bed and carefully arranges her hair and makeup. Other patients lie back on their pillows, with get well cards taped to walls. The health workers' faces can barely be seen through the layers of protective gear. Some, including Varon, wear large photographs of themselves around their necks. It was the loneliness and lack of human contact on the ward that drove his pity for the man he hugged in the viral photo, he said.

During the summer, as cases across Texas surged, they were backed up by a specialist army team providing medical support. But the military soon moved on. Varon and his staff kept working. They have some reinforcements still: since the pandemic began, travelling nurses across America have rushed towards the danger even as others have hunkered down. Demetra Ransom is one of them. She left her home in Florida to head first to New York, epicenter of the US outbreak in the spring, and then to other hotspots before landing in Houston. At United Memorial she is tactile with the patients, touching their arms and shoulders to comfort them.—AFP



Chief of Staff Doctor Joseph Varon smiles and waves to Gloria Garcia's family as she video calls them from the COVID-19 ward at United Memorial Medical Center in Houston, Texas. —AFP

Covid patient on Thanksgiving went viral. The hug was a candid moment of empathy. And Varon's wave to Garcia's family is enthusiastic. But make no mistake: the doctor is exhausted.

When AFP accompanied Varon on his rounds on Friday, it was his 260th straight day of work. Even the few hours he steals at home each day are interrupted by endless phone calls. He sleeps, he says, no more than one or two hours a night. "Don't ask me how I can do this," he adds. Donuts play a role. He displays a box, adding: "Whatever they bring is

LAPA signed a cooperation agreement with 'Geek Express'



Fareah Al-Saqqaf, Chairman of the Board of Directors of LAPA.



Manal Hakim, CEO of 'Geek Express'.



The Performing Arts Academy "LAPA" announced the signing of a strategic cooperation agreement with "Geek Express", a Lebanon-based company for the purpose of providing coded art workshops (combination of coding and arts). In these workshops, children will learn to create literary and artistic content through technology.

These workshops come under the slogan "We are all for the universe" that "LAPA" raised, challenging the conditions of the Corona pandemic by creating opportunities for creativity and online learning. "Geek Express" is a leading company in the field of technological education and programming, certified by Microsoft and has won international awards such as the Best Application Award from MIT.

About the cooperation agreement, Fareah Al-Saqqaf, Chairman of the Board of Directors of "LAPA", said: "We seek to develop our programs for children and adults and keep up with the development in the field of technology and the digital world, also

strengthening Arab partnership is at the top of our priorities. The cooperation with "Geek Express" comes for development, educational and economic goals in the interest of the Lebanese and Kuwaiti parties".

She added: "This confirms our commitment to the national approach, supporting youth opportunities in the Arab countries we work in, which are Lebanon, Yemen and Jordan. It also confirms our interest in investing energies in these countries, opening a joint Arab labor market and developing economies based on creativity and innovation, working remotely and exchanging experiences in the fields of technology. The Lebanese labor market is full of competencies in technology, advertising, media, visual and theatrical arts, so we have a close connection with Lebanon, and the presence of LOYAC Lebanon facilitates that for us".

Al-Saqqaf affirmed LAPA's commitment to its strategic goals, the most important of which is establishing partnerships and promoting joint Arab cooperation, especially

regarding youth, education and creativity issues. She also explained that this agreement provides a set of programs directed in the fields of literature and the arts to encourage children to compose and draw stories, learn the basics of music and develop applications in artistic fields. This serves our vision of the collective awareness that we seek and the development of human relationship with each other and the environment around us under the slogan "one universe".

Manal Hakim, the CEO of "Geek Express", expressed her happiness with this cooperation, saying: "We offer a variety of technology and programming courses specially designed for children between 5-17 years with professional professors. We always strive to present our programs to suit the requirements of our partners, while maintaining our high standards. We are happy to cooperate with "LAPA" and support it in achieving its goals. We will work together to create a new vision for educational programs that integrate technology and the arts".

104-year-old World War II veteran back home after battling COVID

World War II veteran from Alabama celebrated his 104th birthday at home this week after a hospital stay battling Covid-19. Major Wooten, of Madison, Alabama, was admitted to hospital on November 24 with coronavirus, his granddaughter Holly Wooten McDonald said on her Facebook page. Wooten was discharged from Madison Hospital on Tuesday, two days before he turned 104 years old, and his granddaughter posted video of his release. Doctors, nurses and family members lined up with posters and balloons and serenaded Wooten with "Happy Birthday" as he left the hospital in a wheelchair.

Wooten, known as "Pop Pop" to his family, thanked the hospital workers before heading home. Wooten served as a private in the US Army during World War II. Three of his brothers also served and one was killed in action. Wooten was among a group of veterans who visited Normandy last year for the 75th anniversary of D-Day.—AFP

'We all survived': Wuhan artists keep virus memories alive

A melancholy guitar melody intertwines with an ethereal beat as wild-haired singer Lu Yan intones his hometown's feelings into a microphone: "Virus in Wuhan. We all survived." In music, graffiti, even comics, Wuhan artists are beginning to pay homage to their city with works referencing its coronavirus suffering, punishing 76-day lockdown, and subsequent rebirth. "Wuhan's people made a great sacrifice for the whole nation and world," Lu said of the song's intended message.

The song, "WUHAN2020", is the title track of the pandemic-themed debut album by Wuhan synth-rock trio Hardcore Raver in Tears, conceived and written remotely while the bandmates were separated during the lockdown. Stress and cabin fever provided inspiration. "I was worried the world would end," said Lu, after singing through a black mask during a rehearsal in a Wuhan studio. The coronavirus emerged in the city one year ago, before spreading into a global pandemic. The vast majority of China's 4,634 officially acknowledged COVID-19 deaths occurred in Wuhan. Its economy was pummeled, and its name indelibly linked to the pathogen. To many Wuhan citizens, the pandemic period is best forgotten.

'Speak righteously'

But graffiti artist Huang Bowen tries to keep the memories alive. Huang, a self-taught 22-year-old designer, tagged the city with virus-themed graffiti during the lockdown, using a pass gained as a pandemic volunteer to evade restrictions on moving around what had become a ghost town. Huang's sub-



A graffiti artist, in a store where supplies are sold to make graffiti, prepares his bag with spray paint cans in Wuhan.—AFP

jects have included ophthalmologist Li Wenliang, one of several Wuhan doctors who first warned of the spreading contagion in December 2019 and were told by authorities to keep quiet. Li later died of the virus. Politically sensitive art is taboo in tightly controlled China.

As with nearly all his pandemic graffiti, Huang's homage to Li—the phrase "Speak righteously and remember this forever" spray-painted on the walls of the Wuhan Central Hospital where Li worked—was quickly painted over. "I don't mind, because I think I've done what I wanted to do and it

was enough for me to express what I wanted to say," said Huang, who cultivates a Bohemian look with wide-rimmed glasses and a wispy goatee. He previously used English words in his graffiti, switching during the pandemic to artistic renderings of Chinese characters. "It's more direct, and something everybody understands," he said.

Rebellious streak

As he spoke, Huang and two fellow taggers worked under cover of night on a mural inside an abandoned residential building—a green pine forest encircling a giant blazing match, all book-ended by the two Chinese characters for "hope". Chinese media reports have highlighted an explosion of Wuhan video-bloggers who have documented the outbreak and how it has affected citizens, including an amateur rapper/vlogger who sings about the city in Wuhan's unique dialect. Chinese-American artists with Wuhan roots have also created comics celebrating the city, to show it is not just Virus Ground Zero.

Wuhan has long had a rebellious streak. It was the scene of a 1911 uprising that sparked China's revolution against imperial rule; was later known as a polluted industrial city with a rough-hewn blue-collar population; and more recently has become famous as China's capital of punk rock. But rock singer Lu said the sobering pandemic experience had given his band a kinder, more mellow sound. "No matter for people in Wuhan, Chinese people, or people around the world, being kind-hearted is the starting point," Lu added.—AFP

Lifestyle | Features

Dutch 'vegetarian butcher' carves new niche for Unilever

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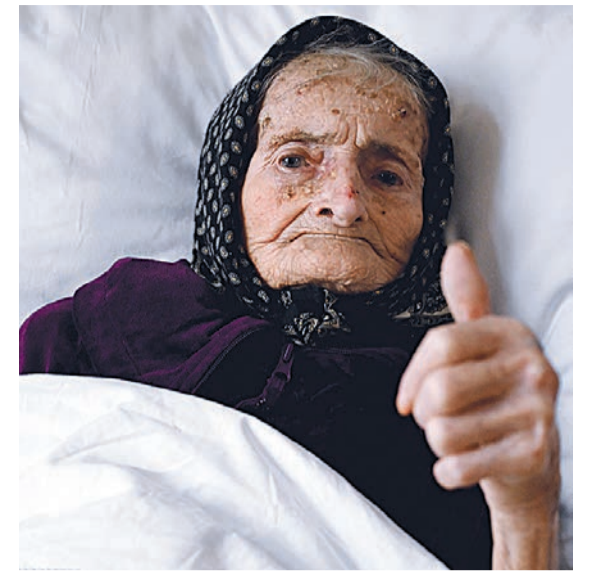
Tall and bald, Korteweg himself posed for publicity pictures holding a meat cleaver and wearing a butcher's apron spattered not with blood but carrot juice. And his move towards plant-based products was ahead of the curve. Consumers worldwide were beginning to turn away from meat products, both for health reasons and also because of the climate emergency, as beef production is a major global polluter. Now the global plant-based "meat" market is on track to be worth \$100 billion in the next 15 years, with British tycoon Richard Branson investing in Impossible Foods, while Beyond Meat is part-financed by billionaire philanthropist Bill Gates.

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—AFP photos

Hospital staff 'truly exhausted,' says Texas doctor in viral hug photo

Through multiple masks, a face shield and a protective suit he likens to those worn by astronauts, Dr Joseph Varon bends over his COVID-19 patient and waves into the phone she is holding up. At the other end of the video call, several loved ones express their delight at seeing the man who helped save Gloria Garcia from the disease that has killed more than 278,000 people in the US and counting. Varon, the chief of staff at United Memorial, a small hospital that primarily treats minority patients in a low-income north Houston neighborhood, made headlines when a photo of him hugging an elderly



Chief of Staff Doctor Joseph Varon smiles and waves to Gloria Garcia's family as she video calls them from the COVID-19 ward at United Memorial Medical Center in Houston, Texas. —AFP

Covid patient on Thanksgiving went viral. The hug was a candid moment of empathy. And Varon's wave to Garcia's family is enthusiastic. But make no mistake: the doctor is exhausted.

When AFP accompanied Varon on his rounds on Friday, it was his 260th straight day of work. Even the few hours he steals at home each day are interrupted by endless phone calls. He sleeps, he says, no more than one or two hours a night. "Don't ask me how I can do this," he adds. Donuts play a role. He displays a box, adding: "Whatever they bring is

what I will eat because you don't know when you're going to eat again." He says he has gained 35 pounds (15 kilograms). Outspoken and frustrated, Varon complained to the media as far back as July that he and his staff were running "on fumes." "My staff is very tired. My nurses, they will start crying in the middle of the day. They will break down because they are so overwhelmed with the number of cases we're getting that they are truly exhausted," he tells AFP.

Reinforcements

Inside the critical care Covid ward, the beds are full. Staff take vitals and check on patients. Varon does his daily rounds. Garcia, ahead of her video call, sits up in bed and carefully arranges her hair and makeup. Other patients lie back on their pillows, with get well cards taped to walls. The health workers' faces can barely be seen through the layers of protective gear. Some, including Varon, wear large photographs of themselves around their necks. It was the loneliness and lack of human contact on the ward that drove his pity for the man he hugged in the viral photo, he said.

During the summer, as cases across Texas surged, they were backed up by a specialist army team providing medical support. But the military soon moved on. Varon and his staff kept working. They have some reinforcements still: since the pandemic began, travelling nurses across America have rushed towards the danger even as others have hunkered down. Demetra Ransom is one of them. She left her home in Florida to head first to New York, epicenter of the US outbreak in the spring, and then to other hotspots before landing in Houston. At United Memorial she is tactile with the patients, touching their arms and shoulders to comfort them.—AFP

LAPA signed a cooperation agreement with 'Geek Express'



Fareah Al-Saqqaf, Chairman of the Board of Directors of LAPA.



Manal Hakim, CEO of 'Geek Express'.



The Performing Arts Academy "LAPA" announced the signing of a strategic cooperation agreement with "Geek Express", a Lebanon-based Company for the purpose of providing coded art workshops (combination of coding and arts). In these workshops, children will learn to create literary and artistic content through technology.

These workshops come under the slogan "We are all for the universe" that "LAPA" raised, challenging the conditions of the Corona pandemic by creating opportunities for creativity and online learning. "Geek Express" is a leading company in the field of technological education and programming, certified by Microsoft and has won international awards such as the Best Application Award from MIT.

About the cooperation agreement, Fareah Al-Saqqaf, Chairman of the Board of Directors of "LAPA", said: "We seek to develop our programs for children and adults and keep up with the development in the field of technology and the digital world, also

strengthening Arab partnership is at the top of our priorities. The cooperation with "Geek Express" comes for development, educational and economic goals in the interest of the Lebanese and Kuwaiti parties".

She added: "This confirms our commitment to the national approach, supporting youth opportunities in the Arab countries we work in, which are Lebanon, Yemen and Jordan. It also confirms our interest in investing energies in these countries, opening a joint Arab labor market and developing economies based on creativity and innovation, working remotely and exchanging experiences in the fields of technology. The Lebanese labor market is full of competencies in technology, advertising, media, visual and theatrical arts, so we have a close connection with Lebanon, and the presence of LOYAC Lebanon facilitates that for us".

Al-Saqqaf affirmed LAPA's commitment to its strategic goals, the most important of which is establishing partnerships and promoting joint Arab cooperation, especially

regarding youth, education and creativity issues. She also explained that this agreement provides a set of programs directed in the fields of literature and the arts to encourage children to compose and draw stories, learn the basics of music and develop applications in artistic fields. This serves our vision of the collective awareness that we seek and the development of human relationship with each other and the environment around us under the slogan "one universe".

Manal Hakim, the CEO of "Geek Express", expressed her happiness with this cooperation, saying: "We offer a variety of technology and programming courses specially designed for children between 5-17 years with professional professors. We always strive to present our programs to suit the requirements of our partners, while maintaining our high standards. We are happy to cooperate with "LAPA" and support it in achieving its goals. We will work together to create a new vision for educational programs that integrate technology and the arts".

104-year-old World War II veteran back home after battling COVID

World War II veteran from Alabama celebrated his 104th birthday at home this week after a hospital stay battling Covid-19. Major Wooten, of Madison, Alabama, was admitted to hospital on November 24 with coronavirus, his granddaughter Holly Wooten McDonald said on her Facebook page. Wooten was discharged from Madison Hospital on Tuesday, two days before he turned 104 years old, and his granddaughter posted video of his release. Doctors, nurses and family members lined up with posters and balloons and serenaded Wooten with "Happy Birthday" as he left the hospital in a wheelchair.

Wooten, known as "Pop Pop" to his family, thanked the hospital workers before heading home. Wooten served as a private in the US Army during World War II. Three of his brothers also served and one was killed in action. Wooten was among a group of veterans who visited Normandy last year for the 75th anniversary of D-Day.—AFP

'We all survived': Wuhan artists keep virus memories alive

A melancholy guitar melody intertwines with an ethereal beat as wild-haired singer Lu Yan intones his hometown's feelings into a microphone: "Virus in Wuhan. We all survived." In music, graffiti, even comics, Wuhan artists are beginning to pay homage to their city with works referencing its coronavirus suffering, punishing 76-day lockdown, and subsequent rebirth. "Wuhan's people made a great sacrifice for the whole nation and world," Lu said of the song's intended message.

The song, "WUHAN2020", is the title track of the pandemic-themed debut album by Wuhan synth-rock trio Hardcore Raver in Tears, conceived and written remotely while the bandmates were separated during the lockdown. Stress and cabin fever provided inspiration. "I was worried the world would end," said Lu, after singing through a black mask during a rehearsal in a Wuhan studio. The coronavirus emerged in the city one year ago, before spreading into a global pandemic. The vast majority of China's 4,634 officially acknowledged COVID-19 deaths occurred in Wuhan. Its economy was pummeled, and its name indelibly linked to the pathogen. To many Wuhan citizens, the pandemic period is best forgotten.

'Speak righteously'

But graffiti artist Huang Bowen tries to keep the memories alive. Huang, a self-taught 22-year-old designer, tagged the city with virus-themed graffiti during the lockdown, using a pass gained as a pandemic volunteer to evade restrictions on moving around what had become a ghost town. Huang's sub-



A graffiti artist, in a store where supplies are sold to make graffiti, prepares his bag with spray paint cans in Wuhan.—AFP

jects have included ophthalmologist Li Wenliang, one of several Wuhan doctors who first warned of the spreading contagion in December 2019 and were told by authorities to keep quiet. Li later died of the virus. Politically sensitive art is taboo in tightly controlled China.

As with nearly all his pandemic graffiti, Huang's homage to Li—the phrase "Speak righteously and remember this forever" spray-painted on the walls of the Wuhan Central Hospital where Li worked—was quickly painted over. "I don't mind, because I think I've done what I wanted to do and it

was enough for me to express what I wanted to say," said Huang, who cultivates a Bohemian look with wide-rimmed glasses and a wispy goatee. He previously used English words in his graffiti, switching during the pandemic to artistic renderings of Chinese characters. "It's more direct, and something everybody understands," he said.

Rebellious streak

As he spoke, Huang and two fellow taggers worked under cover of night on a mural inside an abandoned residential building—a green pine forest encircling a giant blazing match, all book-ended by the two Chinese characters for "hope". Chinese media reports have highlighted an explosion of Wuhan video-bloggers who have documented the outbreak and how it has affected citizens, including an amateur rapper/vlogger who sings about the city in Wuhan's unique dialect. Chinese-American artists with Wuhan roots have also created comics celebrating the city, to show it is not just Virus Ground Zero.

Wuhan has long had a rebellious streak. It was the scene of a 1911 uprising that sparked China's revolution against imperial rule; was later known as a polluted industrial city with a rough-hewn blue-collar population; and more recently has become famous as China's capital of punk rock. But rock singer Lu said the sobering pandemic experience had given his band a kinder, more mellow sound. "No matter for people in Wuhan, Chinese people, or people around the world, being kind-hearted is the starting point," Lu added.—AFP

Venice gold brightens Christmas spirit



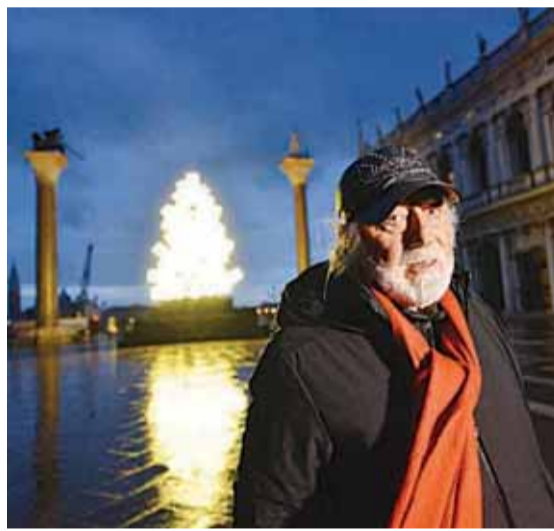
A view shows an installation by Italian artist Fabrizio Plessi set up by the columns of St. Mark's Square in Venice. —AFP photos



A view shows Christmas decorations installed under a deserted shopping arcade by St. Mark's Square.



A view shows a video mapping projection on the Rialto bridge in Venice.



Italian artist Fabrizio Plessi poses by his luminous installation (Rear left) set up by the columns of St. Mark's Square.

Venice lacks the tourists who normally give it a festive air at Christmas, but the Italian city has nonetheless highlighted its landmarks to celebrate the holidays this year. Saint Mark's Square and the Rialto Bridge across the Grand Canal in particular benefit from special lighting and projections that give inhabitants some comfort in this time of coronavirus. Italian artist Fabrizio Plessi created a Christmas tree on the square with huge rectangular screens that project a golden light.

"We have this problem like other people all around the world, but I strongly believe in positivity," he said. The artist explained his choice of light screens to build a Christmas tree by saying: "I work a lot with digital and all contemporary instruments, because I think that an artist must use all the means which his/her times makes available." Plessi placed a second piece at the end of the square, called "The Golden Age" and which also projects yellow light that resembles molten gold.

Rialto images

Another celebrated symbol of the city, the Rialto Bridge, has been transformed into a screen for light shows once night falls. Angels dance on the span's ancient arches and then make way for the gold lion on a red background that is the symbol of Venice. The images are reflected in the Grand Canal, creating an atmosphere full of fantasy and life. —AFP

St Nicholas tradition triumphs over COVID in Prague



A member of the new circus company Cirk La Putyka entertains people with a fore show during their drive-thru performance in Prague as families with their children drive their car a route visiting heaven, hell, and St. Nicholas, a big traditional event in the Czech Republic before the Christmas holidays. —AFP photos



A member of the new circus company Cirk La Putyka dressed as a Devil entertains people during their drive-thru performance.

Christmas tradition won out over coronavirus in Prague on Saturday with a COVID-compliant, socially distanced St Nicholas giving out presents to excited children. Under normal circumstances, St Nicholas, a bearded man accompanied by the devil and an angel, would call on children in the Czech Republic to give them presents in exchange for a song or a poem.

But with coronavirus measures the world over throwing up obstacles to festive celebrations, Prague-based circus company Cirk La Putyka opted for a drive-through solution. "Over the past nine months we have been looking for different ways to approach the audience," company director Rosta Novak told AFP. "This is just another way to do that at a time when theatres can't play and bands cannot perform," he added. In line with tradition, cars first drove through "hell" with devils performing acrobatic tricks and fire shows. Then they proceeded to "heaven" with angels and finally to St Nicholas himself.

The children received presents at the final stop, many of them sticking their heads out of windows to relish the experience. Driving a van full of children, Ondrej Prachar said they had all been thrilled. "It was absolutely perfect," he said, adding that it had also been a tad less frightening than the traditional version when children are sometimes scared by the idea of the devil carrying a bag in which he puts naughty kids. The St Nicholas tradition dates back to the Middle Ages and St Nicholas Day is celebrated in many countries. Born in Turkey around 280, St Nicholas, the patron saint of sailors, tradesmen, pilgrims and children, handed out a sizeable portion of his wealthy parents' property to the poor after their death. —AFP



A member of the new circus company Cirk La Putyka, dressed as Saint Nicholas entertains people during their drive-thru performance.



A member of the new circus company Cirk La Putyka dressed as a Devil entertains people during their drive-thru performance.

Bethlehem lights up Christmas tree as virus rules keep crowds away

Bethlehem lit up its Christmas tree on Saturday evening but without the usual crowds, as novel coronavirus restrictions put a damper on the start of Christmas festivities in the holy city. Palestinian authorities last week announced measures, including a night-time curfew, across the Israeli-occupied West Bank for 14 days to fight a "worrying spread" of the virus. Locals and pilgrims traditionally gather each year for the lighting of the tree in Manger Square, near the Church of the Nativity, built on the site where Christians believe

Jesus was born. But this year, only a small crowd of journalists was present due to coronavirus restrictions, an AFP photographer said. Carmen Ghattas, director of public relations at the Bethlehem municipality, told AFP that Palestinian prime minister Mohammed Shtayyeh had lit up the tree remotely from his office in Ramallah. The West Bank, with a Palestinian population of more than 2.8 million, has officially recorded 71,703 coronavirus infections, including 678 deaths. Israel has occupied the territory since 1967. —AFP



This picture shows a fireworks display during the lighting of the Christmas tree in the biblical city of Bethlehem in the occupied West Bank, closed to the public due to the COVID-19 pandemic. —AFP photos



This picture shows a view of the scene before the lighting of the Christmas tree in the biblical city of Bethlehem in the occupied West Bank, closed to the public due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sports

Photo of the Day



Johnny Collinson prepares to ski in Alaska. — Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

Pandya powers India to thrilling T20 series victory over Australia

Hardik Pandya smashes two sixes in three balls

SYDNEY: Hardik Pandya smashed two sixes in three balls in the final over to power India to a thrilling six-wicket series T20 victory over Australia in Sydney yesterday. Chasing 25 runs in the final two overs in pursuit of Australia's target of 195, Pandya was India's hero with a series of powerful strikes - including the winning six off debutant Daniel Sams with two balls to spare. Pandya finished with 42 off 22 balls after Shikhar Dhawan clubbed 52 from 36 and skipper Virat Kohli 40 off 24 in India's 195 for four. The victory gave India the T20 series with a game to play in Sydney on Tuesday after they lost the preceding 50-over ODI series 2-1.

"I have been in these situations many times and I learnt from my mistakes in the past," Pandya said. "My game is always around the confidence which I carry; it has that fine line where I back myself." Kohli was proud of his team's effort to take the series in such dynamic fashion. "The fact that two of our established players are not playing, and to win like this, makes me very proud of this team," he said. "Pandya now realizes that this is the time to establish in the finishing role and play match-winning knocks for us. "He plays with all his heart and he certainly got that competitive nature about him, and also has the skill to execute that at the highest level."

Shikhar Dhawan and KL Rahul gave India a flying start and had 56 runs on the board in five overs before Rahul was caught in the deep for 30 off 22. Suresh Raina then took a safe skied catch off Dhawan who tucked into leg-spinner Adam Zampa on 52 in his 36-ball stint with four fours and two sixes. Newcomer Daniel Sams got the prized wicket of



CANBERRA: India's Hardik Pandya dives to take a catch to dismiss Australia's captain Aaron Finch during the T20 cricket match between India and Australia at Manuka Oval in Canberra. — AFP

Kohli. He bowled a wide delivery, and Kohli chased it - getting a thin nick behind to Wade just when the India skipper was looking dangerous, with two fours and two sixes off 24 balls.

Earlier, new skipper Matthew Wade and Steve Smith hit half-centuries to lift Australia to 194 for five. Wade - who was promoted to the captaincy instead of an injured Aaron Finch - smacked 58, while Smith chipped in with a breezy 46 after India

won the toss and opted to bowl. "Maybe we were a little bit short with the bat," said Wade. "Unfortunately we didn't execute well towards the end with the ball." Wade was run out in farcical conditions when he was dropped at the third attempt by Kohli, but turned his back and failed to make his ground from the throw to wicketkeeper Rahul. It was a big wicket for India after Wade had belted 10 fours and a six off 32 balls. — AFP



HAMILTON: West Indies Jermaine Blackwood plays a shot on the fourth day of the first Test cricket match between New Zealand and West Indies at Seddon Park in Hamilton yesterday. — AFP

New Zealand extend unbeaten home Test streak with a big win

HAMILTON: New Zealand stretched their unbeaten run at home to 14 matches with a comprehensive win in the first Test against the West Indies in Hamilton yesterday after ending a battling rearguard century by Jermaine Blackwood. The West Indies were all out before lunch on day four for 247 after making only 138 in their first innings in reply to New Zealand's 519 for seven. Blackwood was the penultimate wicket to fall, for 104, after a 155-run stand with Alzarri Joseph who made 86.

The victory, set up over the first two days when New Zealand captain Kane Williamson crafted a majestic 251, highlighted the difficulty overseas teams have on New Zealand wickets. The latest victory extended New Zealand's unbeaten home streak to an impressive 14 Tests, a statistic which took Williamson by surprise. "To be honest, I didn't know that was the case, but it's great. It was a really good performance

for us to put together collectively," said Williamson, who deflected all credit away from himself.

"But we're not getting ahead of ourselves. It was nice we were able to put in a strong performance and for us it's about trying to improve little bits at a time in each game." Although much has been made of New Zealand's green wickets, and in Hamilton it was a lush emerald, Williamson believed it was fair to both sides and the West Indies had first advantage when they won the toss.

'We need a little bit more fight'

But their strike bowlers Kumar Roach and Shannon Gabriel did not bowl full enough to put pressure on the Black Caps, while the West Indies batsmen appeared uneasy trying to reply to the home team's colossal first innings. "We obviously didn't bat well," captain Jason Holder said. "In the initial stages of our innings we just need a little bit more fight in those tough periods and get through. "Kane showed us exactly how it's supposed to be done, that was a proper Test innings, being patient, buying time." The West Indies lost 15 wickets on day three as Tim Southee led a masterclass of New Zealand swing bowling. It left the tourists going into the fourth day on the ropes at 196 for six in their second innings. — AFP

'Dumb errors' cap poor year for ill-disciplined Wallabies

SYDNEY: Frustrated Wallabies coach Dave Rennie blasted his team's "dumb errors" after another erratic and ill-disciplined performance against Argentina left Australia with just one win from six this year and the Tri Nations wooden spoon. They rallied from 13-6 down at the break in pouring rain at Sydney on Saturday to salvage a 16-16 draw, but sloppy ball handling and poor execution again blighted their game.

It followed a 15-15 stalemate against the Pumas a fortnight ago, when they threw away a 15-6 advantage. "We're a work in progress. We're good men who have worked hard and come together well, but, as I've said, we need to see that reflected in performance," said Rennie. "There's no lack of heart and no lack of effort, but we've got to be way more clinical. Discipline was disappointing and we made some dumb errors."

Ill-discipline has been a recurring problem with too many silly penalties handed to the opposition. On Saturday, skipper Michael Hooper was sent to the sin-bin for a high tackle in the first half, with the Pumas scoring 10 of their points while he was off the field. Then Lukhan Salakaia-Loto was red-carded with 20 minutes left for dangerous play. Despite being down to 14 men, the Wallabies managed to claw their way back into the game and could have won had Reece Hodge converted a late penalty.

It was the third time this year he has missed long-range kicks to clinch games, and the stalemate didn't go down well with the Australian media. Broadsheet The Australian said it sent the team "almost back to where it started from" while the Sydney Morning Herald bemoaned a "depressing and sour" end to the year. Sydney's Daily Telegraph was even more brutal. "The Wallabies have been in camp together for months now but were so out of sorts they looked like they were meeting on a Tinder date for the first time," it blasted. New Zealander Rennie was recruited after Michael Cheika - now working with Argentina - was axed after a poor showing at the World Cup last year and his reign began on a promising note with an unexpected 16-16 draw against the All Blacks in Wellington in October. — AFP

News in brief

World Athletes of the Year

PARIS: World record-breakers Mondo Duplantis of Sweden and Venezuela's Yulimar Rojas were on Saturday named the male and female World Athletes of the Year. In a season to remember, not least for the coronavirus-hit scheduling, Duplantis broke the world record in the men's pole vault twice. The 21-year-old cleared 6.17m and 6.18m on back-to-back weekends in February, just weeks before the Covid-19 pandemic brought track and field to a grounding halt. When competition finally resumed, Duplantis capped his season by producing the highest outdoor vault of all time (6.15m) and finished the year undefeated in 16 competitions. "It was a really strange season, for me and everybody, but I was able to put it together and get some pretty good results," said Duplantis. — AFP

Wales beat Italy to finish fifth

LLANELLI: Wales beat Italy 38-18 in Llanelli on Saturday to finish fifth in the inaugural Autumn Nations Cup. Wales looked set for a comfortable victory as they surged into an early 14-0 lead thanks to converted tries by Kieran Hardy and Sam Parry. But Italy hit back to lead 18-17 early in the second period following tries either side of half-time by centre Marco Zanon and flanker Johan Meyer. Replacement scrum-half Gareth Davies settled home nerves, however, with a well-taken converted try before George North and Justin Tipuric scored the last of Wales' five tries. It was just a third win in 10 Tests for Wales since head coach Wayne Pivac succeeded his fellow New Zealander Warren Gatland after the 2019 World Cup, following previous victories over Italy and Georgia. — AFP

Croatia's Zubcic wins giant slalom

SANTA CATERINA DI VALFURVA: Filip Zubcic produced a storming second descent to win the World Cup giant slalom race in the Italian Alps on Saturday after placing just sixth in the first run. Slovenia's Zan Kranjec, the first-run leader, finished second with in-form Swiss racer Marco Odermatt in third. Odermatt is now the giant slalom leader after his second-place finish at Soelden. "It wasn't bad weather. It was just snowing and the organisers did a good job shifting the fresh snow," Zubcic said after his second career win. "I never complain about the weather, I prefer just to find a solution," added the 27-year-old. The race took place in sub-zero temperatures and set off from 2100m altitude, dropping 300m to the finish gate with the soft snow slowing progress around the 48 tight gates. Runner-up Kranjec felt differently to Zubcic. — AFP

Evans crashes out in Monza

MONZA: Elfyn Evans' quest for a first ever world rally championship title looks all but over after the Welsh driver crashed out in treacherous conditions in Monza on Saturday. Evans slithered off a snow-covered road on stage 11 in the hills above Monza, putting him out of contention for the rest of the day and leaving Sebastien Ogier in pole position to clinch a seventh world crown. "We came around a flat right corner with a short braking and the surface of the tarmac had changed," Evans told wrcc.com. "When I braked on that, it was just like glass and there was no chance of us slowing down at all. It completely caught me by surprise." Evans arrived at this seventh and concluding leg of the coronavirus-disrupted season 14 points clear of Ogier. With the title favorite now realistically out of contention for a top-10 finish, barring a miracle the title is Ogier's to lose. — AFP

Thomas clinches Racing win

PARIS: France winger Teddy Thomas scored a crucial late try as he made his return to the Racing 92 lineup and clinched a 17-12 win at Bordeaux-Begles in the French Top 14. Thomas, 27, was able to play for his club and not against England yesterday because he has already featured in the maximum of three team sheets during the ongoing Autumn Nations Cup. "Honestly when you have Teddy (Thomas) beside you, you just have to give him the ball and he does the rest," scrum-half Teddy Iribaren, who set up the try, told Canal. "It was a difficult game, against a good team in unique conditions. We lifted our play at the end." Thomas was joined by fellow Test players Virimi Vakatawa and Camille Chat in the Parisians' matchday squad but they were without prop Hassane Kolingar who will start against England in Sunday's Autumn Nations final. Christophe Urios' hosts made seven changes from last weekend's last-minute win at Montpellier as Tonga prop Ben Tameifuna started against his former side. — AFP

Spence returns from horrific crash

WASHINGTON: Errol Spence overpowered challenger Danny Garcia in his first fight since surviving a near-fatal rollover car accident to retain his World Boxing Council and International Boxing Federation welterweight titles on Saturday. The 30-year-old Spence put on a virtuoso performance winning almost every round in a 147-pound homecoming fight at AT&T Stadium in Dallas, Texas. The undefeated Spence, who suffered serious injuries after being thrown from his car in the drunk-driving smash, won by a unanimous decision proving he is still the same boxer as before the accident in October 2019. "The moment is surreal especially coming back from my accident year ago," Spence said. "Be patient with me. — AFP

Sports

Barcelona suffer fourth Liga defeat, go down 2-1 to Cadiz

Messi's Barcelona take 'gigantic step backwards'

MADRID: Lionel Messi's Barcelona suffered a fourth Liga defeat of the season as they went down 2-1 to Cadiz on Saturday, while Real Madrid eased the pressure on Zinedine Zidane with their first league win since October. Barca are now a distant seventh, 12 points off leaders Atletico Madrid, who beat Real Valladolid 2-0. "It's a gigantic step backwards for our chances to fight for La Liga, you have to see it like that," the Catalans' coach Ronald Koeman said. "A points difference of 12 points with a team as strong as Atletico is enormous," he added.

Koeman made three changes from the midweek Champions League win at Ferencvaros with goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen coming in for Neto. But Ter Stegen made a first costly error in Andalusia after eight minutes as Alvaro Gimenez claimed his second goal in as many games. The Barca defense failed to clear a corner which fell to Ter Stegen, but his weak parry onto his own line was tapped in by Gimenez.

Koeman's men were all-square after 56 minutes as Jordi Alba's low cross was deflected into his own goal by defender Pedro Alcala. But Ter Stegen's second costly error came eight minutes later. Clement Lenglet made a hash of Alba's throw in before Ter Stegen failed to clear under pressure from Negredo and the former Manchester City striker claimed his third goal league goal of the campaign.

'Difficult time'

Under-pressure Zidane said Madrid's scrappy 1-0 victory in Seville was significant after a testing run of results. Sevilla goalkeeper Bono guided Vinicius Junior's effort into his own net in the second half, allowing Zidane's side to take the three points and move up to third in the table, six points behind Atletico. Following two defeats in the past three games, including a 2-0 defeat to Shakhtar Donetsk in midweek that leaves Real's Champions League qualification hopes in the balance, Spanish press reports have linked former Tottenham boss Mauricio Pochettino and ex-Madrid forward Raul to Zidane's job. Zidane said he was satisfied with the points after a "difficult" time.

"These are three very important points for us. It's a well-deserved win, against a very good opponent, who can put you in trouble at any time. We got through this," he said. "It has been a bit difficult lately, today we have to enjoy it, be happy, but nothing more." Atletico, now unbeaten in 26 games in La Liga, moved to the top of the table after France international Thomas Lemar and Spain midfielder Marcos Llorente scored for Diego Simeone's men against Valladolid. Atletico are among five clubs to remain without a domestic defeat in Europe's main five leagues since the start of the season. Real Sociedad, who have lost just once in the league this term, could regain the lead if they beat Deportivo Alaves. —AFP



CADIZ: Cadiz' Swiss defender Jean-Pierre Rhyner (left) vies with Barcelona's Danish forward Martin Braithwaite (center) and French defender Clement Lenglet during the Spanish League football match between Cadiz and Barcelona on December 5, 2020. —AFP

Mueller's double rescues Bayern in thrilling 3-3 draw

BERLIN: Thomas Mueller netted twice as Bundesliga leaders Bayern Munich had to come from behind to draw 3-3 at home to RB Leipzig in Saturday's pulsating top-of-the-table clash. Leipzig, second in the Bundesliga, warmed up for Tuesday's key Champions League clash at home to Manchester United by pushing the European champions hard at the Allianz Arena.

"We knew before the game that we could come back, but the fact we had to do it was news to us," said Mueller. "At the end of the day, we can live with the result." Christopher Nkunku's early goal for Leipzig was cancelled out by a superb equalizer from Jamal Musiala, 17, before Mueller tapped home to put Bayern 2-1 up. However, the lead lasted barely a minute as Justin Kluivert-son of former Dutch star Patrick Kluivert-levelled before half-time with his first goal for Leipzig. A thumping Emil Forsberg header from an Angelino cross put visitors Leipzig 3-2 ahead soon after the break.

Bayern took a share of the points when Kingsley Coman produced a towering cross-his third assist of the

night-for Mueller to head home the equalizer on 75 minutes. "That really was a top game between two teams who really wanted to win," said Forsberg. "It was awesome to be out there on the pitch - you live for games like that." The result leaves Bayern two points clear at the top and Leipzig still waiting for a first win in Munich, after five attempts.

Dortmund drop points

Earlier, Borussia Dortmund dropped more points as they labored to a 1-1 draw at Eintracht Frankfurt with star striker Erling Braut Haaland sidelined. The result left Dortmund third in the table, four points behind Bayern. After suffering a shock 2-1 home defeat last weekend against struggling Cologne, Dortmund missed the finishing of top scorer Haaland, who is out until January with a leg injury. Dortmund's defence was caught napping when they conceded an early goal by Frankfurt's Japan midfielder Daichi Kamada. Dortmund raised their tempo and equalized with a superb strike from 18-year-old US forward Giovanni Reyna, but they failed to breach the Frankfurt defense again despite finishing the stronger.

Borussia Moenchengladbach, who will try and clinch a place in the Champions League last 16 next week away to Real Madrid, drew 2-2 draw at Freiburg, where they have not won since 2002. Gladbach went ahead



MUNICH: Bayern Munich's German goalkeeper Manuel Neuer jumps for the ball during the German first division Bundesliga football match FC Bayern Munich v RB Leipzig on December 5, 2020. —AFP

when Swiss striker Breel Embolo netted with an excellent first-time shot on 23 minutes. Freiburg equalized with a header by defender Philipp Lienhart and then took the lead just after the break when Vincenzo Grifo converted a penalty. Gladbach leveled when Alassane Plea hit the top corner of the net with a wonderful curling shot on 50 minutes. The result leaves Freiburg 14th, a point from the bottom three, while Gladbach are seventh and are seven points behind Bayern.

Demirbay quarantined

Having ended their 18-match

winless run by shocking Dortmund 2-1 last weekend, Cologne backed it up with a 2-2 draw at home with Wolfsburg to climb to 15th. Cologne's 18-year-old striker Jan Thielmann opened the scoring, but Maximilian Arnold equalised with a magnificent free-kick. Winger Ondrej Duda restored Cologne's lead when he shot into the corner on 43 minutes, but Wout Weghorst rescued a point away for Wolfsburg just after the break. Cologne are only out of the relegation places on goal difference while Wolfsburg are fifth. —AFP

Mbappe brings up century as PSG win at Montpellier

PARIS: Kylian Mbappe scored his 100th goal for Paris Saint-Germain after making a late appearance as a substitute for the Ligue 1 leaders in Saturday's 3-1 victory at in-form Montpellier. With Neymar preserved ahead of next week's crucial Champions League clash against Istanbul Basaksehir and Mbappe rested from the start, Colin Dagba's first career goal gave PSG the lead on 33 minutes. English forward Stephy Mavididi leveled before half-time at the Stade de la Mosson, the ball just crossing the line despite the best efforts of Dagba and Keylor Navas.

Moise Kean restored the advantage for PSG on 77 minutes after Rafinha triggered a quick counter, hitting a magnificent solo goal for his fifth in seventh league games. The Italy international was then replaced by Mbappe, who wrapped up the vic-

tory in stoppage time as he brought up his century of goals in his 137th game for PSG, tapping in a Layvin Kurzawa cross. "I've been wanting to score for a few matches, it's a bit of a release," Mbappe told Canal Plus. "When I signed here I wouldn't even had thought of scoring three goals," he beamed. "(A hundred) was part of a distant goal."

Mbappe is joint-fourth on the list of PSG's all-time top scorers, level with Dominique Rocheteau and trailing Pauleta (109), Zlatan Ibrahimovic (156) and Edinson Cavani (200). "I'm feeling better and better, stringing matches together is going to allow me to get fully fit," he said. "When I came here, I said that I wanted to get a lot better and you don't do that in a year. "It's been three and a half years, I've experienced a lot of things here. I've had some less good moments, but the club has always supported me."

Defending champions PSG pulled four points clear of Marseille at the top as they avoided going three league games without victory for the first time since April 2019.



MONTPELLIER: Paris Saint-Germain's French forward Kylian Mbappe (center) scores a goal during the French L1 football match between Montpellier Hérault (MHSC) and Paris Saint Germain (PSG) on December 05, 2020. —AFP

Montpellier, without top scorer Andy Delort after he tested positive for coronavirus for the second time in three months, saw their hopes of dislodging the leaders dashed as their four-match winning run came to an end. Earlier, Rennes crashed to a sixth

defeat in seven matches as they lost 2-0 at home to Lens, three days being dumped out of Europe. Teenage striker Arnaud Kalimuendo, on loan from PSG, hit the opener on 27 minutes and Ignatius Ganago sealed the victory late in the second half. —AFP

Paarl," the governing bodies said.

A decision on the remaining two matches in the series will be taken after the test results are ratified independently by medical experts, the statement added. Ashley Giles, the managing director of England Men's Cricket, said: "We regret that we are unable to play in today's ODI, but the welfare of the players and support staff is our primary concern and whilst we await the results of further tests the medical advice from both teams was that this game should not take place. "We remain in constant dialogue with Cricket South Africa and will continue to work closely with them to determine how

best to move forward."

CSA said the England players and management underwent an additional round of tests on Saturday evening after two members of staff at their hotel tested positive for the virus. Former England captain Mike Atherton, now a commentator and journalist, said he feared the entire series could be under threat. Atherton said the new positive cases had "ramped up" the concern that the England camp already felt after the opening match was postponed. "Certainly this match is off and I would be pessimistic about the other games," said Atherton. —AFP

COVID cancels England match in South Africa, tour under threat

PAARL: Two members of England cricket's touring party in South Africa have returned unconfirmed positive tests for Covid-19, forcing yesterday's first one-day international to be cancelled and placing the rest of the tour in jeopardy. The match in Paarl was to have opened the one-day series after Friday's scheduled first match in Cape Town was scrapped just before play was to begin after a South African player tested positive for coronavirus. Cricket South Africa and the

England and Wales Cricket Board said in a joint statement that two members of England's touring party had now contracted the virus, although further tests were required. The statement did not specify whether the individuals affected were players or support staff. "Cricket South Africa (CSA) and the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) have agreed to cancel today's Betway One-Day International series opening match, which was due to take place in

Chelsea beat Leeds, grab Premier League top spot

LONDON: Frank Lampard believes there is even more to come from Chelsea after the Blues moved top of the Premier League with a 3-1 win over Leeds on the night 2,000 fans returned to Stamford Bridge. Lampard's men had to bounce back after Patrick Bamford's early opener against his former club. But the home fans in attendance after the coronavirus-enforced absence got a glimpse of why the new-look Chelsea are now title contenders as goals from Olivier Giroud, Kurt Zouma and Christian Pulisic extended their unbeaten run to 16 games.

Victory takes Lampard's men - reinforced by a £220 million (\$296 million) spending spree - a point clear of Tottenham and Liverpool, who are in action on Sunday at home to Arsenal and Wolves respectively. "We are a (team in) progression," said Lampard. "When you bring in new players and have young players, people moving to a new country, different city, different teammates, it takes time. I think there is more uplift in us."

"Whether it is this season we can get to real heights we want, we don't know. It's a long season. Consistency is our next challenge but we're moving in the right direction." Edouard Mendy had conceded just once in six previous Premier League appearances to solve Chelsea's goalkeeping woes, but the Ivorian was partly at fault as Bamford kept up his fine start to the season after just four minutes.

The Leeds striker never made a first-team appearance in five years at Chelsea but is proving his doubters wrong back in the top-flight. He scored his eighth goal in 11 games with a calm finish to round a hesitant Mendy after Calvin Phillips's pass opened up the Blues defense. Giroud earned his first Premier League start of the season after scoring four times against Sevilla in the Champions League in midweek. The French international would have had an equalizer earlier had Timo Werner not somehow turned his goalbound header onto the bar from point-blank range.

Lampard trumps old foe

Giroud did finally level on 27 minutes when he slotted home Reece James's dangerous low cross. However, Chelsea were dealt a blow in the build-up to that goal as Hakim Ziyech pulled up with a hamstring injury and had to be replaced by Pulisic. After the break, Chelsea's superior class showed to allow Lampard to get another one over old foe Marcelo Bielsa. "Always defeats are an opportunity to learn something," said Bielsa. Lampard was furious when during his time at Derby, Bielsa sent a spy to the Rams' training ground before a Championship match in 2019. —AFP



Matches on TV (Local Timings)

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE	
Brighton & Hove Albion v Southampton	23:00
beIN Sports	
SPANISH LEAGUE PRIMERA	
SD Eibar v Valencia	23:00
beIN Sports HD 3	
ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE	
ACF Fiorentina v Genoa CFC	22:45
beIN Sports HD 4	
GERMAN BUNDESLIGA	
TSG 1899 Hoffenheim v Augsburg	22:30
beIN Sports	

14 Pandya powers India to thrilling T20 series victory over Australia



15 Mbappe brings up century as PSG win at Montpellier



15 Barcelona suffer fourth Liga defeat, go down 2-1 to Cadiz



Spurs go top of Premier League

Vardy lifts Leicester into third, Palace punish 10-man West Brom



LONDON: Tottenham Hotspur's French goalkeeper Hugo Lloris punches away the ball during the English Premier League football match between Tottenham Hotspur and Arsenal yesterday. — AFP

LONDON: Son Heung-min and Harry Kane fired Tottenham back to the top of the Premier League yesterday after Jamie Vardy struck in the final minute to lift Leicester to third in the table. Jose Mourinho's men beat faltering Arsenal 2-0 in front of 2,000 vocal fans at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium to leapfrog Chelsea.

Earlier, Leicester beat rock-bottom Sheffield United 2-1 while Crystal Palace hammered struggling West Brom 5-1. Spurs took the lead in the north London derby in the 13th minute with a Son wonder goal. The South Korean was set free down the left by Kane, cut inside and curled a brilliant 25-yard effort into the top corner. The home side doubled their lead on the stroke of half-time as they took apart their local rivals on the break.

Giovani Lo Celso played in Son, who returned

the earlier favor to tee up Kane to smash in from close range. Son and Kane have now combined for 31 Premier League goals, the second most of any pair after Chelsea's Didier Drogba and Frank Lampard (36). Tottenham who have not lost a league match since the opening day of the season, now have 24 points after 11 matches, two clear of Chelsea and three in front of Leicester and Liverpool. Liverpool also welcomed back supporters to Anfield as they hosted Wolves yesterday for the first time since the Reds ended a 30-year wait to win a top-flight title.

Vardy strikes

Leicester ended a four-game winless run in all competitions at an empty Bramall Lane to push the Blades closer to a return to the Championship.

Clubs in tier-three areas of England, with tougher coronavirus restrictions, still have to play behind closed doors, while tier-two zones such as London and Liverpool can have crowds of up to 2,000. Sheffield United have just one point from 11 games and were punished for a lack of ruthlessness as John Egan let Vardy run through rather than bringing down the striker outside the box and taking a red card, before the former England international kept his cool to beat Aaron Ramsdale.

The late winner was just reward for Leicester's domination of the game. They hit the woodwork twice in the first half through Vardy and James Maddison.

But it was Ayoze Perez who put Brendan Rodgers's men in front when he pounced on Marc Albrighton's deflected shot. However, Chris

Wilders's men hit back immediately for only their fifth league goal of the season when Oli McBurnie showed good strength to head home from a corner.

The hosts then held out more comfortably in the second period until they lost possession inside their own half and Maddison picked out a perfect pass to release Vardy for the winner. In the first match of the day, Wilfried Zaha and Christian Benteke both scored twice as Crystal Palace made West Brom pay for Matheus Pereira's first-half red card in a 5-1 rout at the Hawthorns. The Eagles had struggled for goals in recent weeks, but with Zaha restored after missing defeats to Burnley and Newcastle due to coronavirus, Palace were a team transformed as they moved to 11th in the table. — AFP

Roma frustrated in goalless draw

ROME: Roma were left ruing missed chances after a 0-0 home draw with Sassuolo in Serie A yesterday as both teams had goals ruled out by VAR and the hosts played the second half with 10 men. Sassuolo are fourth in the Italian top flight on 19 points following the stalemate at the Stadio Olimpico in Rome. Roma are a point behind after wasting opportunities to win despite having to play for 50 minutes with a man less.

Pedro was sent off for a second bookable offence five minutes before the break. His coach Paulo Fonseca followed him to the stands at the end of the first half after Henrikh Mkhitaryan's goal was ruled out for a foul by Edin Dzeko following a VAR check. The home side dominated after the break despite being outnumbered and were unlucky to not take the lead when Leonardo Spinazzola's cross was guided onto the post by Sassuolo defender Gian Marco Ferrari, under pressure from Dzeko.

Sassuolo thought they had snatched the points with 15 minutes left when Lukas Hradek whipped a long-range shot past Antonio Mirante, only for the goal to be ruled out for the tightest of offsides by VAR. "I'm very proud of my team. We played very well even when down to 10. We were



ROME: Roma's Spanish forward Pedro (right) fights for the ball during the Italian Serie A football match Roma vs Sassuolo yesterday at Olympic stadium in Rome. — AFP

very well organised defensively and didn't allow Sassuolo many opportunities," Fonseca told SKY. Parma's match with newly-promoted Benevento also finished goalless while mid-table side Hellas Verona drew 1-1 with Cagliari. Atalanta's match

at Udinese was postponed after heavy rain made the pitch unplayable. Napoli are a point behind Roma in sixth and will have the chance to leapfrog into the top four when they face bottom side Crotone later on. — AFP

Lille beat Monaco

PARIS: Yusuf Yazici scored what proved to be the winner as Lille beat fellow title hopefuls Monaco 2-1 yesterday to retake second place in Ligue 1 and increase the pressure on leaders Paris Saint-Germain. Christophe Galtier's men dug deep at the Stade Pierre-Mauroy to end Monaco's four-match winning streak and move back to two points behind reigning champions PSG. Marseille are two points further back in third, but have two games in hand.

Fourth-placed Lyon could move level on points with Lille when they visit Metz later. "This result is important because we were facing a direct competitor and we hadn't won much recently," said Lille coach Galtier. "When I see what Paris did on Saturday, by beating Montpellier despite rotating eight players, I tell myself that it remains PSG (as title favorites). "To be very honest, I look at what is happening behind us... There is a terrible fight with Monaco, Marseille, Lyon or Montpellier." Lille, who were held to a draw by struggling Saint-Etienne last weekend, had the best chance of the opening half but Jonathan Bamba's strike was

well saved by away goalkeeper Vito Mannone.

Lille broke the deadlock in the 53rd minute. Jonathan Ikone avoided two challenges on the edge of the area before slipping a pass through for Canadian striker Jonathan David to score. The hosts doubled their advantage midway through the second half as Turkish internationals Burak Yilmaz and Yazici combined, with the latter slotting in from close range. Yazici, who was introduced as a substitute three minutes before his goal, has scored four times in the league this season despite only starting twice. Pietro Pellegri pulled one back for Monaco in the 90th minute, but there was not enough time for an equalizer.

The principality club sit fifth, five points behind PSG, who saw off Montpellier 3-1 on Saturday. "It would have deserved to end in a draw, so I am inevitably disappointed," said Monaco boss Niko Kovac. Elsewhere yesterday, Saint-Etienne's winless league run extended to nine matches with a goalless draw at Dijon. Strasbourg moved out of the relegation zone with a thumping 4-0 success over Nantes, while Hatem Ben Arfa scored a late winner as Bordeaux edged Brest 1-0. Nice labored to a 0-0 stalemate at Reims in their first match since sacking Patrick Vieira as coach. — AFP



NORD: Lille's forward Burak Yilmaz plays the ball during the French L1 football match between Lille OSC and AS Monaco at the Pierre-Mauroy stadium in Villeneuve-d'Ascq yesterday. — AFP